

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS IN A
DIVERSE SCHOOL SETTING

by

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Dedication

This is dedicated to my Mom and Dad. I am so grateful for their love and encouragement through the years. They modeled compassion, a sense of adventure, a strong work ethic, and the ability to talk to just about anyone. With their love, support, and sacrifice, I had the opportunities of studying abroad in England, student teaching in Denmark, and traveling throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. These experiences had a profound impact on my desire to explore cultures around the world, commitment to working in diverse schools, and persistence in pursuing a doctorate in International Education.

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List of Abbreviations

Cognitive Flexibility	CF
Cultural Anxiety.....	CA
Cultural Behavioral Integration	CBI
Cultural Inclusion.....	CI
Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity	DMIS
English Language Learners.....	ELLs
English to Speakers of Other Languages	ESOL
Institutional Review Board	IRB
Intercultural Competence.....	IC
Intercultural Development Inventory.....	IDI
Inventory of Cross-Cultural Sensitivity	ICCS
Parent Teacher Association.....	PTA
Professional Development	PD
Research Questions	RQs
Special Education.....	SPED

Abstract

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS IN A DIVERSE SCHOOL SETTING

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George Mason University, 2020

Dissertation Director: Dr. Beverly Shaklee

Investigating the intercultural competence (IC) of educators has important implications for students, parents, teachers, administrators, schools, and school districts. Deardorff's (2009) Intercultural Competence Model was used as a guide to investigate the research questions, and two additional components, context and experiences, were incorporated into the design of the qualitative study. Data sources included an adapted version of the Inventory of Cross-Cultural Sensitivity (Mahon & Cushner, 2014) sent to 74 participants to gauge the IC of the instructional staff. Criterion sampling was employed with 10 participants, and seven names of exemplars emerged. These seven teachers and administrators participated in semi-structured interviews, an observation, and artifact collection. Conducting research in an ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse school, the participants described the development of their IC, how personal and professional experiences impacted their IC, and their perceived influence of IC on

students. With an increased understanding of teachers' IC in a diverse elementary school, this study has the potential to impact professional development opportunities and experiences for pre-service and in-service teachers. Furthermore, implications include how process models of IC could be conceptualized with additional interactants specific to teaching and student outcomes.

Chapter One

Introduction

Being a teacher or administrator in a high poverty, Title 1 school with a diverse student population is rewarding and, at times, extremely challenging. As an educator in one large metropolitan school district for the past 18 years, I have the core belief that teachers at schools like the one in this study will be far more effective with a strong sense of intercultural competence (IC). This involves self-awareness, authenticity, a willingness to be vulnerable, and the ability to think outside the box to ensure the success of all students. Additionally, it is essential for teachers to understand the effects of poverty and trauma, maintain high expectations, and do whatever it takes for their students, families, and colleagues. As a classroom teacher for 14 years, I vividly remember instances of advocating for the most at-risk students. This was done through collaboration with parents, counselors, social workers, behavior specialists, and administrators. It was also by gaining tools to provide engaging and effective instruction for students in poverty (Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Jensen, 2009; Tate, 2007). When working in an ethnically and linguistically diverse school, building positive classroom communities and genuine relationships with students, families, and colleagues lies at the heart of being interculturally competent.

While that might sound simplistic, systemic inequities are everywhere, and school districts are making efforts to bring these to light. For instance, departments have been

created to build the capacity of school and teacher leaders to become increasingly aware of issues around power, privilege, race, and identity. This is progress on a district wide level, and by gaining insight into the IC of selected teachers and administrators at one school, the challenges and inequities can be better understood.

With a strong interest in educational psychology and international education, the achievement gap has always been a research interest of mine. When I became an instructional coach four years ago, it became my job to build the capacity of teachers and ensure all students make learning progress and show growth. In efforts to do so, teachers might choose to be coached in areas related to content, student engagement, or the use of formative assessments. While any of these areas have the potential to make a significant impact, I believe that IC is the thread that connects it all to ensure equitable practices in the most challenging schools.

Intercultural competence is more deeply understood by considering a person's attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Moreover, it is beneficial to know what types of experiences contribute to the development of IC. This study investigates understanding, development, and the perceived impact of intercultural competence within teachers and administrators at one diverse, Title 1 elementary school.

Background of the Problem

As the world becomes increasingly more interconnected, students will need to be prepared to interact and engage, both locally and globally. Schools and teachers will be faced with the challenge of preparing students to not only compete in social, political, and economic institutions on a global scale, but also assume roles as global citizens (Graham

& Hudley, 2005; Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2009). Historically, these topics have been the purview of multicultural education (MME), and the purpose this dissertation is to expand this viewpoint by bringing in IC. Interculturally competent teachers go beyond the traditional boundaries of the classroom by shifting seamlessly between the local community and global community. This interplay can give students the opportunity to develop multiple perspectives, global awareness, and intercultural competence (IC) that are fundamental assets in an interconnected world. The role of the teacher is at the heart of this movement because the teacher must navigate the challenge of making teaching and learning internationally minded. The teacher becomes a facilitator bridging local and global communities through the constant engagement of students in dialogue and action across these boundaries (Cushner, 2011; DeJaeghere & Cao, 2009; Duckworth, Levy & Levy, 2005; Heyward, 2002; Skelton, 2007). This undertaking of teaching and learning is complex and best accomplished by interculturally competent educators.

Developing IC helps educators and future generations overcome ethnocentric perceptions and behaviors to positively influence teacher and student efficacy. Skelton (2007) suggests that educators can achieve this by valuing and embracing cultural awareness beyond surface level understandings. For instance, only celebrating diversity at a festival with food and flags might encourage children to think of other cultures as exotic, rather than having real value. Developing a curriculum that is deeper and more challenging is crucial in this increasingly interconnected world (Skelton, Wigford, Harper, & Reeves, 2002). Intercultural competence and the concept of becoming a global

citizen have a greater chance of reaching our students if educators understand these concepts and act as role models along the way.

In addition to educators developing and modeling intercultural competence, it is imperative for society to understand the positive benefits IC teachers provide all children. In the United States, Hernandez et al. (2009) report children of immigrants are dispersed across the country, including central cities and suburbs of the largest metropolitan areas and rural areas. These first- and second-generation immigrants bring an unprecedented ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity to the United States (Hernandez et al., 2009). With this diversity, children strive to understand the similarities and characteristics that make each person unique. By placing value on the multitude of languages and individual cultures, students can understand themselves and their peers on a more meaningful level (Skelton, 2007). Despite the polarized political climate in the United States, providing a high-quality education that can develop knowledgeable and ethical citizens should be a priority for all Americans.

The development of IC in teachers is essential for student learning and growth in an interconnected world because it provides a framework for students to adapt to the 21st century. Teachers' IC develops the potential for students to gain multiple perspectives, respect for self and other, and an increased awareness of the world (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006; Heyward, 2002; Pearce, 2007). The possible benefits of IC warrant continued inquiry to understand the process of IC and the perceived benefits in the classroom. The absence of an intercultural point of view has the potential to leave teachers and students feeling disconnected. Duckworth et al. (2005) proposed that culturally based

misunderstandings are detrimental to the learning process. When considering instances with immigrant students new to the United States, students often want to change their name to an American name, possibly to avoid problems with peers, to make it easier for the teacher, or to assimilate. Many years ago, a student was having trouble deciding between his Vietnamese name and his *made-up* American name, William. While he ended up choosing his Vietnamese name, many students go through similar types of situations involving internal and external conflict or pressure. Consequently, during these pivotal points in a child's formation of identity, immigrant students are at risk of experiencing confusion or disenfranchisement. Denzin (2007) refers to this issue as the "Sacagawea problem", because "the act of naming erases their sense of personal agency" (p. 124). These ideas connect to local and global educational contexts and the inequalities happening in society. Developing IC helps to rise above an ethnocentric lens and positively influences teacher's internal processes and external interactions (Deardorff, 2009). It is essential that educators bring a global perspective into the classroom to demonstrate the importance of all cultures, particularly given the rapidly changing world in which we now live.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to use qualitative inquiry to investigate the intercultural competence of teachers and administrators within one diverse, Title 1 elementary school. To achieve the goals in the study, multiple sources of data were collected, including survey data, criterion sampling, semi-structured interviews, observations, and artifacts. The investigation helps uncover descriptions of IC,

experiences contributing to the development of IC, and the perceived impact of IC on students. As conclusions are made, administrators and the school district may use this information to inform professional development needs and hiring practices. Furthermore, the teachers and administrators within the study were able to reflect on their own attitudes, knowledge, and skills that attribute to their demonstration of intercultural competence.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. How do teachers define intercultural competence (IC) and describe the development of their own IC?
2. What experiences do teachers attribute to their IC? Why?
3. How do teachers perceive their IC to influence students in the classroom?

Significance of Study

Intercultural competence within education warrants continued investigation. The school context is described as the primary environment in which identity negotiation is presented, and the consequences may significantly influence a child's motivation and dedication to learning (Graham & Hudley, 2005). Specifically, there is escalating interest in immigrant students and "the psychosocial impact of acculturation on academic motivation", and a gap in the literature is "an understanding of process, or mechanisms by which identity promotes motivation" (p. 403). The desire to investigate the process or development of IC stems partially from a background in educational psychology and my beliefs in constructivism. In order to understand these processes, several IC models are

addressed in Chapter Two, and clarification around ontological and epistemological frameworks are provided in Chapter Three.

In addition to the constructivist approach, I identify with the critical theorist lens, particularly so research can make an impact on equitable practices. When considering the multifaceted nature of education, it is crucial to have a “richer, deeper, better understanding of important facets of our infinitely complex social world” (Green, 2007, p. 20). This deeper understanding must involve past, present, and future opportunities for social justice within education. As our society grapples with historic and systemic discrimination and prejudices, it is imperative to address inequities and look for opportunities for access, particularly within education. Green (2007) also asserts, “There is no more urgent national or global priority than to engage with this diversity, to learn how to live with, appreciate, and accept our differences” (p. 29). By understanding the implications of IC in the classroom, this study embraces Greene’s claim. Furthermore, to ensure social justice and what is right for all students and given the focus on student achievement in the United States, showing academic progress in relation to IC has the potential to influence policy. Through social inquiry and examining the process of IC, there are numerous implications in the classroom and for the greater good for society in general.

Defining Intercultural Competence in Education

In the body of research relevant to this study, terms such as intercultural sensitivity, international mindedness, and cultural proficiency are used interchangeably at times. For clarity, intercultural competence (IC) is term used for the focus of this

investigation. Intercultural competence is defined as an educator's genuine belief of culture being central to teaching and learning, the ability to construct a positive cultural identity, and the demonstration of a positive disposition toward diversity. Intercultural competence is exhibited through critical knowledge, skills, and a sense of openness, humility, and comfort in sustaining relationships and interactions in a wide range of culturally diverse contexts (Cushner, 2011; Ukpokodu, 2011). In addition to defining IC, several terms within the process models of intercultural competence need to be defined.

Using the Intercultural Competence Model, Deardorff (2009) defines attitudes as respect (valuing other cultures); openness (withholding judgment); and curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity). Knowledge and comprehension are described as cultural self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness. Next, skills involve the ability to listen, observe, evaluate, analyze, interpret, and relate. The desired internal outcomes are displayed as empathy, adaptability, flexibility, and an ethno-relative view. These internal outcomes lead to external outcomes defined "as effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations" (Deardorff, 2009, p. 66). By using Deardorff's non-linear model, illustrated in Figure 1, these terms and additional categories that emerge lead to a more holistic view of IC.

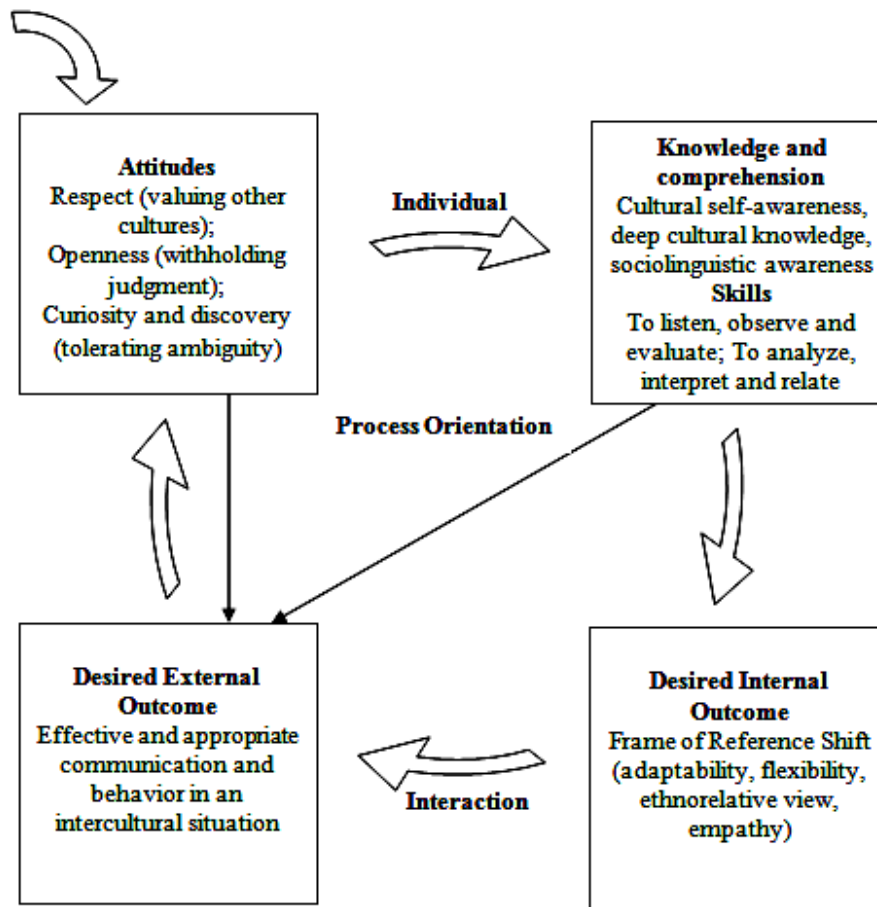


Figure 1: Deardorff's (2009) Intercultural Competence Model.

When looking at a wide range of studies relating to IC, scholars reach a consensus about individuals who exhibit intercultural competence. Studies suggest that these individuals are aware that there are many truths and that one's interpretation of a situation is one of several. As a result, one is receptive to new information and multiple perspectives (Ting-Toomey, 2010). Alternative perspectives are essential when interacting with others who think, feel, and behave differently than oneself, and this may be a key to uncovering the developmental processes of IC. Since fostering IC is an

ongoing and fluid process, a model that will capture its holistic and shifting nature is needed. Before models and theories are reviewed in Chapter Two, a clear picture of the researcher's context is presented.

Context

Teaching in diverse elementary schools has shaped who I am as an individual and an educator. The term diversity can be used to describe a variety of cultural differences, including race/ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economic status, linguistics, and sexual orientation. Moreover, the perspective has shifted from appreciating and managing diversity to inclusion and intercultural competence (Bennett, 2009). Originally, the plan was to conduct research at a school with similar demographics that I had worked at for 11 years. However, the principal retired, and I was hired as an instructional coach at my current school in 2016-2017. As I became part of the school community and got to know the teachers and students, it was determined to be the best setting to answer the research questions in this investigation. Furthermore, the principal at my current school has an interest in research and served as my school district sponsor.

The population of students speak a multitude of languages and have a variety of educational experiences, ranging from no previous schooling to attending pre-school in the United States. Many of the students entered the United States within the past few years and vividly remember their previous homes and countries. On the other hand, several students were born in United States and have never been to the countries their families emigrated from.

The daily conversations I have with my students are remarkable, but many opportunities for cultural awareness seem to be overshadowed by test preparation and the performative culture our U.S. schools are currently in. Ideally, teachers can assist students in navigating a new school, culture, language, and identity, and optimally, can also make learning meaningful to see academic growth in all students.

While I think both goals are possible, I realize the necessity to understand my own biases and assumptions as an educator and a researcher. To begin with, I assume interculturally competent teachers will either have positive experiences or be dealing with a crisis of engagement (Skelton, 2007). Furthermore, I think most teachers who are named as being interculturally competent gained experiences by studying or teaching abroad. Instead of making these assumptions, I want to develop alternative models that would make equally strong predictions (Maxwell, 2005), and keep the greater goal of the study in mind, which is to uncover the characteristics, development, and perceived impact of IC. By taking this realist, process-oriented approach to model testing (Maxwell, 2005), a deeper understanding of intercultural competence can materialize.

Another strong belief of mine is that interculturally competent teachers can positively influence students in the classroom. By cultivating cultural awareness and providing students with the ability to see the world from multiple perspectives, the benefits can produce a positive domino effect. Students might experience increased self-esteem, self-worth, the ability to think flexibly, and improved interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. As a result of these benefits, I believe student achievement can increase, and the achievement gap may lessen, specifically for the immigrant student

population. To ensure valid and reliable research, this requires staying within the parameters of the goals and research questions and evaluating my own underlying biases to ensure a quality study.

Chapter Summary

The growing ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity in classrooms within the United States is a current reality (Hernandez et al., 2009), and teachers will be better equipped to meet the needs of their students if IC is developed. Students' identities are being negotiated at a young age, and elementary classrooms are the primary environments where a student's willingness to learn happens (Graham & Hudley, 2005). In efforts to avoid culturally based misunderstandings which are detrimental to the learning process (Duckworth et al., 2005), it is critical to understand in-service teachers' perceptions of their IC and its influence within the classroom. As a result, a global perspective is encouraged and teachers' efficacy is positively influenced (Skelton et al., 2002) to better prepare teachers for the rapidly changing demographics within American schools.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Chapter Two provides a literature review to understand relevant models and theories about intercultural competence (IC). The first section of this chapter reviews how intercultural competence is defined, conceptualized, and assessed. Various models have been developed to explain the process of IC, and this study applied Deardorff's (2009) Model of Intercultural Competence. With key components such as attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes, the model aligned with the goals and research questions of the study. Additionally, this study examined how teachers perceive their IC to influence students in the classroom. To narrow the scope of these influences for the purpose of this literature review, the context of the study was critically important. Therefore, issues around diversity in education, cultural settings, and the achievement gap are addressed in the second section of the chapter.

Defining Intercultural Competence

Many definitions exist of the terms cultural competence and intercultural competence, and both are initially defined in this review to explain what led to the definition of IC used in this study. While the difference is not clearly stated in most studies, *inter* implies that various cultures can interact in any one place or all over the world. Ukpokodu (2011) defines cultural competence as “one’s abilities, dispositions, and behaviors that grant a successful negotiation and navigation across cultural contexts,

to build and sustain positive cross-cultural interactions and relationships, and to effectively service individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds in professional settings” (p. 437). While building and sustaining positive interactions has an affirming connotation, the latter part of the definition is unclear. Ukpokudo (2011) clarifies the meaning of cultural competence in the context of education by explaining how an educator’s sincere belief in the centrality of culture in teaching and learning can make a difference. This difference is made by constructing a strong racial and cultural identity, providing a positive disposition toward diversity, and a reflective cultural knowledge base. Furthermore, it is suggested that “cultural competence represents a sense of humility, openness, and comfort in seeking and sustaining cross-cultural interactions” (Ukpokudo, 2011, p. 437). This optimistic and constructivist definition provides the reader with a clear sense of an individual’s internal and external behaviors when relating to others.

Similar to cultural competence, Cushner (2011) defines intercultural competence as “critical knowledge and skills that enable people to be successful within a wide range of culturally diverse contexts” (p. 606). It is suggested that the ultimate goal for educators is to increase teachers’ understanding of IC in order to facilitate their own interactions in an assortment of complex intercultural settings (Cushner, 2011). By using a combination of these definitions, intercultural competence, as defined in Chapter One, is an educator’s genuine belief of culture being central to teaching and learning, the ability to construct a positive cultural identity, and the demonstration of a positive disposition toward diversity. Intercultural competence is exhibited through critical

knowledge, skills, and a sense of openness, humility, and comfort in sustaining relationships and interactions in a wide range of culturally diverse contexts (Cushner, 2011; Ukpokodu, 2011). While defining key terms is important for clarity, it is essential to conceptualize IC in the next section.

Models of Intercultural Competence

Several models have been developed to understand IC, and while presented in chronological order, this review primarily aims to consider the uniqueness and commonalities across models. Some of these similarities and differences are based on the organization of the interactants within each model. Therefore, examples of developmental, compositional, adaptive, and causal path models are presented to show the progression leading to contemporary models used to investigate IC. Before explaining the specific types of models, it is important to consider the origin and history of the research leading up to it.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the identifying characteristics of individuals serving in the U.S. Peace Corps were studied. Less competent volunteers had difficulty with uncertainty, criticism, trusting others, and perseverance. On the contrary, the most effective Peace Corps volunteers valued autonomy and intellectual matters, and they regularly demonstrated adaptability, cultural sensitivity, self-reliance, openness, and empathy (Ezekiel, 1968; Harris, 1977). To better understand IC, the Peace Corps adapted and adopted a developmental model - Howell's (1982) Interpersonal Model.

Developmental models "retain a dominate role for the time dimension of intercultural interaction, specifying stages of progression or maturity through which

competence is hypothesized to evolve” (Deardorff, 2009, p. 10). Although these models provide insight into the stages of development of self and other, the real life experiences do not always correlate with the diagrams. The models are also not hierarchical, and stages overlap and influence each other.

Howell’s (1982) Interpersonal Model begins with conscious incompetence, which involves an individual misinterpreting other’s behavior and not realizing it. Next, conscious incompetence occurs when a person misunderstands someone’s behavior but chooses to ignore it. Conscious competence, the third stage, is when a person consciously thinks about their behavior in efforts to be effective. The fourth and fifth stages, unconscious competence and unconscious super-competence, both involve practiced and internalized effective communication behaviors with the goal being communication fluency. In some ways, this model is common knowledge with phrases like, *ignorance is bliss* and *knowing what you don’t know*. However, effective communication has three functions: to achieve a task, facilitate relationships with others, and define one’s self to others (Zaharna, 2009). This requires a delicate balance of maintaining a sense of self while achieving a necessary degree of IC.

An influential model is Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), described as a model that has parallels with Howell’s Interpersonal Model (Zaharna, 2009). It consists of a six-stage progression, with ethno-centric stages being the initial stages and the ethno-relative stages being the goal (Bennett, 1986; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). The ethnocentric stages - denial, defense, and minimization, are based on the assumption that the worldview of one’s own culture is

central to all reality. Defense reversal recognizes the perspective that occurs “when an adopted culture succeeds a person’s estranged culture” (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 22). When a person is in the minimization stage, an individual thinks being color blind and treating all people exactly the same is the right thing to do, despite massive amounts of research that presents the opposite (Delpit, 2006). Conversely, the ethno-relative stages, including acceptance, adaptation, and integration, represent a fundamental shift in mindset to a more cognizant assumption that one’s own culture is one among many viable constructions of reality.

Viable constructions of reality become increasingly understood in the Model of Acculturation by Berry, Kim, Power, Young, and Bujaki (1989). Moving away from the developmental model, this adaptation model recognized the tension between navigating another culture and maintaining one’s own cultural identity. Achieving integration is ideal because one’s cultural identity and the relationships within the host culture are both valued and maintained. The three alternatives are assimilation, segregation, or marginalization, all potentially resulting in negative, long term consequences based on how one reacts to adaptation. The mutual adaptation occurring during integration calls for a deeper understanding of the internal and external outcomes within models of IC.

In the late 90s, compositional models provided additional interactants for researchers to consider. Howard-Hamilton, Richardson, and Shuford (1998) formulated the Intercultural Competence Components Model, which includes attitudes (motivation and values), knowledge (cultural identity and awareness), and skills (self-reflection, multiple perspectives, and cross-cultural communication). These are essential factors in

many contemporary models. Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) introduced the Facework-Based Model of Intercultural Competence, a model that includes knowledge and skills, but also considers cognitive, behavioral, and outcome factors. This was done by adding a mindfulness dimension and competence criteria, such as perceived appropriateness, perceived effectiveness, and mutual adaptability. These additional components helped explain the complexities and iterative relationship of IC.

Heyward (2002) used aspects of previous models to construct a Multidimensional Model on the Development of Intercultural Literacy. This model assumes culture is constructed, fluid, changing, and learned. Additionally, Heyward (2002) asserts that this learning occurs “through experience of confronting oneself in a cross-cultural situation” (p. 15). The end stage of the model for the development of intercultural literacy is transcultural identity, described as one who can consciously alter between multiple cultural identities. Signs of transcultural identity occur when one identifies with more than one culture and describes oneself as a citizen of the world. The commonalities and complexities of these theories and models about IC provided insight for past, the current, and future studies.

Assessing Intercultural Competence

Assessing intercultural competence can be achieved using a variety of approaches and tools depending on the areas of IC being addressed. These areas or components can include attributes, relationships, communication, attitudes, knowledge, skills, awareness, and/or developmental indicators (Fantini, 2009). When IC is demonstrated and conceptualized, behaviors are described as being *effective* or *appropriate* when

interacting in various intercultural settings. It is explained that “*effective* reflects the view of one’s own performance in the target language-culture’, and “*appropriate* reflects how natives perceive such performance” (Fantini, 2009, p. 458). Given the breadth of assessment approaches available due to the range of conceptualizations, this review provides an overview of assessment techniques and strategies. Additionally, significant external assessment tools are described that are relevant to this study.

Assessment techniques and strategies of IC can involve self-evaluation, peer evaluations, group evaluation, and/or teacher evaluation. Field tasks, experiences, interactive activities, debates, role-plays, and demonstrations can be used to show indicators of progress toward the learning objectives within intercultural competence. Commonly used techniques involve closed and open-ended questions, interviews, and written activities (Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2009). All of these are modes of assessment that can demonstrate IC, however, there must be compatibility and alignment between the goals, objectives, and the assessment tools being used.

Extensive lists of surveys, scales, and inventories have been developed in relation to IC or intercultural sensitivity (Fantini, 2009). Mahon and Cushner (2014) suggest these external assessment tools serve to provide a baseline of the knowledge and skills of a certain population, provide self-awareness information, and pinpoint strengths and weaknesses to inform professional development. Within education, the DMIS and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) provide a framework for mapping the development of IC over time in a teacher education curriculum (Mahon & Cushner, 2014).

An important external assessment tool, the IDI, was constructed to translate certain qualitative indicators of IC into valid and reliable quantitative data (Hammer et al., 2003). Bennett (2009) describes the IDI as a tool assessing “the ability to perceive and organize cultural differences in increasingly complex ways as construed by the DMIS” (p. 6). The IDI is a 50-item assessment instrument designed to measure individual and group IC in relation to the respondents’ orientation toward cultural differences and their readiness of training for intercultural settings. The level of intercultural sensitivity is measured on a developmental continuum from highly ethno-centric to highly ethno-relative, and this instrument is a statistically reliable and valid measure of intercultural sensitivity (Fantini, 2009). However, Bennett (2009) cautions the IDI is not sensitive to individual differences, tends to overestimate minimization, and underestimate the more ethno-centric or ethno-relative positions. Consequently, researchers suggest only using the IDI or similar assessments to gauge the overall intercultural sensitivity of groups and in conjunction with other measures, such as descriptive, qualitative data (Bennett, 2009; Deardorff, 2006).

Another instrument, the Inventory of Cross-Cultural Sensitivity (ICCS), was developed in 1986 and considered an indirect self-report instrument (Cushner, 1992). It was developed to allow individuals to assess their level of understanding and skill regarding successful cross-cultural interactions. The original version included 32 items and five scales including: cultural integration, behavior, intellectual interaction, attitudes towards others, and empathy. The instrument was found to have acceptable content and construct validity; however, it was found to have weak internal reliability scores (Mahon

& Cushner, 2014). Therefore, an updated version the ICCSv2, was developed and reevaluated, and consists of 44 items and four scales. The scales were renamed to include cultural inclusion (CI), cultural behavioral integration (CBI), cultural anxiety (CA), and cognitive flexibility (CF). The specific items were revised with major word changes and additions to reflect changing ideas. With Cushner's permission, the ICCSv2 was employed in this study and will be explained further in Chapter Three.

Many researchers, including Skelton (2007), have used a form of the IDI or ICCS and found that teachers think they are far higher on the spectrum than their actual score. With many teachers scoring far from the integration stage, teachers might be expecting outcomes from children that they are not even be achieving themselves. This shows the need for these issues to be reexamined by magnifying the process of developing IC.

Deardorff's Intercultural Competence Model

Earlier developmental models and external instruments, such as the IDI, are linear in nature and models with more flexibility are necessary to uncover the process of developing intercultural competence. In the 2000s, additional theories and models contributed to the contemporary approaches used today, particularly in the field of education. While many of the models of IC have similar attributes and move from "naïve monoculturalism to informed and integrated pluralism" (Heyward, 2002, p. 15), there was a need for refined, multifaceted models emphasizing personal growth and learning.

As referenced in Chapter One, Deardorff's (2009) Intercultural Competence Model is used in this study. It is specific to teacher development, and the grounded theory-based model honors the complexity of IC. Attitudes are an integral part of the

model, and Deardorff (2009) uses the following descriptors: respect and valuing other cultures, openness and withholding judgment, and curiosity and tolerating ambiguity. Moreover, Deardorff (2011) highlights the importance of being able to see multiple perspectives. The next part of the process orientation is knowledge and comprehension, which includes cognitive dimensions such as cultural self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness. Deep cultural knowledge is to demonstrate a holistic, contextual understanding of culture from historical, political, and social aspects. Another component in the same section is skills, which involve listening, observing, evaluating, analyzing, interpreting, and relating. Deardorff (2011) emphasizes these critical thinking skills to have a crucial role in developing IC because an individual can acquire and elevate knowledge. As attitudes and knowledge are developed within the individual, the remaining sections explain interactions within oneself and with others. The desired internal outcome and informed frame of reference shift results in an ethno-relative view and can be demonstrated with empathy, flexibility, and adaptability (Deardorff, 2009). The desired external outcomes are described as effective and appropriate communication and behavior in an intercultural situation. Deardorff (2011) advises that IC is an ongoing process and individuals need opportunities to regularly reflect and assess their own development.

Teachers' Experiences

Transformative learning requires meaningful experiences, and it is imperative to understand the types of experiences that mold teachers' beliefs, assumptions, and varying levels of intercultural competence. Since Deardorff (2009) does not explicitly state

experiences within her process model, experiences could be in each category or within the arrows between attitudes, knowledge, skills, and internal and external outcomes. Experiences might include positive interactions with people from other cultures in the United States or abroad. Interactions can range from semester long study abroad programs, student teaching abroad, internships, service learning, or local cultural immersion opportunities (Deardorff, 2011). Intercultural competence can be developed in many settings, not just abroad. Still, Sleeter and Owuor (2011) suggest that the longer and more integrative the experience, the more IC can occur.

Since not all experiences are positive, negative experiences might deal with some form of prejudice, conflict, or miscommunication. Cultural conflicts could potentially be avoided if one had more cultural competence from the start. Moreover, cultural conflicts could cause individuals to stay on the ethnocentric side of the spectrum (Bennett, 1993). While some experiences might be very clearly positive or negative, most experiences involve a person navigating through the encounter and better understanding cultural differences and similarities. When some of these experiences are uncomfortable, it can be considered a crisis of engagement, and it pushes us past their known status quo. Skelton (2007) explains the crises of engagement by noting, “Our willingness to be open and our energy to explore what is uncomfortably new rather than rest with what already exists” (p. 385). While part of the interaction might feel negative at the time, reflection and time may provide insight and movement toward the ethno-relative side of the spectrum.

In addition to positive or negative experiences, some teachers might share details from two different roles in their own lives. For instance, a memorable example of this

took place when a colleague shared her thoughts about being the teacher of first and second generation immigrant students *and* her reflections from when she was an eight year-old English language learner (ELL) when she first entered the United States.

Another instance of having a discussion or interview with someone who considered multiple viewpoints or time periods was when a coworker from another school shared her feelings about being a daughter of a Holocaust survivor and how that has impacted her empathy toward her students. When researchers examine educators' experiences, the process of IC will be better understood.

Diversity in Education

Many factors are perceived to impact the intercultural competence of teachers. To begin with, diversity within schools can have a positive impact on a teacher's IC, but it does not necessarily lead to it. Simply put, working or living in a diverse setting does not automatically yield IC (Allport, 1954), but reflecting critically on the experience has the potential to do so. Working in a school with immigrant students new to the country can provide the opportunity for teachers to provide a healthy and comfortable learning environment for all students.

Promoting intercultural competence in teachers and schools is a realistic and responsible attempt at providing an equitable education for all students. Encouraging IC requires educators to look at their current systems in place to identify underlying messages being sent to children about culture and identity. Critical reflection can be difficult but has the potential to bring out circumstances of inequity and bias within schools (Skelton, 2007).

Considering immigrant students' transition into U.S. schools, Olsen (1997) explained the Americanization process to include: the requirement to speak English at the expense of one's native language, disproportionate tracking of immigrant students into remedial, special education, and vocational classes leading to academic marginalization, and excessive pressure to find a place in the widespread racial hierarchy. In efforts to overcome this process of integration (Berry et al., 1989), affirming and respecting ethnic and linguistic heritage is imperative (Graham & Hudley, 2005). However, Lam (2006) suggested moving social justice one step further by achieving a multidimensional view of transculturation and described the shift as "looking at multilayered modes of belonging, and participation within, across, and at the intersections of societies" (p. 227). Maintaining and developing immigrant students' bilingual skills demonstrates transculturation and upholds an individual's socio-cultural identity. Furthermore, it establishes tremendous resources for fostering connections globally (Hernandez et al., 2009). Educators, parents, and community members must support the ever changing and growing number of cultures and languages present in the United States.

A substantial amount of research about the achievement gap shows Black and Hispanic students are not performing at the same levels as their White and Asian peers. In efforts to close this gap, teachers and administrators consider far more than the data. Factors including poverty, trauma, and separated families need to be considered, and teachers can be more effective if they are aware of such impactful circumstances. Graham and Hudley (2005) explain, "Much of the parental socialization around achievement involves encouragement of children to overcome setbacks, because their

educational opportunities are perceived to be much greater in the United States than those available in their home countries” (p. 405). It is essential for teachers to understand the persistence needed for many immigrant students to achieve in a new environment, or cultural setting, full of unfamiliar people, languages, and norms.

Instead of only focusing on achievement, there should be an emphasis on student progress, which largely depends on how immigrant children adjust to a new environment. First, the theory of segmented assimilation implies that adopting the host culture and giving up one’s culture of origin will lead to one of two possibilities. Graham and Hudley (2005) suggest it can lead to “upward mobility and absorption into the middle class, or to downward mobility and absorption into the urban underclass” (p. 404). Rather, a third pathway is possible, one with upward mobility while holding onto values from one’s culture and maintaining ties with one’s immigrant community (Graham & Hudley, 2005). By taking this pathway, an individual can feel successful and have a positive self-image relating to cultural identity. Interculturally competent educators need to be aware of these pathways in order to promote student success.

Supporting student success can also be supported when parents and teachers understand the classroom as a social arena in which language learning is constructed. Donato and MacCormick (1994) suggest that increasing participation in the values, beliefs, and behaviors of a community of practice [CoP] will generate language learning. Instead of being taught through direct instruction, “Language is developed through CoPs where individuals, initially inexperienced and unaware, are apprenticed into full participation into the socio-cultural practices of the community in which they live” (p.

454). By watching English Language Learners advance through a silent period, the idea of learning beginning as legitimate peripheral participation needs to be understood by teachers (Lave & Wenger, 1991). By developing IC in pre- and in-service teachers, knowledge and skills can be developed to understand complex issues around language development, academic discourse, culture, and identity.

Cultural Settings

When schools have a linguistically, ethnically, and racially diverse student population, it is critical to analyze how cultural settings can impact children's lives. Examining the cognitive processes in different cultures brings light to the socio-cultural channeling of individual thinking (Rogoff, 2003). Values and belief systems are embedded in the concept of culture, which "potentially influence academic task engagement and performance and can be used to benchmark the relevance of constructs that are embedded within particular theoretical perspectives on motivation and learning" (McInerney, 2008, p. 371). A multitude of values or cultural characteristics might be considered when investigating motivation and learning theories. These include collectivism, individualism, active versus passive learning, and issues related to cultural identity. While cultural identity will be further analyzed, it is important to note that immigrants often navigate through multiple cultural settings. These cultural settings and models have "implications for improving achievement not only for ethnic minority children but children in general" (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001, p. 45). In looking at cultural settings or models, the home and school are two primary focal points.

By looking at the home, positive messages and honest conversations between parents and children relating to ethnicity begin should begin early. Graham and Hudley (2005) suggest that ethnic minority parents must begin teaching their young children about their ethnic history, heritage, and culture. Moreover, conversations and preparation relating to discrimination must occur during adolescence. Consequently, “these communicated messages are related not only stronger to ethnic identity but also to higher academic achievement, more perceived mastery, and better problem-solving skills” (Graham & Hudley, 2005, p. 403). In addition to such messages, Fuligni (1997) suggests that first and second generation students’ high grades correlated with a strong emphasis on education shared by the parents and peers. The shared values toward education are essential ingredients for a positive cultural setting.

When entering the cultural setting of school, Scheurich (1998) insists on several core beliefs being critical components of a school environment. These include maintaining high academic levels for all students; treating students with love, appreciation, care, and respect; valuing the first language and the culture the student brings; instructing through a positive, learner-centered approach; and the school serving the community. In order to build such a cultural setting at school, Riehl (2000) suggests the principal’s role includes “fostering new meanings about diversity, promoting inclusive school cultures and instructional programs, and building relationships between schools and communities” (p. 55). These connections and relationships are missing in many schools, but Delpit (2006) encourages the dominant culture to change that, and it begins in the classroom.

A good starting point for this change is to help teachers understand how to avoid cultural misunderstandings. Delpit (2006) explains that teachers should value students' home culture and language, and basic skills must also be taught. She defines skills as "useful and usable knowledge which contributes to a student's ability to communicate in standard, generally acceptable literary forms" (Delpit, 2006, p. 18). Adults and children are constantly choosing the *acceptable* or *appropriate* ways to react. Therefore, teachers need to understand the value of non-standard and standard English and the importance of helping children learn flexible ways of acting, speaking, and adapting to shifting roles and situations (Rogoff, 2003).

These shifting roles between home and school can cause misunderstandings and challenges. Rogoff (2003) explains, "Learning which approach to use at school and home, along with determining which strategy to use in cognitive tests and other problem solving situations, amount to learning to generalize appropriately from one situation to another" (p. 257). She goes on to provide an example of Native American children being expected to be silent when learning at home, but the child may appear disinterested when behaving this way at school to a non-native teacher. Furthermore, "a collaborative mode at home may be inconsistent with an expectation at school that students compete with each other and show off their knowledge" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 256). Educators should aspire to develop the awareness and skills to provide children with the tools to be successful in the future.

Student Achievement

Educational institutions, both nationally and internationally, use standards to guide teaching and learning. Oden (2007) states “The term standard refers to a statement of what learners should know, or be able to do, as the result of their educational experience in a school system” (p. 176). Teachers, in turn, use standards to shape their instruction, which affects what learners know and can do. The teacher creates assessments that mirror learning objectives presented by each standard. After the assessment, students are evaluated on whether or not they have adequately met the outlined learning objectives. In this case, standards-based instruction provides teachers with the broad concepts and skills students must cover, but it does not provide an explanation on how to model intercultural competence. This divergence between standards and IC may lead teachers to doubt whether or not they have time or the training necessary to demonstrate IC in the classroom.

The need to incorporate diverse pedagogies in a standards-based classroom did not begin with IC. Multicultural educators debated the incorporation of multicultural education in standards-based classrooms because of teacher and administrator perceptions that it was a separate subject, one that was new and could not be incorporated into existing subject areas (DomNwachukwu, 2010). Intercultural competence, like multicultural education, may be seen by many as isolated and not as an integral part of student life and the classroom culture, but the argument can be made that without its integration into a standards-based classroom, students will not receive the tools necessary to be global citizens or participants in a global community. When discussing

multicultural perspectives, Banks (In DomNwachukwu, 2010) suggested the use of a transformation approach that "...requires teachers to change the structure of their curriculum to enable students to engage in concepts, issues, events and themes from a multicultural perspective" (p. 203). Teachers in PK-12 classrooms in the United States who are invested in incorporating IC must engage students in the broad concepts presented in standards from an internationally minded perspective. This approach allows for a more relevant experience that transcends additive models that promote foods, festivals, and flags (Skelton et al., 2002). It can also provide students with a rich educational experience and the chance to not only look inward, but to see outward (Oden, 2007).

Closely aligned with the topic of standards is the interest in the concept of achievement, which has rapidly grown in the United States and many countries around the world in the past few decades. *Race to the Top* (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), *No Child Left Behind* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), *ESSA* (U.S. Department of Education, 2020), and other policies have been implemented to ensure all students are achieving at high levels. While these seem like encouraging ideals, achievement is an individual and social construct. First, cross-cultural differences in achievement are prevalent causing the term to take on different meanings in different cultures (Plaut & Markus, 2005). When taking those socio-cultural variations into consideration, some cultures, for instance a number of cultures studied in Asian contexts, may entangle individual and social motivations due to the collective culture and wanting to please family. However, in U.S. contexts, individual and social motivations tend to be

seen as being mutually exclusive. Immigrants in the United States can have changing educational motivations as they learn factors valued in the American context, like competition and individualism (Plaut & Markus, 2005) and while becoming accustomed to the dynamics of a new country or environment, immigrant students may have a myriad of reasons for achievement or lack thereof.

Many research studies find resilience to be one of the most important qualities leading to achievement in immigrant students. Borman and Overman (2004) suggest that the most powerful school characteristic promoting resiliency is a supportive school community. Two models, the communitarian model and the supportive school community model, “stress that progress toward improved achievement begins with efforts to foster the healthy social and personal adjustment of students” (p. 192). This can be achieved with a safe and orderly environment, positive student-teacher relationships, and parent involvement (Borman & Overman, 2004). By valuing socio-cultural variations regarding achievement and encouraging a caring school community, minority students can have a better chance at high achievement levels.

Potential Impact of Interculturally Competent Teachers

Students learn and grow when optimal conditions are provided. When children are in the zone of proximal development and navigating cultural settings, continuous growth is possible due to the many interactions taking place (Rogoff, 1990). In other words, students are influenced by their teachers, peers, and caregivers on a regular basis, and research shows these interactions can impact their cultural identity and awareness

(Munro, 2007; Pearce, 2007), increase multiple perspectives (Dooly and Villanueva, 2006), and willingness to take risks (Skelton, 2007).

Cultural Identity and Awareness

Cultural identity, referring to one's incorporation of the cultural values, beliefs, and practices of one's ethnic group, is described as "a relatively unconscious process" (McInerney, 2008, p. 374). Despite being an innate process, understanding one's identity is crucial to development and unique to every individual. Thus, it is difficult to generalize how students will respond, particularly in diverse classrooms. Graham and Hudley (2005) explain, "In a multiethnic society, members of minority groups are constantly called upon to negotiate their identity" (p. 400). This negotiation is possible for immigrants who were born in the United States or moved here at a very young age and barely remember their home country. Identifying with one's country of origin and country of residence can be considered "reconciling bicultural identities" (Graham & Hudley, 2005, p. 400). There are many theories about what happens as this negotiation occurs internally and through interactions.

Closing the achievement gap requires understanding identity development and possible educational risk factors. Graham and Hudley (2005) explain that "a growing empirical literature has documented the motivational benefits of strongly identifying with one's ethnic group" (p. 402). A strong racial or ethnic identity comes from the way parents socialize children through the attitudes and messages communicated. Positive messages about cultural identity are vital to student achievement, and parents, schools, and communities must take notices to what messages are being sent.

Student identity and perception of self can be increased by developing teachers' IC and adapting an internationally minded approach to standards. Students of diverse backgrounds in elementary schools confront challenges when they access educational settings that do not mirror their cultural values. Teaching with a strong sense of IC can bridge the "cultural difference between the subject and his or her social environment" (Pearce, 2007, p. 129). Interculturally competent teachers can foster a healthy environment by valuing both student culture and the local culture. This model allows students the ability to navigate between cultures without losing their personal identity. Teachers have the opportunity to view the funds of knowledge that students, parents, and communities can bring to a diverse classroom (Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 2005). Valuing students and their household communities as resources raises students' self-concept and identity.

The movement from local self to a global self is a developmental process of negotiation of values systems, which provides a foundation for cultural awareness for both students and teachers. Students can develop new lenses that can facilitate their interaction within local and global communities. Interculturally competent teachers "foster both (1) positive international values by encouraging positive attitudes to and a valuing of specific concepts from a multinational perspective and (2) a high level of cultural awareness, sensitivity, and acceptance" (Munro, 2007, p. 125). This approach is of great benefit to all students.

Multiple Perspectives

Valuing multiple perspectives is a fundamental objective to gaining intercultural competence. Regardless of the model used for analysis, becoming a global and critical thinker requires this particular know-how. For instance, intercultural literacy brings a cultural competence to individuals, which facilitates their ability to see more than one point of view, a critical asset to world leaders (Heyward, 2002). Educators must have the capacity to scaffold students' learning, and Dooly and Villanueva (2006) proposed new teacher education programs to construct new understandings and respect for other cultures. Moreover, this preparation will enable teachers to “open up learners to other ways of thinking and to show them that their own view of the world is just one among many” (Dooly & Villanueva, p. 238). As a result, children develop the ability to reason and contemplate in an analytical fashion. Despite multicultural resources being present for decades, research has only recently examined the impact of teaching multiple perspectives through discussion and reflection.

Risk-Taking

When making learning meaningful, recent brain research and emotions play a role. If the idea of a crisis of engagement often takes place during meaningful, transformative experiences, it is imperative to find a place for it in the educational process (Heyward, 2002). Essentially, learning what is unknown usually takes place in an uncomfortable new way, unlocking the power of risk-taking. Skelton (2007) urged educators to investigate the crisis of engagement and how to facilitate the shock students go through. By exploring the positive feelings of motivation and excitement, in addition

to the unsettling conversations, educators and students feel more comfortable discussing past and present critical issues around equity.

Chapter Summary

Past and current models of intercultural competence are relevant to this study because the progression shows the uniqueness of each and overlap of similarities. By using Deardorff's (2009) Interactive Model, the fluidity of IC is honored, yet there are still clear components to organize the information. The perceptions that teachers have about their own IC and the impact IC has on their students relates to Deardorff's (2009) internal and external outcomes.

This review considers additional topics that are not explicitly included in Deardorff's model. These include teachers' experiences, the context of the study (diversity in education, cultural settings, and student achievement), and potential influences interculturally competent teachers can have on their students. The review of this research serves as a foundation to analyze the results, present the findings, and discuss conclusions and future recommendations in the upcoming chapters.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Chapter One provided the rationale, importance, and justification for this study, and Chapter Two reviewed the literature focusing on the wealth of information on intercultural competence (IC) in education and selected those most appropriate to this study (Bennett, 2009; Deardorff, 2007; Hammer et al., 2003; Heyward, 2002). Chapter Three explains the methods used, including research philosophies, qualitative research design, and participant selection. A detailed explanation about criterion sampling used for initial participant selection is described, as well as clarification about data collection, data sources, and data analysis. Additionally, methodological issues, such as sampling and design challenges, researcher credibility, triangulation, and ethics are addressed.

When considering methodological decisions, one diverse, Title 1 school was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of IC. With purposeful sampling procedures, a goal of the study was to gain insight from the teachers and administrators who were considered to have high levels of IC. Another goal was to document and triangulate their IC through multiple sources of data. Therefore, when framing the research questions, it was vital to have them point toward the information that helps achieve these practical goals (Maxwell, 2005).

The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. How do teachers define intercultural competence (IC) and describe the development of their own IC?
2. What experiences do teachers attribute to their IC? Why?
3. How do teachers perceive their IC to influence students in the classroom?

Research Ontology and Epistemology

Reflecting on my own research philosophy and how it aligns with the goals and methodology within this study was important for clarity and transparency. The study was conducted with a post-positive approach due to the parameters of the investigation within the school district. Therefore, methodological decisions explained in this chapter involved timelines, planned observations, and checklists that were used in accordance with district guidelines for research. As I considered my own lens when approaching the investigation, my views involved additional ontologies and epistemologies.

Constructivism is guided by the ontological belief that reality is socially constructed, complex, and can fluctuate, and critical theory accompanies the belief that reality is shaped by historical and structural conditions that should be uncovered to transform and create positive change (Glesne, 2011). In my opinion, it was challenging to imagine investigating the process and development of intercultural competence without having a critical constructivist lens.

Generating research questions, methods, and information about participants in a specific order was difficult due to my preference for a cyclical model versus a linear model. Therefore, flexibility was vital because all categories influence and build on each

other to create a holistic design. When situating these insights into the research, RQ 1 and RQ 2 involve descriptions of IC and how IC is developed in teachers (constructivist) and RQ 3 delves into the perceived impact on students (critical theorist). Identifying the *what is* (RQs 1 and 2) and the *what could be* (RQ 3) helped structure my research ideology.

While terminology can differ across research philosophies, the correlation between terms within the constructivist criteria includes trustworthiness (rigor), dependability (a systematic process), and authenticity (reflexive consciousness). Furthermore, Patton (2002) explains the importance of capturing multiple perspectives instead of a singular truth. In this regard, I did not anticipate hearing only one view of intercultural competence (RQs 1 & 2). Likewise, it was unlikely that all interculturally competent teachers had similar perceptions of the impact of IC in the classroom (RQ 3). Rather than finding a specific recipe for IC, the survey, criterion sampling, semi-structured interviews, and additional secondary sources of data provided multiple insights and understandings.

Another approach to investigating RQ 3 involved the critical change criteria because it aimed to show inequities and the use of inquiry to bring about social change (Patton, 2002). When schools have teachers with low levels of IC, there is the potential to have a negative impact on students (RQ 3). For instance, if teachers who lack IC repeatedly call a student by the incorrect name or ignore important cultural norms or customs, this could result in detrimental experiences or negative relationships within the classroom. On the other hand, interculturally competent teachers have the ability to have

critical conversations with colleagues, parents, and students, and “build the capacity of those involved to better understand their own situations, raise consciousness, and support future action aimed at political change” (Patton, 2002, p. 549). This supports Deardorff’s (2011) process model with the desired external outcome being effective and appropriate communication and behaviors.

My understanding of research ideologies in relation to this study were further understood through the lens of Greene’s (2007) dialectic stance, which “enables a meaningful engagement with difference and thus promotes values of tolerance, acceptance, and equity” (p. 80). Valuing engagement with methodological and philosophical difference does not always transfer to promoting equity but has the potential to do so. When considering the impact interculturally competent teachers can have on students, Greene’s (2007) complementary strengths stance shed light on implications related to the achievement gap. The role of paradigms is vital in influencing the inquiry practice and to maintain the integrity of any given methodology to generate defensible results (Greene, 2007). Ultimately, it was possible to follow the requirements from IRB and the school district and hold true to my own values and beliefs while conducting the research. While this investigation was conducted using a post-positive design, I hold a strong interest in issues of equity and social justice.

When researching topics related to social justice and equity, listening to participants to understand their viewpoints was critical to building relationships. The idea of using mutually productive dialogue to bring people together makes more sense than having core principles or foundational beliefs (Maxwell, 2010). Rather than

becoming stuck or labeled, I agreed with Oakley (1999) when she stressed “the need for adopting methods appropriate to research questions, for choosing methods which are sensitive to power relations, and for the ethical conduct of research” (p. 252). By not being stuck in just one paradigmatic viewpoint, it broadened my understanding and enriched the research. Consequently, my research ideology was driven by a moral commitment and focus on social justice.

Research Design

Investigating teachers’ intercultural competence (IC) required an in-depth understanding of their characteristics, experiences, and influences, and this required a complex and multi-dimensional approach. Luttrell (2010) focused on six components within a North Star model including: 1) research relationships; 2) research questions; 3) knowledge frameworks; 4) inquiry frameworks and methods; 5) validity; and 6) goals. Since Luttrell’s (2010) Reflexive Model of Research Design, illustrated in Figure 2, places research relationships in the center, it honored the importance of examining the complexity of my own role within the study.

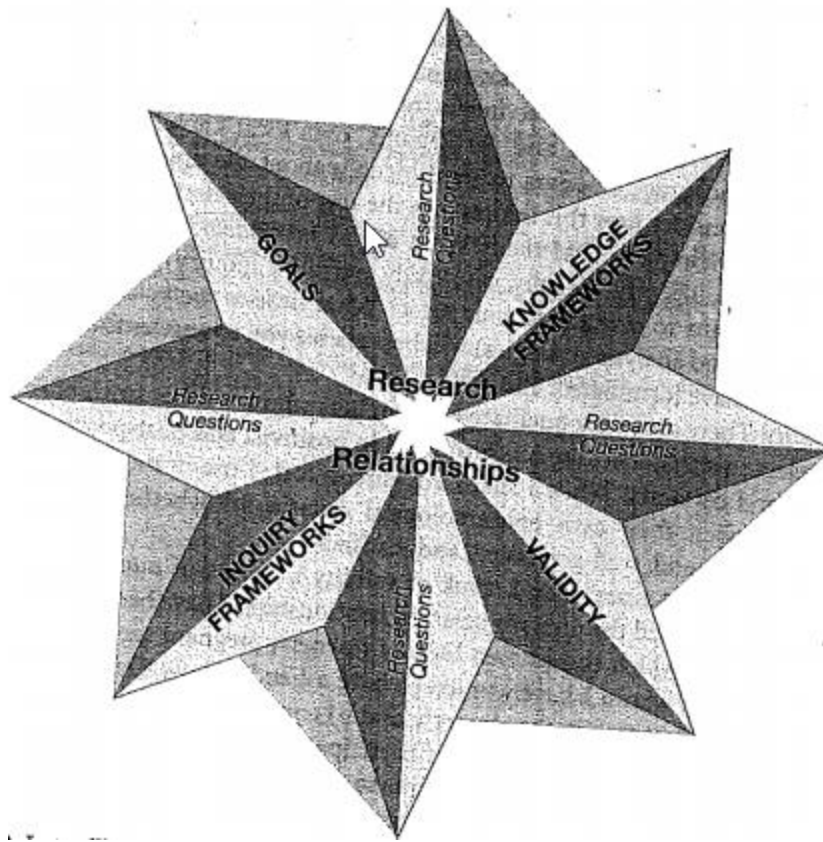


Figure 2: Luttrell's (2010) Reflexive Model of Research Design.

To understand qualitative research design, Luttrell (2010) suggested transforming “the study into a multi-dimensional and lively representations of lived experiences, social processes, and complex webs of meaning and values” (p. 160). While I saw value in multiple layers and approaches to qualitative research, I needed more structure than what Luttrell’s model offered independently. As a result, I chose to combine Maxwell’s (2005) Interactive Approach Model, shown in Figure 3, and Luttrell’s (2010) Reflexive Model of Research Design. Maxwell’s Interactive Model of Research Design included goals, conceptual framework, research questions, methods, and validity in a diagram that

emphasized the interaction between parts, stressing that each component is closely tied to the other, but is not linked in a linear or cyclic sequence.

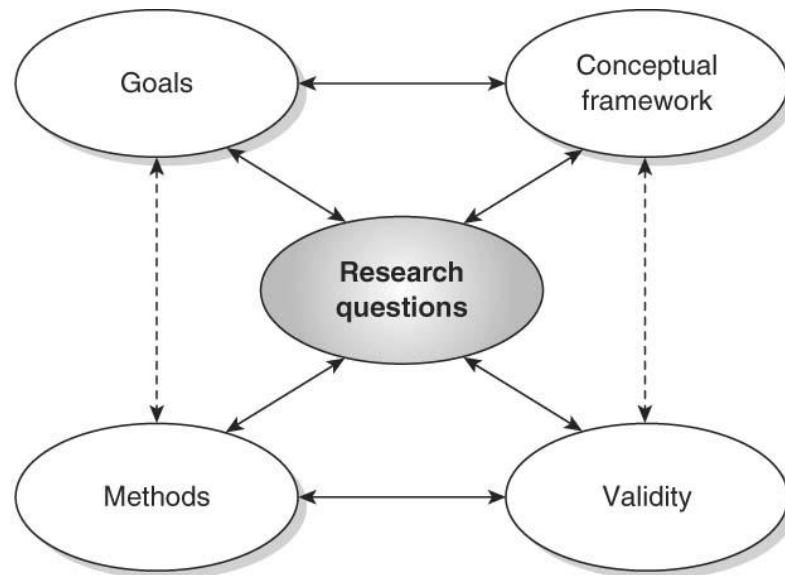


Figure 3: Maxwell's (2005) Interactive Model of Research Design.

Both models contain the same main components, but they differ with the placement of the research questions and relationships. While the research questions in Maxwell's model are placed in the center, Luttrell placed the research questions in between the other components four times. Both approaches showed the interconnectedness and importance of the RQs that inform the study. However, only Luttrell's model included relationships, an imperative part of this investigation due to the nature of my work at the school. Over the last several years, I have had many critical conversations about difficult issues with many of the teachers and administrators. We carry these experiences with us and see each other as more than colleagues, but at times,

as co-teachers, friends, support systems, superiors, fellow advocates, or even adversaries. Not only do the relationships have an impact leading into the investigation, but the deep reflection involved in the interviewing process can affect the relationships as well.

The two models merged together to provide structure, depth, and gave the researcher – participant relationship the respect and attention it deserves. Furthermore, the models conceptualized the iterative nature and complexity involved, either through two-way arrows or by using a multi-dimensional figure. The combined interactive and reflexive research designs contributed to gaining a holistic understanding of IC.

Access and Selection of Site

My role working in an elementary school in a large school district in a metropolitan area of the United States provided me with opportunities to work with teachers, administrators, and the district office. Access was essential because it “is eventually understood as not being solely a methodological tool for theoretical sampling purposes but an ontological framework that shapes the inquiry process from beginning to end” (Freeman, 2000, p. 359). Not only did gaining access shape the whole process, but it had a timely impact that needed to be considered. I needed to understand my access to the research on many levels. Access means so much more than just having permission to conduct research. It also involved gaining educators’ willingness to provide information, hopefully for the greater good of schools.

My experiences teaching in a culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse part of this school district greatly influenced my research interests. Since I am passionate about providing an equitable and quality education for immigrant students, I believe these

students deserve teachers who maintain a high level of intercultural competence (IC). Conducting research in this school district and with teachers in my specific school contributed to positive relationships and rapport. Another factor that helped with access involves the researcher and participants having the shared experience at one of the most at-risk elementary schools in the district. My hope is that the participants could speak freely about IC during interviews due to our common goals of creating a caring culture and improving student learning.

In addition to working with the teachers and administrators, access occurs through the school district. Adler and Adler (2008) suggested, “Because corporate managers must safeguard organizational goals, they serve as gatekeepers, effectively keeping out unknown or nosy intruders” (p. 159). Investigating IC aligns with the school district’s strategic goals which aim to achieve the following: empower students to meet high academic standards as responsible and ethical global citizens; foster a caring and inclusive culture; and acknowledge and understand diverse perspectives and cultures. Theory and practice are combined to create an actionable plan committing to developing cultural competency and sensitivity in teachers and administrators. As a result, the goal is to have students, families, and employees feel welcome and supported at school. This study supported these goals and strategies by exploring teachers’ understandings and development of IC and the perceived impact on students.

Data Collection Timeline					
Approval Dates	GMU IRB Approval: 12/14/2018 School District Approval: 3/12/2019 Data Collection Weeks 1-4: 3/15/2019-04/12/2019				
Week	1	2	3	4	
Starting	Mar 15	Mar 22	April 1	April 8	Notes
Phase 1	March 15-29				
Qualtrics Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Week 1: Invitations Sent to staff members and Consent Forms Collected Week 2: 68/74 Online Surveys Completed via Qualtrics
Criterion Sampling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Week 1: Invitations Sent and Consent Forms Collected Week 2: 10/10 Criterion Sampling Informal Interviews Conducted
Phase 2	April 1-12				
Interviews			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Week 3: Invitations Sent for Participation, Consent Forms Collected, and Interviews/Observations Scheduled
Observations/ Artifact Collection			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Week 3 and 4: Seven Semi-structured Interviews Conducted Week 4: Eight Observations Conducted and Artifact Collection Completed

Figure 4: Data collection timeline.

Despite the clear alignment of the goals of the study and the district, the process for the research approval was very detailed, rigid, and required a post-positivist lens at times in order to follow the necessary guidelines. Applications were submitted to both the school district and the George Mason University (Mason) IRB in December of 2018, and the Mason IRB approval was granted the same month, as illustrated in Appendix E. The school district approved the research in March of 2019, and the approved timeline is presented in Figure 4. The presentation of the timeline is shown at this point in the chapter to help the reader understand the strict timeline given and how it influenced data collection.

Selection of Participants

Once access was granted in the school district and the school, participants were selected for the study. While this was often skimmed over in many studies, Reybold, Lammert, and Stribling (2011) suggested, “Participant selection constitutes one of the most invisible and least critiqued methods in qualitative circles” (p. 2). So often, researchers choose out of convenience or due to time constraints. Instead, the following sections will describe in detail who was selected for each phase of the study and the reasons for doing so.

The people are the core of the study because it is their stories and experiences that are told. The researcher holds more power than most realize because the researcher’s lens on the issue impacts who we perceive to be at the core of that issue and, therefore, what we hope to learn from those participating in the study (Reybold et al., 2011). In this case, my role as a school leader working closely with most of the staff, allowed me to witness specific teachers demonstrate IC over the last three and a half years. On the contrary, if certain teachers were not as open to coaching or the nature of collaborate learning teams, this would have blurred my ability to see their IC as clearly. This was an important bias to examine, and it is addressed when describing criterion sampling and the phase 2 selection process. This qualitative inquiry requires transparency to support a credible study with quality.

Initial Participant Selection

The selection process for criterion sampling was significant because the input from these individuals determined the participants invited to phase two of the research

(teacher interviews, observations, and artifact collection). Criterion sampling involved studying cases of predetermined criteria (Patton, 2010), and the diverse sample of 10 participants included multiple points of view and sources of information within the school. Table 1 explains details how the criterion sample was intentionally varied across gender, age, and ethnicity.

Table 1: Criterion Sampling Participant Information

Criterion	Details	Notes
Age and Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 10 participants between 34-61 years old 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did not intentionally exclude 24-33 age range but adequate experience was needed for participants to name IC teachers. Participants had 10-25 years of experience in education. One teacher had 21 years of experience to offer historical perspective.
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Females 8 Males 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender breakdown is representative of staffing. Planned for 3 males but historical factor from a female teacher took priority for goals of study.
Ethnicity /Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White 5 Hispanic 3 Black 1 Other 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The breakdown was representative to staffing, however, ideally, there would have been Asian or additional Black participants. A 26-year-old Black male teacher was to be included, but the historical factor took priority to reach the goals of the study.

In addition to age, gender, and ethnicity, it became evident that experience and specialization were critical to ensure a well-rounded sample representative of the staff. The principal of the school, who also served as the district sponsor for this study, met with me to discuss the selection of 10 participants. We determined two main criteria: 1)

the participants demonstrated a level of IC themselves and 2) knew their colleagues well enough to be able to recommend them for having high levels of IC. With the range of specializations, each participant offered a unique vantage point as they considered names of colleagues to recommend as exemplars.

Brief, informal conversations were had with the 10 teachers and administrators about which educators in the school to interview. Appendix A includes the criterion sampling protocol and questions asked of the 10 participants. In most cases, I met with participants for the informal 5 to 10-minute interviews in their classrooms or offices at a time that worked best for them. One exception was one of the administrators, frequently interrupted, who asked if we could meet in another room. By asking questions related to IC, without using that term or defining it, they were to consider and share teachers' names who displayed the various attributes and characteristics related to intercultural competence. Participants were named for their cultural awareness, empathy, and involvement with families and the community. Furthermore, the questions involved finding out which teachers came to mind when thinking about intercultural experiences that had greatly influenced their teaching and learning in the classroom.

Before the 10 short conversations occurred, I had my doubts about criterion sampling. My hesitation stemmed from how informal it seemed and the fear it would become a popularity contest of participants naming their friends. After providing a clear structure of asking each of the 10 participants the same three questions, the professionalism and detailed rationale from the teachers and administrators proved my apprehensions wrong. The process of sorting through the names and reasons by writing

out the results with tallies and detailed notes was well worth the time and energy. The participants, including eight teachers and two administrators, provided insight to ensure a quality sampling process.

With many decisions in play, critical dialogue occurred in order to scaffold the developing research and situate the participant selection (Reybold et al., 2011). About 10 to 12 names continued to bubble up, and the participants chosen were either named the most or set apart in some way. For instance, several teachers were chosen who have the same specialization, including ESOL and Spanish Immersion teachers. Therefore, information rich examples were given priority over vague or little rationale. The critical dialogue with colleagues, reading back through my notes three to four times, and criterion sampling procedures led to the seven exemplars. These seven participants, who had a range of perspectives within the school, were selected for phase two of the research.

As the names emerged from criterion sampling, it was evident that relationships played an integral role. During several conversations, the rationale for the names provided was given with strong emotions, and the informal interviews allowed for participants to feel comfortable. The Criterion Sample Participant Responses are described in Appendix B. One of the teachers, referred to as Participant D in Appendix B, was named by five colleagues for reasons such as: humongous rapport with families, thinking outside the box and acting on it, being able to talk about issues that others take for granted, having a method to her madness within the utter chaos, and understanding other cultures, including military life. Military life was not something I had anticipated;

however, it can be a culture of its own. With these examples in mind, the interview process became recognized as interactive because the interview is a relational and interactional act, influencing the data collection process (Enosh & Buchbinder, 2005). In Table 2, the seven participants of phase 2 of the research are listed with pseudonyms that will be used in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

Table 2: Phase Two Participants

Selected Participant	Pseudonym	Notes
A	Arlene	ESOL Teacher
B	Brian	Administrator
C	Carmen	Classroom Teacher
D	Darcy	Spanish Immersion Classroom Teacher
E	Erin	Parent Liaison
F	Fiorella	Administrator
G	Grace	Music Teacher

Of these seven participants, two of the administrators, the parent liaison, and two of the teachers were from the original criterion sampling of 10 participants. This overlap is logical because part of the original criterion for the participants in phase 1 of the research involved being someone who demonstrates intercultural competence (IC). Participant A had seven of her colleagues recommend her, and Participant E had nine recommendations, eight from her peers and one self-nomination. The administrators and parent liaison were named between three and five times each, and their unique perspectives warranted being selected for phase 2.

Data Collection

For this study, the best approach to investigating the research questions involved multiple methods of data collection within two phases. Deardorff (2009) suggested avoiding major pitfalls, including “using only one tool or method to assess intercultural competence” (p. 486). Instead, “a multi-method, multi-perspective assessment package needs to be developed as part of the assessment plan” (Deardorff, 2009, p. 486). When trying to create this multi-method approach, the current instruments being used in studies relating to IC existed for varying purposes. After reviewing over 40 instruments representing varying conceptualizations of IC, none seemed to be able to adequately address the answers to all three research questions. Therefore, phase 1 of the data collection began by using the ICCSv2 survey (Mahon & Cushner, 2014) to gain an understanding of the intercultural sensitivity of the staff. Next, criterion sampling was used to screen participants for phase 2 of the research, which involved semi-structured

interviews, a classroom observation, and artifact collection. Consequently, a multi-method approach answered the research questions about the development of IC, experiences relating to IC, and the perceived impact in the classroom.

Survey

To gather a holistic understanding of the staff within the school, data collection within phase 1 included a survey with the entire school instructional staff. The survey, the Inventory of Cross-Cultural Sensitivity (ICCSv2) (Mahon & Cushner, 2014), was delivered within Qualtrics, an online survey platform. The survey protocol and a copy of the survey are shown in Appendix D and contains 44 statements to be answered using agree or disagree based on a 7-point Likert scale. The results break into four subscales: cultural inclusion, cultural behavioral integration, cultural anxiety, and cognitive flexibility.

The ICCS was developed by Cushner in 1986 and was employed on numerous populations within studies and determined to have acceptable content and construct validity (Aoki, 1992; Loo & Shiomi, 1999). Another significant factor ensuring the reliability of the survey involved updates and revisions over time. By taking out the fifth sub-category of empathy, Cushner strengthened the ICCSv2 (Mahon & Cushner, 2014). A supervisor of this study facilitated the permission from Cushner for the ICCSv2 to be used with these research questions thanks to their past research and collaboration.

After an initial recruiting email (Appendix E) and collection of consent forms (Appendix F), the ICCSv2 was sent to 74 staff members to gain an understanding of participants' intercultural sensitivity. A reminder email was sent halfway through the

collection window, and 62 of 74 participants completed the online survey (an 84% response rate). The findings of the data are presented in Chapter Five.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The main goal of the criterion sampling was to obtain specific participants to ensure the quality and depth of the study. The seven participants selected for phase 2 of the research were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. To honor the relationships in play, the invitations were asked in person with an email invitation (Appendix G) sent as a follow up. After the consent forms were collected (Appendix H), the semi-structured interviews were completed in person, in private settings at school, where participants spoke openly.

When considering how to collect data relating to RQ 1, intercultural competence characteristics, and RQ 2, personal and professional experiences, acceptable data collection included self-reporting, interviews, and a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures (Deardorff, 2009). Additionally, an interview with a participant can be considered as multiple interviews. Holstein and Gubrium (2008) suggested, “Treating subject positions and their associated voices seriously, we might find that an ostensibly single interview could actually be, in practice, an interview with several subjects, whose particular identities may be only partially clear” (p. 22). For example, when interviewing an administrator, their lens could be as a teacher, a parent, and a school leader.

When considering RQ 3, the perceived influence of IC on students in the classroom, Deardorff’s (2009) Interactive Process Model was used to determine which aspects of IC participants referenced. While it is possible that teachers will attribute their

impact on students to stem from attitudes, knowledge, and skills, the internal and external outcomes likely to student outcomes. For instance, appropriate and effective communication and behavior translates into the instructional decisions and interactions with students and parents. Potential impacts of a teacher's IC on students could involve increased self-awareness, cultural awareness, engagement, and achievement.

When preparing for the semi-structured interviewing phase of data collection, an interview guide (Appendix I) provided a framework and sequenced pertinent questions. Additionally, an advantage of using a carefully planned interview guide is being able to make use of the limited time with the participant. In addition to valuing the participants' time, an interview guide is a helpful compromise between "the informal conversation" and "the standardized open-ended interview" because it provides a rough sketch of topics covered in the interview for stakeholders and gatekeepers (Patton, 2002, p. 342-344). Since the topic is not controversial or intrusive, a standardized interview was not necessary. Even with the interview guide, one of the interviews went longer than others due to passionate and detailed examples by the participant. Additionally, she provided a dual perspective of being a teacher and a parent to two children at the school. The interview lengths for each participant are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Interview Lengths

Phase 2 Participants	Interview Length
A	Interview 1: 44 minutes
B	Interview 1: 52 minutes
C	Interview 1: 39 minutes Interview 2: 5 minutes
D	Interview 1: 47 minutes
E	Interview 1: 50 minutes
F	Interview 1: 49 minutes
G	Interview 1: 79 minutes

During the semi-structured interviews, an approach to getting powerful examples of IC from participants is through the “illustrative examples format” (Patton, 2002, p. 367). This format lets participants know that it is okay to share extreme examples “without making them worry about my judging what they say” (Patton, 2002, p. 367). An example like this resonated with me when conducting an interview about leadership in a graduate class many years ago. The administrator shared an extreme example of a teacher creating a bulletin board all around the theme of bacon. About one third of the student body and some of the teachers were Muslims, so this could be taken as extremely insensitive to many students, parents, or teachers. This interview, and particularly this example, struck me, thus causing me to appreciate using illustrative examples in questions.

Like the previous example, there are times when the participant had negative or uncomfortable examples. For instance, I have unintentionally put newcomer ELLs in tears before. By putting myself and my lived experiences out there, both positive and negative, I can show vulnerability to encourage the participants to feel comfortable.

Wolgemuth and Donohue (2006) explained this uneasiness in research by stating:

Narrative inquiry of discomfort takes as its primary goal the transformation of individuals into ambiguous selves. The aim is to help participants recount complicated, contradictory, and ambiguous stories that inevitably emerge from the recognition that ethical, emotional, and value paradoxes coexist (p. 9-10).

In order to allow this narrative inquiry to occur naturally, with the possibility of both comfortable and uncomfortable topics being addressed, it was essential for the semi-structured interview guide to provide flexibility.

The data collection for this study involved a process that was thoughtfully planned, prepared, and allowed for freedom within the approved parameters. Patton (2002) suggested using qualitative methods because of the interpersonal and in-depth nature which gain insight and more reactivity than quantitative approaches. While it will be addressed again in Chapters Four and Five, it is important to note the reactivity within the interviews that occurred. The interviews were purposefully scheduled on a day when students were not present at the school and there were no pressing deadlines for teachers. This provided a physical and emotional space for authentic dialogue during the interviews. The participants shared many emotions, including joy, sadness, anger, pride, confusion, and empathy, which will be considered in future chapters.

Artifact Collection

Research Question 3, the perceived impact on students, was probably the most difficult to uncover, but in my opinion, was the most important. Freeman (2000) supported the power of interviewing stating, “Understanding is not just about sharing stories, it is about questioning the role these particular stories have in shaping our understandings of our experiences” (p. 367). To better these experiences, another data collection approach included collecting artifacts from teachers, which are listed in Table 4. In efforts to obtain artifacts that display intercultural competence, participants were asked to consider lessons, resources, student products, planning documents, and curriculum frameworks. Additionally, the participants were asked to consider artifacts that document cultural awareness, equitable practices, valuing multiple perspectives, encouraging risk-taking, and promoting relationships with students and families.

Table 4: Artifact Collection

Phase 2 Participants	Description
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer ELLs tour school and create booklet that incorporates words, sentences, and pictures about the important people, places, and things. • Reading assessment modified by the collaborative team after Participant A advocated that it was not an appropriate assessment to measure adequate student progress.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agendas from Leadership Team Meetings where issues around equitable practices are discussed, and action plans are developed. • Staff PD agendas and slides promoting critical conversations – i.e. Charlottesville and making students feel safe and welcomed.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to parents offering home visits for parent-teacher conferences.
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students wrote alternative endings to show multiple perspectives. • Nomination from a colleague for Teacher of the Year providing rich examples of IC.
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flyers explaining regularly scheduled classes for parents: Early Literacy Program, Hippy, and a technology course.
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Communication Log – Participant F calls approximately 25 parents per week to share updates about students. • Agendas from meetings held with teachers, teams, and district specialists to plan and facilitate quality, reoccurring PD to improve best practices relating to ELLs and students receiving special education services.
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slideshow of annual school wide assembly with videos and songs that explain various winter holidays celebrated by our students and children around the world. • Scripts of the annual play put on for the school by the entire 3rd grade based on Ancient Civilizations blending history and the arts.

Observations

The participants were asked to carry on with their typical instructional block and lesson plans, and they were told the classroom observation would last about 30-45 minutes. Date and time were agreed upon and scheduled in advance, but no additional planning or preparation was required. The observation checklist (see Appendix D) was used to consider various domains and criteria, and additional hand-written notes were taken. All participants were observed once, except for the parent liaison, who was observed twice. This was because she invited me to two different classes held with parents, one for technology and another for early literacy.

Informal discussions or teachable moments with students relating to IC are shared through the interviews and observations, rather than artifacts. Observation provides a powerful tool to learn about behaviors and context, and interviewing gathers a description of the actions and events (Maxwell, 2005). Together, the interviews, observations, and artifacts provided a comprehensive understanding of RQ 3 - how IC in teachers impacts students within the classroom.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study included multiple analytic options, including memos, categorizing strategies, and connecting strategies, in order to answer the research questions. The qualitative data analysis began during data collection, with detailed memos to capture, facilitate, and stimulate analytical thinking (Maxwell, 2005). Without the space and documentation of this thinking, the selection of the participants might not have been as thoughtfully considered.

After the 74 participants were sent the survey, they were given one week to complete it, and a reminder was sent out a few days prior to the deadline. The overall scores of the participants were analyzed to consider the intercultural sensitivity of staff members as a whole and the extremes at both ends of the spectrum. Additionally, the subcategory data was analyzed to consider strengths and potential areas of growth for the staff. For instance, teachers working in a diverse school would likely have strengths in the areas of cultural inclusion (awareness) and cultural anxiety. These strengths contribute to intercultural sensitivity and IC, however, being comfortable and aware of cultural differences do not necessarily translate into being an effective teacher. If areas of growth involved the subcategories of cultural behavior integration or cognitive flexibility, culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and deeper seeded beliefs may need further examination.

When conducting the initial participant selection using criterion sampling with participants, memos served as initial analytical records. As I considered the content of what participants were saying, particularly the teachers' names that were provided and the reasons for naming them, detailed notes assisted with the selection process. New information continuously became available over the course of the criterion sample conversations, and the ideas were examined and refined to further the analysis.

After interviews were conducted, I transcribed four of the interviews, and due to time constraints, three of transcriptions were completed by a professional company. The transcriptions were reviewed by listening to the recordings and correcting for any errors or omissions. Member checks were done with participants who participated in the semi-

structured interviews. Creswell (2008) defines *member checking* as “a process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account” (p. 267). Participants confirmed the transcripts and significant quotes were accurate to use for the study.

After the process of member checking and reading transcripts three to four times, the analysis was initially with organization categories. Maxwell (2005) describes these as broad areas or topics that are usually predetermined. These five organizational categories were context, challenges and cultural misunderstandings, and the three research questions. Next, the subcategories were based on Deardorff’s (2009) model, which was used for several reasons. In addition to being specific to teacher development, the model was created using grounded-theory and a consensus from leading intercultural competence experts. The Process Model of IC allowed for structure of core components while allowing for flexibility between the interactants. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) explained, “The model envisions a simultaneous interactional process that feeds back into itself at almost all levels but also anticipates several specific sequential causal paths” (p. 32). As a result of this complex process, data analysis was exciting and incredibly daunting at times.

During the open-ended interviews, many of the responses from participants included aspects of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and outcomes all within a few powerful sentences. This forced me to dissect the responses line by line, however, the intent of this was not to separate information. It was critical to preserve the integrity of the personal

and reflective stories shared and deeply understand the *individual* and *interaction* elements of Deardorff's model.

As the data analysis unfolded, etic or theoretical coding was needed to address information that does not easily fit anywhere else. Rather than only looking for specific themes, additional topics or issues may arise. Creswell (2008) noted that "a code can emerge from data that is not only expected but even surprising, unusual, or conceptually interesting" (p. 153). A few substantive or emic categories were also drawn from participants' own words, and this was done through open coding. For instance, *reflection* and *mindset* were reoccurring phrases shared by the teachers and administrators.

There were two instances when participants answered questions explicitly about attitudes, yet, they both continued to come back to attitudes at later points in their interviews. Most times, these types of responses were coded within attitudes. However, there were responses from participants mentioning attitudes, but their response fit best in another category. For example, one participant used the word *open* or *openness* 13 times in his responses. While this shows the critical importance of this specific attitude, these types of important choices had to be made during the coding process.

Skills are deeply embedded within the development of IC. These are internal processes, and while many of these skills are not thoroughly explained by participants, they are commonly used when describing how to get to the outcomes. For instance, the word *listen* was used 12 times by a participant when he responded to various interview questions. Reflection was explicitly stated by four participants, and although it is not one

of Deardorff's (2009) skills in her model, it was added to the subthemes because it emerged.

Along with skills, internal outcomes are also deeply ingrained into the process model, yet, not always articulated with great clarity. Deardorff's subthemes of empathy and flexibility were used, and a third subtheme named *mindset* emerged. These internal shifts were a critical piece of the puzzle driving individuals through the process model to their external outcomes.

In Deardorff's model (2009), external outcomes are described as effective and appropriate communication and behavior in an intercultural situation. Teachers are interacting with students, staff, parents, and other external stimuli all day long. Therefore, external outcomes were sorted into two categories, communication and instructional practices. As the arrows show in Deardorff's model, each of the components (attitudes, knowledge, skills, and internal outcomes) can lead directly to external outcomes.

During the analysis of data related to RQ 2, the categories and themes that emerged are shown in Figure 5. These themes and subthemes related to the type of experience (childhood, study and teaching abroad, personal, or professional), the feelings associated to the experience, and the perceived impact of IC on students. While all seven participants shared positive experiences that were influential to their IC, six of the seven participants also reflected on overcoming negative or uncomfortable experiences. The similarities, differences, and perceived impact of the experiences are explained in the findings in the subsequent chapters.

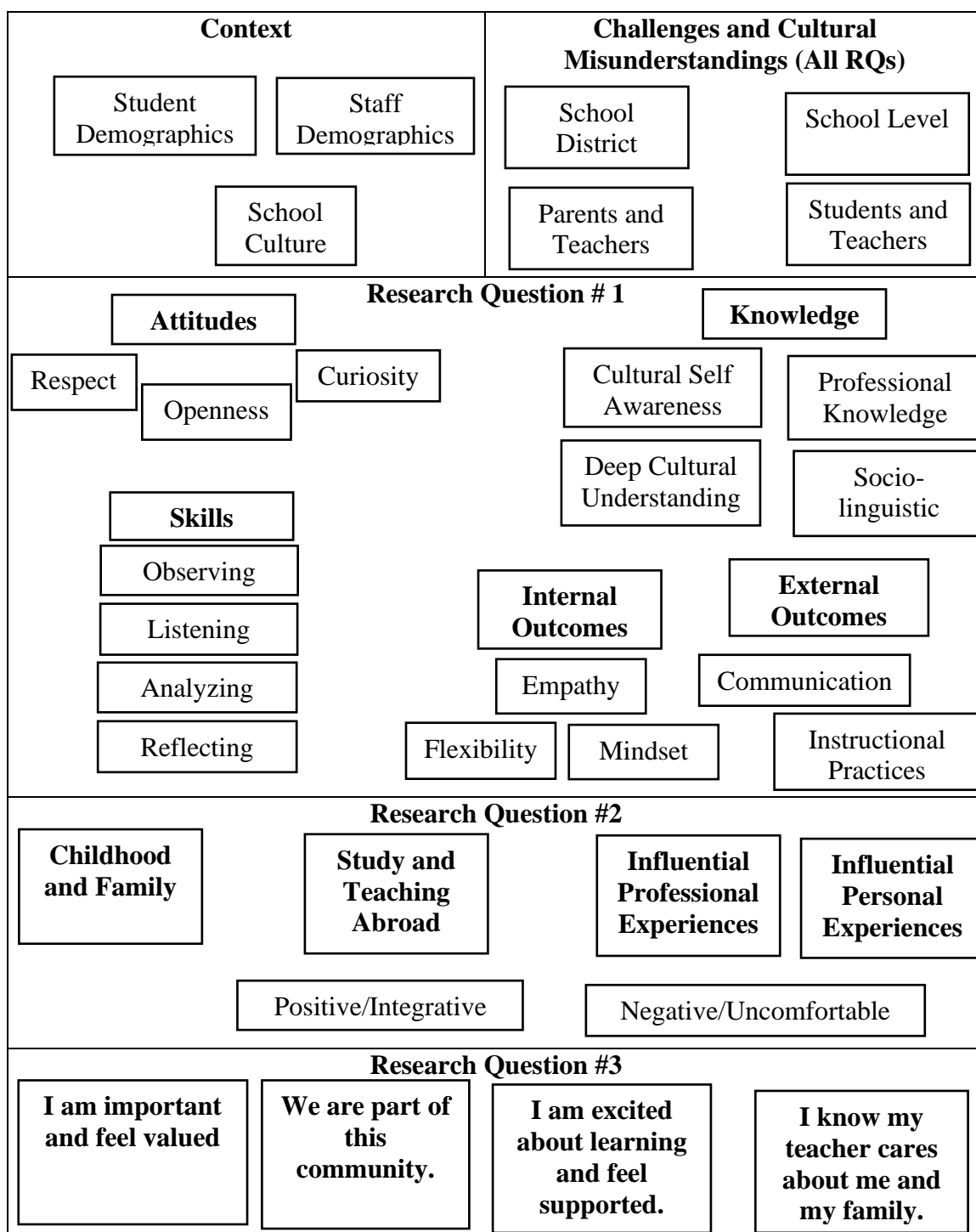


Figure 5: Categories, themes, and subthemes.

When completing the data analysis of RQ 3, the perceived impact one's IC can have on students, it was essential to go through the presentation of data and findings of RQ 1 and RQ 2 *and* go back through the transcripts, observation notes, and artifact collection. Initially, there were three themes that emerged from the perceived influences on students. Even though the teachers and administrators were the participants, they were sharing their perception about students. Therefore, the themes are written from the students' perspectives, and one of the participants used some of this language, which sparked the ideas. The themes included: *I am important, and I feel valued; We are part of this community; and I am excited about learning and feel supported*. Since positive mindset and empathy continued to emerge, a fourth theme was added: *I know my teacher cares about me and my family*. The synthesis of RQ 3 was challenging for a few reasons. It was important to be careful not to reuse any quotations from the participants from previous sections *and* teacher and student interactions involve many moving parts often creating a domino effect. The analysis was well worth the time and complex nature because it led to themes that tell the story of how IC teachers can make a difference in their students' lives.

In Chapter Four, the presentation of data or current realities of the school are constructed and organized as context (student demographics, staff demographics, and school culture) and challenges and cultural misunderstandings (school district level, school level, parents and teachers, students and teachers). In Chapter Five, transcripts were compared with the secondary sources, the artifacts and observation notes, to present the findings of the RQs. Finally, Chapter Six reports conclusions and recommendations.

Methodological Issues

This section discusses methodological issues, beginning with sampling and design challenges. Many of these issues were addressed through discussion with my committee members and district sponsor, and these instances are noted. Next, methods of triangulation, research credibility, and ethics are considered. The following detailed descriptions allow the reader to consider the rationale behind the decisions made throughout the study.

Sampling and Design Challenges

Some of the challenges included choosing the appropriate sampling method and being able to properly align my research philosophies with the methodology employed. Additionally, it was difficult to anticipate the types of experiences the participants would share and how their perceptions of IC would differ. One of the biggest challenges addressed is how close I am to the study and the participants.

My critical constructivist beliefs stem from my passion for educational psychology and a desire to implement equitable practices in schools. While these beliefs remain, due to the parameters of the school district's research guidelines, post-positivist approaches needed to be taken at times. The strictness of the data collection timeline and checklists would not have been my preference; however, the timeline provided the structure and momentum needed for the study. Within these guidelines, there was still flexibility that allowed for a critical eye. Additionally, the interviews in conjunction with the secondary sources allowed for multiple avenues to show IC. The multitude of data

collection approaches used to understand the development and impact of IC built upon each other to construct meaning.

The next challenge involved sampling because the initial plan was to use snowball sampling. After explaining the process taken to determine the sample who was interviewed to my committee members, it became clear that criterion sampling was being employed. The repetitive nature of names being repeated during snowball sampling did occur, but criterion sampling was employed for the 10 participants in phase 1 and again for the seven participants in phase 2 of the study. This ensured that exemplars who would provide data rich information were selected.

When investigating RQ 2, I sought to understand the experiences which had a profound impact on developing the teachers' intercultural competence. The criterion sampling process asked participants for names of teachers known for having intercultural experiences. However, the questions did not specify whether the experiences had to be positive, and some of the descriptions of experiences were negative or challenging. These moments of stress or crises of engagement can prompt "our willingness to be open and our energy to explore what is uncomfortably new" as one moves through the stages of development (Skelton, 2007, p. 385). The aim of criterion sampling was not to find participants with only positive stories or an easy, linear pathway to developing IC. Instead, Patton (2002) suggested that "Dealing openly with the complexities and dilemmas posed by negative cases is both intellectually honest and politically strategic" (p. 555). Therefore, this investigation valued the entire range of experiences on the journey of developing IC.

When considering the impact that truthful and open-ended interviews had on my relationships at work, it was essential to keep the findings in context and be careful about extrapolating findings to other people, times, or situations (Patton, 2002). As a researcher who is also invested in the success of the students and teachers within the school, this idea of keeping things in context was complex. This was because the school leaders, including me, were simultaneously trying to understand and address deeper, systemic issues around equity within the school. In dealing with such issues, many conversations with colleagues demonstrated various levels of IC, and this was eye-opening to see amidst my research. Despite the challenges of being so intertwined in the study, maintaining positive relationships as the researcher and taking an active role as a school leader were both possible.

Triangulation

The study utilized triangulation of data sources by employing a survey, criterion sampling, interviewing teachers and administrators, conducting observations, and collecting artifacts. Atkinson & Coffey (2008) provided some context when considering observations and interviews by explaining:

It is only relevant when the interview is used as a source of information about situations and events the researcher himself has not seen. It is not relevant when it is the person's behavior in the interview itself that is under analysis (p. 419).

For RQs 1 and 2, the interviews were the primary source of information, with the survey and additional data gathered serving as secondary sources. In relation to RQ 3, I was searching for teachers' perceptions of the impact of IC on students in the classroom and

not necessarily what was occurring in real time through observations. Therefore, the observations and artifacts were being used to validate and affirm insights. However, if there were inconsistencies, it did not make the data invalid. Instead, Patton (2002) suggested understanding and analyzing the reasons behind the differences captured.

Research Credibility

When considering quality as reflexivity, authenticity and situating the researcher and research are both essential. Authenticity is described as “understanding how one’s own experiences and background affect what one understands and how one acts in the world, including acts of inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 546). My interest in investigating IC in elementary schools stems from my passion for international education, both locally and globally. Teaching in a diverse elementary school has greatly influenced my identity as an educator. The interactions I get to have with students are remarkable, particularly when it is their first experience in American schools. I hope to assist all students in valuing their culture and the cultures of others by better understanding IC in teachers and IC particularly in this school.

In efforts to address researcher bias, it is critical to understand how one’s values and expectations drive the procedures and conclusion of the study (Maxwell, 2010). Many of the participants interviewed were aware of my values, and while they could have told me what they thought I hoped to hear, it was clear all participants provided in-depth, genuine answers. These answers were full of personal stories, antidotes, and examples. In turn, these could be considered “measures of intercultural competence,

combined with measures of relevant personal and contextual aspects” (Deardorff, 2009, p. 413).

Besides research bias, reactivity is a potential problem raised in qualitative studies, but Maxwell (2010) wrote it “is generally not as serious a validity threat as some people believe” (p. 282). Instead, the most important thing is to understand how the researcher is influencing what the participant says and how this can affect the validity (Maxwell, 2010). Still, besides leading questions, I do not think reactivity should be taken lightly. Henry (2010) explained that “a fieldworker’s identity does in fact impact upon the research process and product, challenging notions of researcher objectivity and neutrality” (p. 363). Researchers can react through head nodding, informal conversations, and showing any sort of emotion throughout the research process. Given my efforts to gain rapport and be real with my colleagues, reactions did occur, and I agree with Maxwell that these needed to be noted. The reactions that stand out the most include two participants each sharing stories about struggles their own children were having. By showing genuine reactions (mostly facial expressions) of empathy, it allowed for open, honest reflection.

Another topic related to research credibility involves potential readers questioning what a white, middle class teacher and researcher knows about IC or what immigrant students need. Like Henry’s (2010) dilemma of feeling like she had to justify her *Canadianness* and her *Indianness*, I questioned if I would need to justify my passion or knowledge about teachers developing IC in schools. On one hand, as Fine (1994) discussed, I do not want to offend anyone by making them think new programs should be

created to remedy a problem. Immigrant students are not a problem; however, the achievement gap is a critical issue at this school, in the school district, and in the United States. So, instead, I strive be one of the “qualitative researchers who see their work with those who have been cut out as Others, on struggles of social injustice, in ways that disrupt ‘Othering’ and provoke a sense of possibility” (Fine, 1994, p. 79). Without IC being a priority in U.S. public schools, the possibility of an equitable education for all students becomes increasingly more difficult to achieve.

Since I am heavily invested and advocate for the student population whom I work with, I struggle to understand why any teacher would not want to develop IC within themselves and in their students. Ignoring culture or treating it in a superficial is not helpful, but it is also likely not done intentionally or knowingly. When conducting research about IC and the perceived outcomes, I remembered not to jump to conclusions. I consciously tried to assess the results without making assumptions. Instead, I tried to deconstruct what was happening to understand the process of developing IC on a deeper level.

I am invested in the research because I genuinely care about the success and progress of all students. This is a potential advantage because the motivation driving the research is sincere. On the contrary, some potential disadvantages exist because of my knowledge, experience, and strong views. My knowledge about IC, identity, and the reality of a considerable achievement gap leads me to believe that promoting IC can make a positive difference in classrooms. As a result, I realized it is vital to remember to stay open to a variety of research findings.

When considering researcher bias, I have some previously conceived thoughts about teachers' cultural competence within the school. It is important to identify these and be careful not to smuggle them into the conclusions. For instance, a teacher I knew many years ago at a different school was very well travelled with lots of cross-cultural experiences, but I would consider this individual to be culturally insensitive. This cultural insensitivity was demonstrated by giving students Americanized nicknames because their names were *too difficult* to say. This is an example of a *negative case*, and if a case like this comes up, I should report it and allow readers to draw their own evaluations and conclusions (Maxwell, 2005). Each aspect of this study was looked at from many angles to recognize and address bias in order to uncover patterns and insights.

Ethics

The confidentiality for the study was maintained by not naming the school, school district, or city. Additionally, while job descriptions are used to understand the participant selection, no teacher, administrator, or student names are used. By assigning an identification key to each interview and pseudonyms, the identities of the participants were not disclosed.

Ethical decision making needs to take place in every profession and conducting research within elementary schools is no different. If anything, educators are held to a higher standard, and in higher education, "Faculty members are expected to maintain their right to criticize and seek revision while giving due regard to institutional responsibilities" (Reybold, 2008, p. 281). Still, it is questionable whether elementary schools require the same of teachers when it comes to critical reflection and the critique

of others' work. Typically, collaborative learning teams are encouraged to look at data and reflect as a group. Many years ago, I participated in Japanese lesson study to critically observe and reflect on teaching and learning. While time consuming, my team completed three cycles of lesson study where we planned a lesson together, observed one of us teaching, collected data, and reflected on strengths and areas of need. This process has similarities to instructional coaching cycles, an effective practice being implemented in this school and district.

While this is a helpful start, when it comes to IC, some of the teacher evaluation standards may touch on it (caring culture or respecting diversity of students), but there are no clear-cut requirements on how to achieve this. Teachers are often working on becoming more effective at engaging all students, managing classroom behavior, building a community of learners, and using data to drive instruction, and all these instructional practices require a high level of IC. Another common misconception or assumption is that teachers who work in diverse schools become more interculturally competent because of it. While more experience can often result in one's development, it does not automatically do so.

Another consideration is that teachers who view themselves as interculturally competent do not always feel they can demonstrate it in the classroom due to restrictive standards and a fast-paced curriculum. Still, in my opinion, IC is under the umbrella of morality and ethics because teachers should value all cultures and expect the same from their students. When it comes to these types of issues, expectations are often left unspoken. Pacing guides and curriculum standards should not be used as a cop out.

Moreover, Reybold (2008) suggested these “codes of conduct are intentionally subjective”, and the “standards are descriptive rather than prescriptive, justifiably deferring to specific contexts and individual choice” (p. 281). Instead of ignoring the importance of IC, schools and teachers must embrace it to best meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of their students.

Chapter Summary

Work ethic, transparency, inquiry, action, and making connections have always come easy to me in my professional and research experiences. Challenges tend to occur when I am inundated with too many ideas or feel overwhelmed with how to organize everything, and while my investment and passion for the topic is present, the focus needs adjustment and sharpening at times. During the data collection process, these challenges became clear when reflecting with my supervisor, who also served as my district sponsor for the research. Since many insights were relevant to the school’s current efforts to employ equitable practices, I would immediately want to spring into action with the exciting ideas being shared. My supervisor reflected on what is best for the school and future implications, however, and reminded me that I was not conducting action research. Consequently, I remembered that I was amidst the research design and data collection process carefully created and had to trust the process.

Chapter Three presented the research ideology, research design, methods employed, data collected and analyzed, and methodological challenges. The process is like completing a giant puzzle that not only needs to be deeply understood by the researcher but also articulated to others in a detailed and meaningful way. Chapters Four

and Five aim to achieve this while simultaneously answering the three research questions in the study.

Chapter Four

Presentation of Data and Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate RQ 1 – how teachers define and describe the development of their own intercultural competence (IC), RQ 2 – what experiences do teachers attribute to their IC and why, and RQ 3 – how teachers perceived their IC to influence students in the classroom. Seven participants from one diverse Title 1 elementary school participated in semi-structured one-on-one interviews; the primary data source used for analysis. Secondary data sources included artifact collection and observation data collected from the seven participants. Additionally, the ICCSv2 was completed by 62 instructional staff members to determine their level of intercultural sensitivity. The research obtained revealed answers to the three research questions, using Deardorff's (2009) Intercultural Competence Model as a guide. The research findings are presented in Chapter Five.

In this chapter, the context and cultural misunderstandings and challenges are explained to support the findings of all three research questions. This expanded approach carried forward the research ideology presented in Chapter Three. The ontology of constructivism is that reality is made by people from a mutual understanding. Therefore, the context of the school was co-constructed and best explained through the words of the participants. Transformation is possible when the current reality is understood, therefore, challenges and cultural misunderstandings are described by the teachers and

administrators. Participants' explanations provided a contextual understanding of the staff, students, and community, and the challenges highlighted why interculturally competent teachers are of critical importance.

This expanded approach used Deardorff's model as a guide, yet also allowed for flexibility to include additional components. As noted in the literature review, models are more advanced when the conceptualization of the following interactants are involved: motivation, knowledge, skills, context, and outcomes. Therefore, the complexity of intercultural competence is further understood by adding experiences and context to the existing components of Deardorff's model. The context of the school setting is described through the presentation of data in this chapter.

Context

Based on the descriptions about the context of the school, I organized the data into three categories: student demographics, staff demographics, and school culture. The diversity of the school was described similarly by many participants; however, the details varied regarding the ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic differences, including the changes occurring over time. The school culture was described by the school principal and provided a pivotal viewpoint.

Student Demographics

The school has a diverse student population of approximately 750 students. Over 50 percent of the student population is considered Limited English Proficient, however, significantly more than 50 percent of students speak a second language. The student body speaks several languages including Amharic, Spanish, Urdu, Twi, Chinese, Arabic,

and Somali. The following racial and ethnic categories, as referenced in Table 5, are used by the school district to describe the student demographics: 56% Hispanic, 20% Black, 10% Asian or Pacific Islander, 11% White, and 3% Other. Regarding socioeconomic status (SES), 71% percent of the school population receives free or reduced breakfast and lunch, and the school's mobility rate is 18%. Understanding the wealth of ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity was essential when investigating IC.

Table 5: Student Demographics at School District and School

Race/ Ethnicity	American Indian/ Alaskan	Asian	Black	Hispanic/ Latino	White	Other
Students – School District	0.2%	20%	10%	26%	38%	6%
Students – School Level	N/A	10%	20%	56%	11%	3%

Arlene, an ESOL teacher at the school for about 15 years, described the student population in detail. Furthermore, she considered the idea of diversity versus difference to make the point that diversity is relative to who or what it is being compared to:

When you compare us to other schools, we are incredibly diverse. If you look at our population, we are majority Hispanic. So, are we diversified or are we just different? We do have our Middle Eastern population, specifically, the majority are Urdu or Farsi speakers. Then we have our West Africans. Still, quite

honestly, we used to have a larger African American population. That has slowly decreased, and the Hispanic population has increased if you look at the data. That has been a change over time for the school, and we've had to kind of be more responsive for the language needs.

Echoing Arlene's description of the majority Hispanic student population, Brian and Erin spoke about range of differences within one linguistic and ethnic group. Brian explained, "The largest percentage of our students are from Hispanic cultures. But even within the cultures, there are differences. It's not that all our students are from El Salvador but from different parts of Central and South America." Erin, the parent liaison, connects with parents in the community daily. She shared where some of the families are from and their needs in comparison to her home country of Colombia. She said, "Our families are mostly Central American. Most of them are different from South America. For me, their education is lower. For people in Central America, it's harder to go to school." She also considered how many of the parents are very young when having children, and she tries to prepare them to help their children.

As participants continued to share information about the student population, they also described challenges many new immigrant families are faced with. These difficulties included lack of education, the circumstances causing families to seek asylum, trauma, the difficult journey to the United States, and the separation of families. Brian described families who recently moved to the area to seek refuge. He stated, "Most recently for us, there has been a large growth of families from Middle Eastern countries, many who were trying to escape from war and poverty. So, a lot of the students have

gone through trauma.” Like Brian, Darcy, a first-grade teacher, reflected on her former student’s separation from her brother:

I have something that touched my heart that a student told me. He said, “I’m going to Honduras to visit my brother because he cannot come here.” She said, “I go there and give all the love that my parents want to send him because my parents cannot travel to him and when I come back in August, I bring all the love that he wants to send to my parents.” It gave me chills because families are apart, and they leave family members behind. They can send money, but they’re not able to just be parents and be present.

In addition to the reasons that may have brought families to the United States, new challenges emerged. These included navigating a new country, language, and determining legal options regarding residency or citizenship. Erin explained, “Some of them were born here, but many are immigrants. And many of them, I have learned don’t speak English, and they are afraid of coming here.” With the political climate producing increased fear in the community, additional challenges like this are addressed in future sections.

Brian and Erin shared instances of immigrant population families working together and with the school to become established within the community. Brain stated, “We have a strong Ghanaian culture who have [sic] been able to find a foothold and then bring their families and neighbors to develop a community here that carries forward the same values as in their home country.” Another support to families, involving various classes for parents, was shared by the parent liaison. Erin stated, “In this community,

they start coming and go talk to others. So, more people are coming from Pakistan, Africa, from other parts. Now more mothers are coming here to learn English, computers, and about nutrition.” These programs are providing critical knowledge and skills to the community, and the buy-in is developed when parents tell others.

Participants shared additional factors that create the diverse school setting, including the range of religions, learning styles, and socio-economic status (SES). Brian shared, “About 20% of our students have parents who are a little more, well I wouldn’t say affluent, but are more typical of what you would expect of a family in this school district.” Carmen went on to explain the impact of SES by stating, “Some of our families have multiple children that aren’t school aged. It’s hard getting to school for a conference. If they only have one car or no car at all, just getting here is difficult.” Rather than simply listing demographics, these descriptions provided an in-depth of understanding of the range of students’ backgrounds and needs. More importantly, it showed the various levels of awareness demonstrated by the exemplars. Simply put, the participants’ perceptions of the diversity within the school community helped in two ways: the reader gets to learn about the context of the study from someone other than the researcher *and* it served as evidence of IC depending on the level of sophistication in their descriptions.

Staff Demographics

The instructional staff at this school is far more diverse compared to the school district, as evidenced in Table 6 and responses of several participants. The demographics breakdown of the instructional staff is 61% White, 16% Black, 16% Hispanic, 5% Asian,

and 3% Other. The staff ranges in age and experience, however, there is a gender gap with only 13% male working at the school. Several staff members speak Spanish, and specific staff members speak Ethiopian, Urdu, Mandarin Chinese, French, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Arabic. Despite staff and student demographics not matching up, particularly with the inverse of the Hispanic and White populations, the staff at this school had more ethnic/racial diversity than many others in the district.

Table 6: Staff Demographics at School District and School

Race/ Ethnicity	American Indian/ Alaskan	Asian	Black	Hispanic/ Latino	White	Other
Staff – School District	0.1%	5%	8%	5%	80%	2%
Staff – School Level	0%	5%	16%	16%	61%	2%

Fiorella, who has worked at several different schools in the school district, explained the diversity of the staff:

If I compare it to other schools in this school district, I think we are pretty diverse. Having worked at different schools where 80% of the population is young, White, blonde teachers, I think we do a pretty decent job of having multiple teachers that *actually look* like the kids we serve. I think we can still do more. I personally, as I think about our immersion teachers and the fact that they're all Puerto Rican, I'd

like to see some that are not. Because most of our Hispanic students are not from Puerto Rico.

With about 56% of the student population being Hispanic, this does not align with having only 16% Hispanic instructional staff. Inversely, about 60% of the instructional staff is White, and only about 10% of students are White. Fiorella continued, “I think our staff doesn't necessarily represent the make-up of our community as much as we'd like it to be.” On the contrary, Brian acknowledges an alignment of staff and student demographics, particularly in terms of language and having staff members who can communicate effectively with families:

We've been lucky in that we've tried to make our school match our community and hire that way. It is my hope the language is not a barrier, and it is my hope that people see the language for the treasure that it really is. We have been very adamant about making sure our staff can speak the languages of our families here at school. In some ways, we have been very intentional about that, and in some ways, we've gotten very lucky with that. We do have a lot of staff members who speak Spanish, and that wasn't the case when I started here. We're also lucky enough to have some of our instructional assistants or front office staff who speak Arabic and Amharic.

By valuing the importance of language and knowing the staff's abilities and expertise, effective communication with families can occur.

In addition to staff members being able to translate in various languages, messages are sent to students and parents through the systems and structures in place.

Fiorella pointed out an issue relating to the staff's diversity and potential room for growth, both in the school and the school district:

I think there was a study in this area that showed how minorities are related to their positions and what the study found was that Middle Easterners are mostly like cafeteria workers, instructional assistants, and custodians. But you don't see them as much in higher-level positions and to me - that was extremely enlightening. I think there's a slow shift happening. Whites and African Americans still hold the lead in terms of leadership positions in the county. The lowest level positions are really the Asian, Middle Eastern, and African not African American. Hispanics are in the middle I would say.

The example shared about the discrepancy of specific demographics in leadership positions will be addressed in Chapter Six for future research considerations. The staff demographics stated in this section are relevant to understand the context and stakeholders involved.

School Culture

Brian, an administrator at the school, considered the role of intercultural competence in the school by reflecting on important decisions and the overall school climate. He also pointed out the range of IC that exists on an individual level:

A lot of decisions have been made with IC in mind - the way that we interact with our families, the way that we accept people into our building. We want to be that way because we feel like that's part of the culture. We've created a culture of cultural competence at the school. Not everybody is culturally competent, but we

have tried to create that culture of acceptance, openness, and willingness to listen here at our school. Then, we also created that culture of advocacy and equity at this school. If I leave here, and somebody says he was able to make sure that students at the school had access to the things they deserve, that would be more than enough. I would be very proud of that.

Brian shared his perception about teachers being at different points of developing IC. He also demonstrated his own IC by acknowledging the power and privilege of his decision making. Important issues around equity, access, and advocacy are discussed as the challenges are shared.

Challenges and Cultural Misunderstandings

An unexpected theme that was created was challenges and cultural misunderstandings. Uncovering the difficulties teachers and administrators were experiencing was critical to understanding what it takes to demonstrate IC in this context. While many of the participants shared success stories of overcoming issues, many frustrations remained and will be clarified in this section. In a diverse elementary setting, a critical factor for the success of students is communication between parents and teachers. Carmen, a classroom teacher, emphasized, “I feel very much like it's a partnership. I see the kids for seven hours a day. Their parents know them in one way, I get to know them in a different way, and it's a whole team effort.” The seven participants articulated the cultural misunderstandings and barriers and their desire to make positive change.

The challenges and cultural misunderstandings that were shared by participants were analyzed and organized in four categories: challenges and misunderstandings at the school district level, the school level, between parents and teachers, and between students and teachers. These descriptions are not intended as non-examples of IC. Instead, they are relevant depictions that co-construct the current reality many schools are facing. Moreover, some of the challenges displayed the internal conflict individuals grappled with in their development of IC.

School District Level

This school district has made equity and cultural proficiency a priority, and several systems and structures within the educational system have an impact on these initiatives. One approach to reaching a large audience of educators is through professional development (PD), which some of the participants referenced in their interviews. Recent PD opportunities intended for the staff to understand and reflect on issues related to identity, race, power, and privilege. Teachers considered their own development of cultural proficiency, and one specific developmental model was shared. Some of the PD sessions included how equitable practices can be applied in interactive ways, such as with collaborative learning teams and by building the relationships between teachers with students, staff, and families.

As participants considered the meaning of equity and being an interculturally competent teacher, most articulated that it means providing students with what they need. However, one of the participants shared confusion about the terminology associated with

the accreditation process. Grace struggled with the idea of subgroups in relation to achievement data:

I still have a big issue and don't know if this is my whitewashing or whatever. I still don't understand if we are going to equity why those test scores are still thrown up in cultural categories. I don't understand why it's Black, Hispanic. Why are we are still looking at them like that? It seems to me a disconnect in 2019. I understand English language learners because...I don't know. Because no time I'm going to go through my piano assessment and be like, "Black, Middle Eastern." It just seems so bizarre to me. No, I go through like, "Did you put effort into it? Yeah, you." The concept of effort, self-respect, value, doesn't...Where does that come from? I think is the ultimate question.

In this instance, the teacher provided a variety of choices for students to show their musical knowledge, which showed respect for various learning styles and cultural differences. Also, the classroom observation data showed Grace has high expectations for all students and provides appropriate scaffolds and accommodations. The misconception seemed to be about the labeling of subgroups, how and why it connected to achievement, and the implications for all educators.

At the school district level, Arlene shared structural and systemic issues relating to the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) department and programs supporting English Language Learners (ELLs). After stating that the school district has made progress, she explained, "When I started 15 years ago, there were still schools that

didn't have ESOL programs. It's ever-changing, the ESOL office is reinventing itself and reflecting on instructional practices.” Arlene continued:

I was here about six years and left for a year to go to middle school. It was truly eye-opening because I saw a lot of our students were being funneled in the ESOL classes which were separated. Most level 1 through 3s were in separate classes and didn't have electives. It almost became an adversarial relationship with their teachers in middle school because they resented being in ESOL classes. They weren't going to be in regular credit-bearing classes in high school, so there was almost no way for them to graduate high school on time. So, their family members were having to drop out to go to work or having to go to school until they were 19, 20, or 21 to get the credits.

This memorable experience provided Arlene with additional knowledge and insight to advocate for ELLs. She stated:

This has improved since then, but it was almost like we were setting up kids for failure. The research was saying that what we're doing with our ESOL students, mostly who are Hispanic, well that they equated it to an extreme, but I am going to say it. They equated it to an ethnic cleansing kind of thing. Because we weren't putting them in credit-bearing classes, we were guaranteeing that they would not graduate from high school. They would become dropouts and then that was leading from school to prison connection, that pipeline. It was sobering, and this is not what we want for our kids. After that experience, I started having conversations with the administration. Eventually, the whole system was

revamped where students are dually enrolled so they're still in an ESOL class but they can also take their English course to get the tools so they can graduate.

Arlene works in an elementary school, but she considers the path her students take in their schooling and how the decisions of teachers, administrators, and school districts can clear the path or put up additional barriers. This example highlights the process of a systemic problem that was brought to light, challenged, and ultimately, changed for the better.

School Level

At the school level, participants shared several programs and resources available to support teachers and students. Many of these programs provided access and opportunity, but several challenges and misunderstandings remain. In this section, teachers and administrators reflected on their experiences at the school and the perceived impact on students.

Academic programs.

Classes and groupings, particularly in elementary school, can be complicated due to departmentalization of teachers and the spectrum of students' needs. Several programs or classes, including ESOL, Special Education (SPED), Advanced Academics (AAP), Spanish Immersion, and advanced math courses, are critical pieces to this puzzle and how-to best group students in classes. When considering intercultural competence, decision making, and equitable practices are intertwined, each of these programs would ideally be comprised of students who proportionately reflect the diversity of the overall student population.

Given the large number of ELLs at the school, interculturally competent teachers make sure students' home culture and language are validated and affirmed in the instructional setting in order to bridge the home and school culture gap. In addition to the ESOL Program, another way to support this goal was to develop a Spanish Immersion Program, and students are taught math and science for half of their school day in Spanish. Each year, the program grew by one grade level, and this year includes the entire school, grades K-6, in the program. Brian stated:

For me, equity is really making sure that everybody gets what they need. You know, we fight a lot of battles about that because some people don't understand the reasoning. We want to make sure that our students have access. I feel like I'm a little bit crazy about making sure that our students have access to all the things of any other school. So that started with the language immersion about six years ago, but other priorities have been advanced math. Making sure that students have access to it even if they are in a bilingual program. I think only one other school has advanced math in Spanish.

Special education and English as a second language.

In addition to the Spanish Immersion Program, school wide supports are critical to the success of students are the SPED and ESOL programs. Arlene shared confusion that occurred in earlier years:

I feel like when I started here in some ways, a lot of administrators and higher ups equated ESOL and SPED as the same thing. And getting them to understand that those are two very different things. That while the services and staffing, you

could look at in some ways. But that they were two different paths for students. ESOL is a temporary situation of acquiring language, and there is a progression. With special education, while we might have some strategies and things that work in common, they are not the same. So just understanding that there is a difference. It helps us look at what are we going to do, how it affects our models, and how we train our teachers.

Arlene shares the important differences between the services provided from SPED and ESOL teachers, and if administrators required more knowledge, this suggested that teachers could benefit from additional PD. In Chapter Six, this will be addressed, as a significant number of students are dually identified and eligible for ESOL *and* SPED services.

The school's parent liaison, Erin, has worked with some of the same families in the community for about five years. She assists the communication efforts between parents and teachers, and she translates at many of the local screening meetings for the SPED team. Erin's frustration was evident when she stated:

The local screening meeting...I have been many times, and I feel frustrated. So, there was a mother sitting there, and I had to explain the situation. When he was in first grade, the teachers complained he was slow and wasn't reading. Then, I wonder first, second, fourth, are they waiting for him to be in sixth grade? Some teachers they *care* so much, so they report the kid. But they say it's a language thing, and we must wait to have more proof. It is not fair, because the teacher is saying they have tried so many strategies. I think we need more money for

additional special educational teachers here. We have many problems and kids that need more help. We need to help them without forgetting those who are ready to learn more. I don't know how, but it is the situation that we have.

Erin's story suggested that all teachers would benefit from additional professional development from the SPED and ESOL departments, specifically on differentiation and the referral process. On one hand, Erin demonstrated IC by advocating for additional support for students who need it most. On the contrary, the over-identification of specific categories of students can warrant additional time for language acquisition before determining eligibility, a complex issue discussed in Chapter Six.

Access, opportunity, and class groupings.

A current reality was the implementation of the advanced academics classes. Several teachers advanced their own knowledge and skillset by taking classes, addressed in future sections. Contrasting viewpoints are shared, and Brian said, "Years ago, we found students who have advanced capabilities but not in the typical sense. Now, we're expanding our advanced academics, and it's about opportunity and access. We have more students in advanced math than many wealthy schools nearby." Brian provided positive examples of access and opportunity; however, many factors can impact how all stakeholders perceive these changes. Grace, a teacher and parent at the school, shared insights about the class placements and determining students' abilities prematurely:

You put limitations on them. They know they're in the dumb class, and they're separated. Would they be doing what they're doing if they were in more mixed...if everybody was exposed to everything because you don't know which

kid is going to pick up on what thing. I refuse to read IEPs right away. I can't limit in that way. Same with DRAs.

Grace pointed out the potentially negative impact labels can have on teachers' expectations of students and students' perception of themselves. Still, the critical distinction between knowing students' needs (legally) versus avoiding placing unnecessary limitations and bias will be addressed subsequent chapters. Grace continued, "...with being separated, it's intense. The advanced math kids have an attitude, and for third graders, it's too young. My son said, 'We're in advanced math, the smart ones.' I went off on him. He no longer has that mindset."

In addition to an elitist mindset developing, Grace expressed her thoughts about negative student behavior. For the classes categorized that were *not* immersion or advanced, she suggested concerns shared by many within the school. With emotion and tears, Grace shared:

And then I've seen kids who had an awful introduction to school because of individual behaviors that...took away. That's another thing is, obviously, those children need something different. There's one in almost every grade level who just...this is not the setting for them. Anyway, I digress. What I was going to say is that, some of the classes lowered their expectations for themselves because it was their third year of this. They have finally said to themselves, and I would too, if you see this happening and you see this behavior being rewarded, what does it look like to a child? This is why we've gone to culturally responsive teaching...because what does it look like to a child? You can't expect them to

understand the abstractness of, this child is different, so they need rewards every five minutes. Whereas you do what you're supposed to do. Then, they get the message, why do this if all I must do is meet this?

Summary.

According to the reflections of the participants, there was a consensus that creating a positive and equitable learning environment for all students was the priority. However, some of the contrasting viewpoints provided insight into the challenges that can occur balancing a variety of programs and courses. Specifically, Brian felt that offering advanced courses in both Spanish and English presented an opportunity for students in the immersion program. Erin and Grace did not disagree with Brian; however, they were concerned about effects, particularly in the non-advanced classes. Grace expressed concerns about separating two classes, one English and one Spanish immersion, into an advanced track or cohort beginning as early as third grade. For instance, she noted some of the advanced classes developing an elitist mindset. On the contrary, Grace cautioned it could determine students' abilities prematurely, lower students' perception of themselves, or result in negative student behavior. Erin also expressed concern about a significant number of students needing additional support at the school, while also acknowledging the need for enrichment opportunities.

Another point agreed on by participants was that ESOL and SPED programs were critical to the success of students. Arlene pointed out important differences between the services provided, however, none of the teachers discussed the unique needs of dually identified students, eligible for ESOL *and* SPED services. Several participants believed

additional professional development about differentiation would be beneficial for all teachers. While there are unique challenges at many schools, the critical reflection of the participants demonstrated IC.

Parents and Teachers

All seven of the participants shared information about the dynamic between the parents and teachers at the school. These responses were to three different questions in the interview guide. One of the more general questions asked participants to describe the diversity at the school. Specific questions that elicited reflections asked how past experiences affected interactions with parents and how language and culture played a role in their classrooms. All participants pointed out misunderstandings *and* that something could be done about it.

Communication.

Fiorella and Erin both shared insights about a communication breakdown that can happen for a variety of reasons. Fiorella explained:

I think another big piece is communication because some teachers don't know how to communicate with parents from another culture. They perceive one thing and when you dig deeper, you find out it's another thing. For instance, the parent has a misconception or is deferring to the teacher as to the holder of knowledge. I have a parent who thought things were going great because they don't get as many notes. Meanwhile, the teachers say that the parents don't want to talk to them. So, there's a gap between the teacher and parent, and teachers and parents both need more tools.

When considering the difficulties with communication, Erin shared that sensitive information about students should be shared in a manner that promotes supportive and honest dialogue:

There is no formula, but I think kindness melts everything. There are some situations in when I can't be at the meeting and some teachers who might have a strong personality, say the correct thing but in *her* way. When parents are hearing hard things about the students, people get defensive. I say, "Pay attention to what the teacher is saying to you. She talks like that, that's her voice, but she *cares* about the child." Sometimes the parent can tell that the teacher cares but sometimes not. They say, "Is your hearing bad, Mrs. Erin? This teacher is mean." So, in Spanish I said, "No, I know the teacher."

Erin continued to explain that coming to an understanding does not mean agreeing or sharing the same values, a point brought up by Carmen and Brian as well. Erin expressed, "I want everybody to understand each other. When you are kind, you can say everything. It's the delivery. You don't have to say good things - you can be critical if we all know that we are together." These results suggest appropriate and effective communication to be vital to intercultural competent teachers, and additional discussion points are addressed in Chapter Six.

Barriers.

With potential misunderstandings occurring, Arlene expressed the importance of being flexible due to the barriers between parents and teachers. She said, "Many parents haven't been raised in U.S. schools, so the lack of response isn't necessarily that they

don't care. There are barriers related to language, economics, and time. If teachers want to make that contact, they must be flexible.” Related to Arlene’s point, the issue of potential barriers came up with Grace, as she wrestled with understanding the lack of participation and diversity on the PTA:

We don't know what the barrier...It's not language. We know that because we have translators. We're just still trying to figure out. But we're not going to be able to figure that out as 40-year-old White women sitting around the table. We need to have a round table and invite people and tell them that what they have to say is valuable. Maybe that is the barrier, that they don't feel their opinions are valued. What do they value about school? That's another thing that I talked to the PTA about is I took the class about ELLs. We discussed how each culture’s education system is different, and sometimes the parents are not as involved. This whole concept of PTA is valued in America.

As Grace spoke directly about the potential barriers, she concluded there were stakeholders missing from the conversation. Additionally, she credited the knowledge gained from a course specifically designed to educate teachers about the needs of ELLs and how schooling might be approached in various cultures.

Like Grace, the PTA was also a talking point for Fiorella, however, she spoke about socio-economic differences being the catalyst to the misunderstandings:

The PTA is always asking is how can we get more parents involved. I obviously said my opinion on the matter. There's a group of parents at this school whose concern is advanced academic classes or Spanish Immersion. There's another

group of parents that their immediate goal is survival. So, there is almost a situation where you have the haves and the have nots. Even though it's more blended at the school, I don't think we have a lot of haves, and we have many have nots. There's a gross misunderstanding as to why some parents don't come to the meetings. I was trying to explain that it's tied to immigration and socioeconomic status. Their primary concerns are social services, mental health, living conditions, food, and not getting chased down by ICE. The one thing I have learned in my short experience as an administrator is that every single kid who has had some significant difficulty in school, there's always trauma attached to it. And again, those are the ones that I don't necessarily see at PTA meetings.

Fiorella elaborated on serious problems, some of which came up when describing the context of the school: poverty, trauma, and fear of being deported. With the challenge pointing toward socio-economic differences, misunderstandings are likely to come up between the teachers and parents. Erin shared insight into many students' living situations. She expressed, "The teachers are American. These people are from Central America, a country with violence and poverty. They are not legal, so people take advantage of that, or they need two jobs. Some teachers don't understand this." Erin explained how she tries to bring awareness to teachers about their schedules, home life, and beliefs about education. She continued, "I asked if they know that many of our families are living two families in one apartment? One family in one room? Some of the teachers are really surprised because if you know that, then you understand better."

This surprise would not be so evident if teachers considered doing home visits, a strategy also explained by Arlene. She discussed the benefits by stating, “You can see how they live, that their houses are clean but overcrowded out of necessity. So, making space for a study area isn’t feasible. Their realities are different and to be aware and responsive to that.” While Grace and Fiorella were primarily sharing reasons for the lack of parent involvement in the PTA, Erin and Arlene expressed thoughts about parent involvement and misunderstandings in general.

The school has many opportunities for parent involvement, far beyond the PTA. Brian considered some of the increased involvement with less formal events, like Thanksgiving lunch, fairs on school grounds, and the book van that goes to the apartment buildings each summer as a mobile library. Still, he questioned challenges that need to be addressed:

Well, I think your culture is a part of your DNA. It’s what you come to the table with, and cultures are all very different in the way that they access and approach school. Like, when I was at a nearby school, on one side of the school, there was a real sense of entitlement. On the other side of the school, there was a real sense of distrust of the educational system. Here at this school, the biggest challenge is parents are OK with us doing whatever. So, we want the families to come be a part of this by inviting them into the school, and they like it now. They want to access the things that are going on.

While Brian says parent involvement has increased, he shared that parents are okay with *doing whatever*. Arlene previously commented about teachers being the holders of

knowledge, and Erin appeared to agree when she shared, “And now, teachers know better than many of the parents. They are scared. They don't know, they feel like they don't have any skills.”

Another consideration for the reasons behind these interactions involved Carmen describing the respect many of the families, particularly new immigrant families, have for the teachers:

Something great is that teachers seem to be held in a high regard in many countries outside the United States. So, I feel like whenever I contact parents, they say, sure, whatever you want. They stand back a little bit because they see teachers as the professionals. So, it is understanding where families come from and knowing that my beliefs may or may not coincide with their beliefs towards education or school, and just trying to get everybody sort of at the same place or understanding.

The understanding between parents and teachers that Carmen described is an important component of a partnership. At times, that requires the teacher to provide information like Darcy did in the following example:

I tell parents, “Please don't forget about your culture and language.” They need to speak it at home. In my personal experience with my daughter in Kentucky, all my colleagues would say please don't speak Spanish to your daughter because she's getting confused. I said no, she's not getting confused. You can learn as many languages, especially in the early years when your brain is absorbing like a sponge. So, I tell the parents, make sure they have a strong first language, any

strong first language, and it transfers to the other language. It very important to educate families and tell them to read in Spanish. If they cannot read in English, they don't read to them. I said no, it's the opposite.

Regarding the dynamic between parents and teachers, the data suggested the need to reach out to parents and educate them on expectations, important skills to help their children, and biliteracy.

Summary.

All seven participants raised perspectives about the need for better communication to avoid misunderstandings. Arlene articulated many of these viewpoints and emphasized the need to help teachers see the parents' reality:

Sometimes with staff members, some people are very receptive, and others are not. So, kind of breaking down those walls and getting them to understand you're trying to help give them tools to make their job easier and connect with the kid. It is about understanding perspectives and pointing out things that they might not have thought about because of their background and experiences. It is also important to overcome stereotypes and prejudices. I understand this is a high stress job and that we all get overwhelmed, so we must assume positive intentions.

To break down walls and provide prospective, these results suggest the need for teachers to better understand issues of poverty, trauma, and realities related to immigration. By developing intercultural competence, the teachers are more likely to bridge the gap with parents.

Students and Teachers

The final category of misunderstandings and challenges was about students and teachers. Four of the participants shared memorable experiences that resulted due to the lack of perspective taking. While many of these moments provided important learning opportunities, participants considered how IC can help avoid these misunderstandings from the start.

Teachable moments.

Impromptu conversations between teachers and students can have a great impact in overcoming cultural misunderstandings. Slowing down and taking the time for dialogue was explained by Arlene:

You're feeling the stress and must get through this lesson. So sometimes that piece is lost, and we say we'll talk about that later and never get back to it. When they happen, it is an eye-opener on both sides. Quite honestly, it's driven by the kids and usually about having heard something at home, the news, or from friends. It's that teachable moment because it's the elephant in the room.

Sometimes it's between cultural groups. It's either like a sense of isolation or a slight that was perceived that was never intended. I think it's powerful and it should happen more, however, that sense of urgency still needs to drive us. So maybe it's a speed bump, and we should slow down and take advantage.

This illustration points out the crucial balance of having a sense of urgency regarding teaching and learning *and* making time for impromptu discussion around invaluable teachable moments.

Teacher misconceptions.

Misunderstandings and teachable moments also occurred for teachers, as illustrated by several participants. Fiorella explained the confusion that occurred between a teacher and a student. She said, “Students called each other tomato head, and the teacher reported it as a racial slur. Another adult talked with the students and found out it was from a video game. So, listen to others’ perspectives to consider another rationale.” While many misunderstandings can be resolved through discourse, Erin described an example that could be considered helpful knowledge to share with new teachers through PD or mentoring programs. She recalled, “I received an email from one teacher who hasn’t learned that the middle name, because you know in Hispanic culture, we use two last names. I thought, ‘Oh, she hasn’t learned this, and it is April!’.” These uncomfortable or frustrating moments can happen because teachers are different points on the spectrum of developing intercultural competence.

Both Arlene and Grace considered moments when they had aha moments in their classrooms, and the students helped them realize what they as teachers might not have considered. Arlene reflected on a misconception when teaching fifth grade science:

It was a light experiment in the dark, and you look at a partner's eyes and watch the response when the lights go on. But the kids complained because they couldn't see it. I looked around and realized that the other teacher and I were the only ones that didn't have brown eyes. So, it was harder for them to see the dilation and restriction of the pupils. I think about that experience and how things like that can impact learning.

Students bring their own experiences, which was also evident to Grace during music class. She stated, “In the beginning, I didn't understand the cultural influence and restrictions of folk dancing for Middle Eastern girls. Finally, a girl felt comfortable enough explain that in her culture, girls can't dance with boys, at least in her family.” These examples suggested that while sometimes issues naturally come up, teachers and students would benefit from embedding time for considering cultural differences when planning for instruction.

Low expectations and ability to differentiate.

When Brian and Carmen tried to articulate characteristics of IC, they both referenced it was like good teaching. Cultural differences, learning styles, and students' needs are considered when planning lessons and employing instructional strategies. Erin and Fiorella continued to consider how teaching and student learning can be negatively impacted if teachers are lacking IC. Erin expressed concern when she stated, “Yeah, because some kids come with zero background, they don't know many things or they have learned differently, so some teachers think that they aren't very smart.” Since all students come with background knowledge, this was potentially a misunderstanding of Erin's, however, she went on to clarify that by zero background, she meant formal schooling, as opposed to knowledge or experience.

Fiorella shared challenges which can result in detrimental behaviors from teachers, such as low expectations and lack of differentiation for students. She stressed the need for teachers evaluate and reflect on their ability to work with struggling students:

When we talk about scaffolds, we're talking about accessibility; it is about *really* thinking of other ways to show what the student knows and needs. Teachers everywhere, not just here at this school, struggle with doing that, with providing appropriate scaffolds and instruction that allows kids to *access* knowledge and discover new things. Maybe the teachers haven't been exposed to different cultures or perhaps they fear it. Not everybody is able to work with populations of kids that struggle. We're here to support any teachers who are willing to learn, go further, and dig deeper.

Fiorella, a former instructional coach, articulated the complexity of how IC and quality instruction merge together. The data pointed toward the need for increased reflection, modeling, and differentiation for effective teaching and learning to occur with struggling students.

Negative mindset.

Additional challenges included language, and Fiorella shared her concerns about deficit language or a negative mindset. She said, "Another thing is how we talk to kids and about kids. You cannot say you believe in kids if you only talk about what kids cannot do. It's that message that you're conveying." A negative mindset impacts teaching and learning, and this can include how teachers handle challenges with student behavior. Arlene explained:

That would be the thing - not judging our kids by how they dress, what they look like, or even sometimes how they speak. It's a matter of, maybe they just haven't been exposed to a different way. We have some teachers here that don't

understand. Our kids, especially from a high poverty area, they don't have a different register when they talk to adults. It's the same kind of informal street language, and some teachers take offense because they feel like they're not being respected. But that's all the kid ever experienced, and they hold that against them instead of educating them and being aware that they haven't had the same upbringing that you have had.

These misunderstandings suggest that to be interculturally competent in this setting, teachers required sociolinguistic awareness, an understanding of the impacts of poverty, and a positive teacher mindset.

Summary of Challenges and Misunderstandings

The participants provided insight into the challenges and realities at the school. Furthermore, they considered the perceptions of students and parents in the community. According to the data obtained, there was a consensus that creating a positive and equitable learning environment for all students was a priority. However, some of the contrasting viewpoints shed light on the difficulties that can occur when offering a variety of programs and courses at the elementary level. These perceptions included the school being able to provide additional access and opportunities to advanced classes and Spanish immersion classes. However, perceptions also involved concerns about the divisiveness resulting in negative mindsets of teachers and students, low expectations, and problematic student behavior. The two additional challenges at the overall school level included: opportunities and support for intervention *and* enrichment and meeting the needs of ELLs and students receiving special education services.

The data analysis regarding the communication and interactions between parents and teachers appeared to raise issues related to poverty, trauma, and realities related to immigration. The data generated about teachers and students involved finding a balance between keeping up with the momentum of instruction *and* making time for discussion around teachable moments and misunderstandings. Finally, the data showed the importance of teacher mindset and additional knowledge, skills, and outcomes that would assist teachers in working with struggling students. In the next chapter, the additional findings are presented and organized by research question to uncover how interculturally competent teachers and administrators can provide an equitable education for all learners.

Chapter Five

Introduction

Chapter Four provided evidence and a foundation to understanding the findings of the three research questions, which are presented in this chapter. The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. How do teachers define intercultural competence (IC) and describe the development of their own IC?
2. What experiences do teachers attribute to their IC? Why?
3. How do teachers perceive their IC to influence students in the classroom?

Seven participants participated in semi-structured one-on-one interviews, artifact collection, and observations. Additionally, the ICCSv2 was completed by 62 instructional staff members to determine their level of intercultural sensitivity. Based on the data collected and analyzed in this study, answers to the three research questions and findings are presented in this chapter.

Teachers and administrators shared definitions of IC and descriptions about the development of their own IC (RQ 1), and these are captured through the following categories: attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes. These external outcomes are organized into subcategories of communication and instructional practices, two critical factors impacting students. As the participants shared stories of

demonstrating IC, how they perceived their IC to influence students in the classroom (RQ 3) was revealed to an extent.

Next, the participants shared the experiences they attribute to their IC and why (RQ 2) and the findings are presented in the following categories: childhood, study and teaching abroad programs, influential professional experiences, and influential personal experiences. As each teacher or administrator shared how their experiences impacted their development of IC, the responses simultaneously explained their perceived impact of their IC on students (RQ 3), and these findings are presented in this chapter.

Survey Results

The staff at the school was invited to participate in the ICCSv2 through Qualtrics, an online survey platform. This was part of phase one of the research, and the data collection was completed before phase two (interviews, observations, and artifact collection) of the research began. The purpose of obtaining the data was to gain a holistic picture of the intercultural sensitivity of the staff at the school. The response rate was relatively high with an 84% completion rate, and 62 out of 74 instructional staff members submitted the survey. The 44 statements required a response between one and seven on a Likert scale. The results, shown in Table 7, break into four subscales: cultural behavioral integration (CBI), cultural anxiety (CA), cultural inclusion (CI), and cognitive flexibility (CF).

Table 7: Survey Results for ICCSv2 (Mahon and Cushner, 2014)

	Cultural Behavioral Integration (CBI)	Cultural Anxiety (CA)	Cultural Inclusion (CI)	Cognitive Flexibility (CF)	Overall Score
Minimum	22.00	33.00	54.00	30.00	179.00
Maximum	66.00	77.00	91.00	69.00	285.00
Mean	42.63	65.13	75.03	57.68	240.47

The results report a broad understanding of the staff's cultural awareness. Specifically, the data provided insight about the staff's level of understanding and skill in relation to cross cultural interactions. The mean scores reported across all subscales indicated the sample was strongest in cultural inclusion ($M = 75.03$), which emphasized that the teachers demonstrate an awareness of cultural differences. At the same time, the data revealed a high degree of cultural anxiety ($M = 65.13$). The lowest mean ($M = 42.63$) was cultural behavioral integration. Due to the higher anxiety score, it makes sense for the low CBI because behavioral change requires a tolerance of ambiguity. With the school being diverse ethnically, racially, and linguistically, it is not surprising that the CI score was high. However, being comfortable does not necessarily equate to effective communication and behavior, and the low CBI highlighted the need to strengthen skills

related to culturally responsive instruction. These findings will be addressed further in the discussion in Chapter Six.

In addition to the subscale data analysis, some of the specific items suggested extreme differences in the staff's beliefs. For instance, in the CBI subscale, the results were surprising in response to the following statement: *I am likely to introduce myself to people from different countries or cultures, rather than waiting for them to approach me.* Of the 62 respondents, 17% disagreed to a degree and 23% answered with a neutral score of four. Given the diversity of the school and importance of communication with parents, ideally, 40% of the sample would have felt more comfortable in this scenario. Two additional statements, within the CA subscale, could impact the interactions between teachers and parents: *I avoid people from other cultures who seem different than me* and *It makes me nervous to talk to people who are different from me.* While most participants (85-90%) disagreed, about 10% of staff members agreed to some extent. One more statement, in the CF subscale, related to communication: *I do not understand why so much information is printed in other languages in the U.S. In general, it is the newcomer's responsibility to adjust to the larger culture, not the other way around.* Given the linguistic diversity and large population of ELLs, this was another surprising data point pointing toward sociolinguistic knowledge, mindset, and effective communication as areas of growth for this pocket of teachers.

The data analysis highlighted three additional statements that could inform implications and recommendations related to instruction. While the bulk of the staff scored higher in the areas of CI, about 13% of the respondents disagreed with the

following two statements: *Because of my experiences with other cultures, I have learned that sometimes I have to change the way I do things around them from the way I might normally do it* (flexibility) and *When I interact with someone who is different from me, and things do not go well, I wonder what I should have done differently* (reflecting, analyzing). Therefore, these select teachers could develop intercultural competence by building on these skills and outcomes. Finally, the last data point considered advocacy, and about 10% of participants were in agreement and 8% were neutral about the following statement: *I would not like to see someone being made fun of for being different, but I don't think there's much I could do about it*. Intercultural competence involves attitudes of openness and respect and the outcome of effective communication. Therefore, standing up and advocating for others can be done in a variety of appropriate and potentially effective ways. While the ICCSv2 confirmed predictions that staff would differ regarding their levels of IC, some of these specific outliers related to communication and instructional practices are concerning, and they will be addressed in parts of the subsequent chapter.

Themes and Findings

The teachers' and administrators' one-on-one interviews, observations, and artifacts were used for analysis, and the following themes and findings were designed to answer the research questions. In addition to using Deardorff's process model (2009) as a framework, context and experiences were vital to investigating the development of teachers' IC. For all three themes, attitude and specific types of knowledge are emphasized and will be discussed. Specific to theme #1 on context impacting the

development of IC, the findings relate to reflection, mindset, and instructional practices. Theme #2 was about experiences influencing IC, and the findings connect to flexibility and navigating frame of reference shifts that lead back to effective practices when working with struggling students. Finally, theme #3 reflects the interpretation of access and opportunity and the importance of communication and building a school community.

Theme #1 – Context Impacts the Development of IC

Context influenced the degree in which a person can demonstrate IC. As exemplars shared challenges and cultural misunderstandings occurring in the school setting, specific attributes of IC were pivotal to school settings like the one in this study. While some of the subthemes were part of Deardorff's model, additional subthemes emerged, and the most salient areas identified were mindset, reflection, and differentiation within the realm of instructional practices. Furthermore, context can include structural and systemic inequities within the school setting, and this was clear as teachers and administrators expressed on-going concerns. Theme #1 encompasses findings from RQ 1 and RQ 3, and these are explained in the subsequent paragraphs.

Attitudes

According to the teachers and administrators, attitudes are the driving force that facilitate IC. During semi-structured interviews, participants were asked directly about knowledge and skills, and several participants circled back to attitudes. Attitudes served as foundational layer as individuals work through the process model. Arlene shared her thoughts on how crucial one's attitudes can be and the interconnectedness, particularly to

teaching and learning a diverse group of students in this school context. This example showed the innerworkings of the individual and interactive processes. She explained:

I think attitudes drive the skills and knowledge. If you're open and value somebody else and their culture, you're going to want to understand how to figure out what you need to do to meet their needs. So, I think those three are all rolled together, but they're driven by the attitude because you can't mandate somebody's attitude. You must educate them, open their eyes, help them understand, and hopefully they'll change their attitude, alter it, or soften it. Then, I think that once you have the belief that every kid that comes through that door wants to learn, you have to find a way to do it...So, that's the biggest thing, that if you don't feel a sense of urgency every day, then you aren't invested in our kids.

Arlene's description reflected Deardorff's (2009) model, and while she stated that attitudes cannot be mandated, the importance of respect and valuing culture, openness, and curiosity emerged. Then, she described two essential internal outcomes: trying strategies until something works (flexibility) and believing that all students want to learn (mindset). This journey through the individual processes leads to the external components of interacting with others, which is at the heart of teaching.

Several participants emphasized the importance of respecting and valuing other cultures, as evidenced by two responses. Grace shared her views on why difference is important in her teaching. She explained, "Our world is diverse, and there are two goals for the students: to be able to respect things that are different from us and to find

something that doesn't make it as different as you think it is.” Arlene agreed, particularly about diversity being an asset. She said:

I think the biggest one is being able to value somebody else's culture, their experiences, and their language. Those are not distractions, and it doesn't detract from who they are. It adds to it, that it's just as valuable as your own and projecting that to the students. Also, part of it is the willingness to be personal and share your experiences as well. And then it can be a springboard for the relationship and for the kids sharing too.

These examples suggest that valuing culture, including understanding similarities and differences, can lead to making meaningful connections between teachers and students.

The attitude referenced the most by participants was openness and withholding judgment, also reflected in Deardorff's (2009) model. Arlene's viewpoint included the skill of listening, but primarily focused on the attitude of being open. She said, “I guess just being open-minded, being able to admit you're wrong, and being able to hear another perspective. Admit, hey, this is a great thing you should listen to this person, they have certain experiences.” Grace echoed Arlene's sentiment when she shared that interculturally competent teachers are not “easily offended, or defensive.”

Similar to Arlene and Grace, Brian felt openness was important, and discussed an episode reflective of withholding judgment. He considered it to be like good teaching:

I think that you must have positive prepositions where you might not know something right away, but you're willing to listen and see how it works out. Often, I don't know these things about culture, but I am willing to listen. I feel

like that's a big piece of the attitude. You have to just be open to understand where somebody else is coming from not just literally but also figuratively. Like, he says that because that's the way it was done in so and so. He may not understand that we don't do it exactly that way instead of just rushing to anger with the student for not doing something the right way.

These descriptions all involved deeply ingrained dispositions and why being open to perspective taking can be so powerful. When asked to describe how one can demonstrate openness, Brian stated, "You can't be fearful or guarded of every new kind of person you meet." Instead, being curious and seeking out new experiences and knowledge can develop IC.

When Fiorella described important attitudes for interculturally competent teachers, she named curiosity and a shift of someone realizing what they do not yet know. She explained:

Curiosity is a big one. By curiosity, I mean they don't understand why something is not clicking. I guess it's an attitude. I find when a teacher is willing to dig a little deeper to find out and learn how to make something work - that's a big asset! It goes from that unconscious ignorance to the conscious ignorance and seeking knowledge.

Grace also responded with a desire for genuine understanding. She shared, "Understanding, like in the point of not understanding information, but wanting to understand." Finally, Carmen demonstrated curiosity when she suggested teachers at the school search for answers to the following questions: "Why are immigrant families

moving into the United States?; What is the purpose behind why people flee their homes as refugees?; Why do we have such a diverse school?; and What have families gone through to get to this point?” These questions were explicit examples of how curiosity can be applied to daily teaching and learning and drive one’s efforts to seek out knowledge.

Summary of attitudes.

Attitudes (respect, openness, and curiosity) drove the iterative process. Of the specific components of IC noted, there were numerous statements about attitudes being fundamental and about the interrelationship of attitudes, knowledge, and skills, particularly in teaching and learning. Based on evidence, teachers felt strongly that respecting similarities and differences and valuing culture facilitates meaningful connections and relationships between students and teachers. According to participants, openness and withholding judgment pointed to facilitating feelings of safety and mutual understanding. Furthermore, being open to perspective taking was reported to be a critical prerequisite to acquiring knowledge and avoiding misunderstandings. Finally, curiosity was explained as knowing what you do not know and wanting to know more. It is important to note that participants credited curiosity as the catalyst to seek knowledge.

Knowledge

The participants’ descriptions of IC involved self-awareness and various types of context specific knowledge. As referenced in Chapter Two, Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) consists of a six-stage progression (Bennett, 1986; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). The ethnocentric stages - denial, defense,

and minimization, are based on the assumption that the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality. On the contrary, the ethno-relative stages, including acceptance, adaptation, and integration, represent a fundamental shift in mindset to a more cognizant assumption that one's own culture is one among many viable constructions of reality. When considering the DMIS, the participants' responses reflected different parts of the spectrum of stages.

Since circumstances and situations are often changing, Brian questioned how the highest level of intercultural competence can be maintained:

Knowing yourself is also really important. If you are somebody who has trouble being wrong, cultural competence probably isn't going to be your thing. But if you're somebody that's OK with having your worldview to [sic] changed, you probably have a better chance at some level of intercultural competence. I think that's the thing, nobody is ever really going to be really interculturally competent. You never really get to know exactly how to react all of the situations. I think it's more about just being willing to be along for the ride.

When thinking about the stages of the DMIS, Brian described needing to shift one's reactions accordingly, and this could be the cross over from acceptance into adaptation. Another description related to cultural self-awareness was shared by Grace, and the response could be considered to be on the ethnocentric side. At various points during her interview, she described everyone being human and other possible signs of minimization, a way of not seeing color. However, without using the word minimization, Grace goes on to acknowledge that she does see culture, a sign of acceptance on the DMIS:

I think of equity, I think I'm giving all of my students what they need. The strategies and the resources to accomplish what they need, no matter what that is. I've read articles repeatedly. Of course, culture doesn't matter to me because I'm White, so this whole I don't see culture kind of thing. No, I see culture. I see it, and I respect it. But the culture that I'm creating in my classroom is its own culture. And, also, not devaluing. Just like music, as humans, we are so many more things than just one thing. And that's what I want the kids to peel back. Like you are an onion, and you are not just one thing. You are not just a gamer playing Fortnite. You are not just an advanced math student; you are not just...all of this makes you who you are. I read in the news or different articles that I read, that people think I'm saying those things because I don't want to look at culture. And that's not it. It's not it.

As Grace clarified her thoughts, she pointed out the importance of helping students understand their own identity and the role of intersectionality. Additionally, she discussed the value of having a unique classroom culture, and a classroom culture of respect and willingness to take risks was reflected in the observation.

When asked about the knowledge of interculturally competent teachers, Arlene circled back to attitude but landed on perspective of oneself and of difference, which aligns with the acceptance phase on the DMIS. Then, she provided a timely political example related to current events likely in the defense phase of the continuum:

I guess the biggest thing for me would be and it goes back to the attitude. It is not being so self-centric and understanding that while you have a perspective and

culture and the language of your own, everything is not like that. So being aware that there are others and just because they're different, doesn't mean they're less valuable. I think that's part of it is that our fearless President and leader, he has no cultural competence. You know when he made that comment, excuse my language, about those African ****hole countries. These are great civilizations that have contributed to the world and while sometimes they have areas just like we have in our own country, hard stricken with poverty and urban decay, it doesn't make them less valuable. They can still have something to contribute and to not just dismiss them on face value.

The highly publicized quote demonstrated the defense phase by polarizing and stereotyping. There was a lack of critical awareness and tendency to blame cultural difference for problems within society. This example demonstrates a lack of self-awareness, and Arlene pointed out the lack of historical and cultural knowledge, key factors relating to the context of the United States.

Regardless of one's position, whether it be President of the United States or a teacher in a highly diverse school, the lack of knowledge can have major implications. Fiorella considered how the attitudes of openness and curiosity can drive teachers to seek additional knowledge:

That's a tell-tale sign that the teacher is aware that there might be another reason, that there is a way to do it, but she doesn't quite know how. She will seek out help from coaches, specialists, administrators, or other peers to find out. I can

think of a teacher who will reach out to a specialist to ask, “What do you know about Ghanaian culture?”

Given the large population of ELLs in this school context, sociolinguistic awareness, which is specific to Deardorff’s (2009) model, served as an essential ingredient to demonstrating IC. Additionally, sociolinguistic awareness served as an important factor in preventing misunderstandings between the teachers and students or parents. Grace shared instances when she was not sure about the expected language progression and sought out knowledge from Arlene. Grace explained:

I’ve encountered some older girls who I’ve taught for years who will still have their friends be like, ‘They don’t speak English.’ Then, I have to pull the, “We all speak the language of music. It’s a different language for all of us made of symbols and sounds.” I’ve gone to the ESOL teacher and said, “I need some insight on this because I’m unsure if they are using this as excuse and fooling around or not.” As specialists, we’ve had some of these students for years, so it is confusing.

In efforts to gain insight from other teachers, Grace reflected on how she sought the advice of ESOL teachers. She shared how supporting ELLs might look in her class:

...We just did poetry with some of my second graders, and I was like, “You can write in Spanish if you want.” I can translate it later, or I don’t have to translate it at all. It can go up on the wall if you feel more comfortable.” But the two kids that I offered that to, they wanted to learn how to write in English, so they practiced...

Another important type of knowledge specific to this context was how to make instruction culturally relevant to meet the needs of all learners. Two participants referenced courses related to challenges previously stated. Grace said, “I’m taking a course on advancing differentiation and recommend it to everybody. I also recommend the advanced academic course. As a mother of a child who should be in advanced academics, but his learning style doesn’t fit the norm.” Grace applied her new learning from the course to provide a variety of assessment options for students, which is included the external outcomes section. Despite professional development about differentiation not being anything new, the needs of students within schools are continuously changing. Some of these needs include supporting students in the following programs or classes: ESOL, AAP, Spanish Immersion, special education, and advanced math classes. The placement of students into these classes or programs does not necessarily equate to all students’ needs being met. Instead, to make teaching and learning culturally relevant, equitable, and differentiated to meet the needs of all learners, interculturally competent teachers continue to grow by gaining sociolinguistic and professional knowledge.

A common challenge as teachers acquire professional knowledge involves how cumbersome it can be to navigate through such a large amount of information. Fiorella explained, “There are resources, I think the problem is you have to know where to go and you have to know who to ask. I’m talking about educational specialists, the equity office, and an ombudsman.” When asked to clarify, she stated, “There’s a new office, and it’s a person who is a neutral party. If there’s something that cannot be resolved, then his role is to bridge the gap.”

Four participants shared varying perspectives around curriculum, standards, and pacing guides and the connection to IC. Some of the participants reflected on how the resources from the school district supported their IC and helped to make instruction culturally relevant to students, while other participants did not see the connections and supports in the same way. Brian explained, “I think that the pacing guides and curriculum standards have been created so tightly. There are times when they just must get it done, and there’s not a lot of room to change things up.” Carmen had a neutral viewpoint, and she said, “I don’t really see them as necessarily assisting or restricting.” She suggested incorporating IC into the curriculum as the best approach. Fiorella considered the way curriculum is written and delivered as it relates to IC:

For example, the pacing guides, I think back to when it was just the standards. We’ve come a very long way. You can see that there is a progression of thinking, and there are also a lot of anticipation of strategies and possible misconceptions that our students may have. That is extremely powerful, and once again, I go back to if you really think about it and talk it through, that can really shift teachers’ thinking about their instruction. It takes dedication and investment though.

Grace provided an example of how to use these resources and evaluate how to teach the required content in a meaningful way. She explained, “We must study five White men for classical music because that’s the way history went. It’s not good or bad, and we can’t devalue their efforts. So, trying to find that balance, I guess.” As teachers attempt to find

balance regarding what to teach, they also continuously make decisions about how to teach it.

When considering the range of needs in this school context, teachers must go beyond engaging students with culturally relevant content and differentiate to ensure all students are learning. Arlene discussed the challenge of getting teachers to feel comfortable and being open to trying new resources that assist with differentiation. She stated:

I know the school district has made a huge investment to provide scaffolds and resources that are more culturally aware. It's like anything else, it's a time thing. I think that they're laying the foundations, but sometimes teachers use what feels natural to them and represents their perspective. At times they don't avail themselves to those resources, or it's just so foreign to them, that they don't feel comfortable with it.

This point suggests that teachers may revert to the context in which they grew up or felt most comfortable. Instead, professional knowledge and practice using culturally appropriate resources can move teachers beyond their comfort zone to demonstrate IC in this school context.

Summary of knowledge.

IC teachers' context specific knowledge was described by one participant as a fluid, ongoing process. Cultural self-awareness, sociolinguistic awareness, and professional knowledge are critical for teachers in this school context, and the lack of either can result in challenges. Even if teachers know the content well, that does not

always result in student engagement and understanding. To meet the needs of all learners, making instruction culturally relevant and being willing to continuously learn develops and demonstrates IC.

Critical Reflection

Observing, listening, and analyzing are three of the skills from Deardorff's model that emerged from the evidence. Teachers demonstrate their IC when they know their students well and engage with the community. These skills are necessary for these connections to occur, and all participants named at least one of these skills. Four of the participants named reflecting as a skill, which became its own subtheme. Skills were sometimes stated in passing or as a prerequisite to internal or external outcomes. For instance, Brian noted listening 12 times throughout his responses in his interview. Arlene said, "I think the biggest skill is somebody that knows how to listen, to observe, and just to kind of hear what the kids are saying without saying it and knowing what they need." Carmen agreed with Arlene that figuring out what students need is the goal, which is often done through reflection. She explained, "I mean, it's sort of like skills for any teacher. How to talk to different kids...an intuitive awareness of how to read kids, how to figure out what they need to learn, and how to fill the missing gaps." Carmen's description of intuitive awareness and figuring out of the gaps involved the culmination of skills leading to critical reflection. Instances like these suggested the teachers perceived their IC to have an impact on meeting students' needs academically, which helps answer RQ 3.

Fiorella also noted that critical reflection often involved analyzing, evaluating data and determining effectiveness. Regarding coaching, she expressed that the attitude of openness is necessary:

It goes back to the whole idea of coaching and being open to feedback, able to analyze, explore other ways and try them, collect data. I feel like a big thing with behavior is like we're going to have a meeting and talk about a behavior plan and they tried it three times, and it doesn't work. So, persistence and curiosity. "What happens if I do this consistently?" Or, teach me how to do this because I don't know how to do it on my own.

Reflection is a commonly used term, and the depth of reflection can fluctuate. The participants shared why deep, thoughtful reflection can be vital to developing and demonstrating intercultural competence. Carmen shared the importance of reflecting on one's teaching and one's interactions with students:

There was a quote basically saying, you should be someone that you would want your own children to have as a teacher. Are you doing the things that you would want for your own kids? Are you putting in the efforts and the time? If you're reflecting on your own teaching, that may help people to go beyond. Maybe I need to take a little bit more time to listen to the student or try to get in touch with this family. Helping people to reflect on themselves, their lessons or teaching, and their interactions with students.

As a former instructional coach, Fiorella shared why she values coaching cycles, observations, peer to peer walk-throughs, and especially reflection. She said:

It's really on the job training, to reflect on what people did, and think about how that might work in your classroom. That's extremely powerful. There are always positives to draw from. Obviously...the reflection process is so powerful. It is also a way to really break down the steps, make it accessible and manageable for the teacher. Collaborative learning, opportunities for practice, opportunities to go see other places.

Like Carmen and Fiorella, Grace considered reflection but in response to professional development. She stated, "After PD, people need to ask themselves questions in a reflective way and take the information. Like, they continue the conversation outside of where it was, and talk to other people about their perspective."

The last example demonstrated the epitome of what it takes to be a teacher in this school context with elements of vulnerability, perseverance, and the use of multiple skills, including reflection. Arlene said:

You know and that can wane - energy levels drop, patience levels, all those things, because we are not perfect and that's okay and kids feel that. Then, talking with the kids, and saying, "This is why I am frustrated. Or, what's going on?" It leads to those conversations of being reflective. I'm doing everything I can, and it's not working. "What do you guys need? What don't you understand? How can I help you?" Just being willing to say sometimes, I don't know, let's figure it out together.

These skills are critical components within the process model that move toward effective outcomes of IC. Understanding the breakdown within the process model and

development of IC helps answer RQ 1, and the perceived influence on students answers RQ 3. For instance, Arlene's example of slowing down and having a conversation with a student provided the student with voice and agency in the learning process. While Arlene and others do not name all six of the skills reflected in Deardorff's model, the ideas put forth about critical reflection serve to demonstrate IC by bringing awareness or clarity to situations of systemic inequities in a given context.

Mindset

Internal outcomes are essential, particularly when working in an elementary school like the one in this study. While Deardorff (2009) does not include mindset in her model, it would likely be an internal outcome. Darcy shared that an interculturally competent teacher is "a positive person" and Brian explained that he thinks positive presuppositions are important. He stated, "I wasn't always as positive. That was really a mind shift for me. There have been so people that are so kind and so patient in teaching some of these things, and that's been a big difference for me." By assuming the best in people, Brian also tries to model this positive mindset for the staff. Arlene shared how mindset and skills are integrated to develop external outcomes by stating, "You need to get buy-in that all our kids are valuable, worth your time and energy, and don't give up on anyone. Then, figure out how to build the background knowledge and develop the skills to make progress." Additional approaches to describing mindset were maintaining high expectations and considering one's beliefs about students. Fiorella explained, "When you hear teachers commenting on what students can't do, it breaks their confidence. In my job I try to speak to teachers a lot about mindset. Do you truly believe that every kid

can?" This example provided the distinct connection between a teacher's mindset and student's self-confidence. Challenging beliefs and raising expectations are not easily done, but through critical conversations, reflection, and a growth mindset, IC in the context of this study can be achieved.

Summary of reflection and mindset.

Based on the data generated from the teachers and administrators, observing, listening, analyzing, and reflecting were the skills most beneficial to IC within this school setting. *Reflection* was the top skill and responses suggested that openness and vulnerability allow for deeper, more thoughtful reflection. These internal processes, described as an intuitive awareness, led to shifts in thinking or desired internal outcomes. Specifically, *mindset* involved believing that all students want to learn, maintaining high expectations and positive presuppositions, and viewing diversity as an asset. Understanding the importance of reflection and mindset in the development of IC supports RQ 1. Additionally, a finding related to RQ 3 involves the perception that mindset influences students' self-confidence.

Instructional Practices

Context has an immense impact on the effectiveness of teachers' instructional practices. Teachers make decisions constantly in order to keep students engaged, maintain a positive classroom environment, and check for understanding. When participants were asked about how interculturally competent teachers go about planning lessons and delivering instruction, several topics were considered. These included: valuing culture and student identity, and authentic learning and assessment opportunities.

Additionally, two more instructional practices were addressed that frequently came up in the challenges and misunderstandings section: differentiation to meet all students needs and promoting a culture of accountability and equitable practices.

Valuing culture and student identity.

Darcy, a first-grade teacher, discussed how the Spanish immersion team makes time on Fridays for specific lessons relating to culture. She noted:

I don't think you can love the language without knowing the culture. So, I make sure that Friday is my culture day. I designate 30 to 45 minutes to talk about the culture of Spanish speaking countries and the food, music, and dress. So, they also embrace their peers that are sometimes from those countries and they understand why they behave certain ways. Again, I go back to what my dad said, you can't love what you don't know.

Teaching about culture once a week, as opposed to it being embedded in daily instruction, can be a sign of treating culture artificially. On the contrary, Darcy's perceived views of student outcomes are powerful. These included learning about peers, feeling like their own culture and identity was valued, and increased student engagement.

The integration of culture into the existing music curriculum was described by Grace. She provided several examples of how help students make meaningful connections between history, music, and culture:

What I'm trying to instill in them is this, we are different, and people come at things from different ways. But, no matter how different something looks on the outside, I'm going to play this piece of classical music and you're going to be like,

“Oh, my God, it's classical music! Okay, yeah, it's from 300 years ago and you don't think you have any connection to it but listen...I'm trying to get them not to take that initial reaction of I don't like it.

The ability to make connections quickly and even on the fly allowed for Grace to make learning relevant for students. One of Grace's artifacts included the script of a third-grade play about ancient civilizations. It has been done every year for over a decade and provides a culminating activity that extends across subject areas. Grace explained, “I like teaching about Chinese culture because it's so different, yet, the Chinese New Year connects to the lunar calendar, which a lot of our Middle Eastern students can relate to.” During the classroom observation this was demonstrated when the fourth-grade students were learning Colonial American dancing. Students were in character and fully engaged, and students who have challenges with self-control in other classes were on task. Grace's interview, observation, and artifacts demonstrated the value of IC and her ability to demonstrate it within the school context.

Learning about students and valuing who they are as individuals was described in the letter concerning Darcy, part of the artifact collection. This suggests she might have taken the a course or PD about culturally responsive teaching, which promotes building community. From the letter:

Darcy is very attuned to the importance of cross-cultural understanding. She begins the day with a morning meeting in order to foster classroom community, and she encourages her students to support and applaud one another. Every single

student knows that they are loved as if they were her own, and our diversity is celebrated.

Additionally, Grace shared a description of a music lesson that promoted introspection as students were able to reflect on their own identity by making a playlist about their lives. Grace assured she was not judging them and provided a safe, comfortable space for students to share about sick family members and even tragedy. When considering Deardorff's process model, the attitude of openness was at the foundation and resulted in the external outcome of effective instructional practices.

Authentic learning and assessment opportunities.

Teachers were asked questions about how IC affected curriculum, instruction, and assessments used in their work. Arlene, Grace, and Fiorella shared strategies for assessing what students know in a meaningful way. Grace explained:

My objective is to teach the children how to not have this A, B, C, D philosophy. There are times when there is a correct answer, that is C. But our next project is to take that and show me how C can look a bunch - the umbrella underneath C. What is the common thing that they all must do? So, unknowingly to them, we taught them six different ways to show us the information and then we assessed them.

Grace's example was used in conjunction with an assignment for the course she was taking on differentiation. Still, her excitement when describing the assessment options for various learning styles suggested these practices are becoming part of her repertoire.

Another example related to assessments came from Arlene's artifact collection. During a leadership meeting at the school, she respectfully challenged some of her colleagues and provided rationale on why the reading assessment was not equitable for many of the ELLs. For the test to become an appropriate measure of student progress, Arlene collaborated with the reading specialist and presented an alternative assessment to their collaborative team. Effective behavior in an intercultural situation was demonstrated as numerous factors impacted instructional practices: professional and sociolinguistic knowledge, the forum to advocate for students, and collaboration with colleagues.

Fiorella, a former ESOL teacher and literacy coach, considered how the workshop model can provide numerous chances to see what students can do. These serve as daily authentic learning and assessment opportunities. She said:

What I love about the workshop model is that you can have multiple opportunities to work side-by-side with students. Students can work with each other and learn from each other. If you set up a structure that is consistent and supported, whether it's through scaffolds or extra support with teachers, you can create an environment where there is risk-taking, conversation, and reflection as the kids' practice!

Based on the description of the workshop model and benefits it can bring to students, the importance of two aspects of IC are highlighted: adaptability and tolerating ambiguity. While these were not mentioned explicitly by any of the participants, Fiorella's illustration suggested their importance because of all the moving parts of the workshop

model and the constantly changing needs of students. All three participants approached assessment differently but demonstrated adaptability and IC for students to be successful in this school context.

Risk-taking.

Many of these illustrations of authentic learning or valuing culture involved risk-taking for students. The term risk-taking is precisely used by Grace as she shares the excitement of the annual kindergarten play performed for the entire school, “The kids are in front of 800 people. Everybody comes to the microphone and sings and dances together in costume.” When asked what student outcomes she perceived to have been developed, she explained, “I think it's self-confidence. It unites them with a common goal. It doesn't matter if they couldn't read, write, or even speak. They all get to shine, and it's all related to academics because we're telling a story.” Risk-taking was also an instructional practice described within the artifact submitted by Darcy. The nomination letter stated, “Darcy encourages practice with oral language, and she embraces risk-taking. Students feel safe and happy in her classroom. She celebrates every student, no matter what their achievement level.” Risk-taking is one of the external outcomes in the findings of RQ 1, and the perceived impact on students will be embedded in the findings of RQ 3.

Differentiation and scaffolding.

When teachers know their students’ needs and learning styles, differentiation and scaffolding become ingrained in their instructional practices. These are key findings both in understanding IC teachers (RQ 1) the gaining insight into the participants’ perceptions

of how students' needs can be met (RQ 3). Several examples were already shared of trying many strategies until something clicks for a student. That is one approach to differentiating and adapting instruction to ensure learning. During an observation of one of Arlene's small groups, she provided scaffolds with word walls, sentence frames, and visuals. Carmen shared how this type of support makes a difference and collaboration with ESOL and SPED teachers can be impactful. She explained, "Well, I think that speaking for my grade level team, the ESOL and SPED teachers are both strong. They put in the planning, and they're very knowledgeable on how to scaffold for our students while still pushing them forward." Carmen described equitable instructional practices by maintaining high expectations and providing the necessary tools for students to get there. On one hand, Fiorella noted teachers like Carmen, however, she also expressed the need for more teachers in the building to understand and apply these critical instructional practices:

What does it mean to really scaffold? What does it really mean to look at data, analyze it, and determine next steps? There are teachers who are organically thinking about that, and there are others that are not and need to more. When a teacher can dig, that's what you find out what is really going on with the student or find out what are their assets?

Fiorella's artifact, the agenda outcomes of a meeting with school district ESOL and SPED specialists, involved creating an effective PD to help teachers understand the large number of students who are dually identified and eligible for both SPED and ESOL services. When Fiorella was reflecting on a difficult childhood learning experience, she

felt strongly about being persistent and flexible in trying new strategies and differentiating until something works for all students. This idea of being persistent was also included in the recommendation letter for Darcy. The letter stated:

She has a deep understanding of differentiation and a toolbox as big as a shed of ways to help students master skills and concepts. If one thing doesn't work, she tries something else, and something else, until something works. She never gives up on the kids.

For students to feel excited about learning and supported, a finding of RQ 3, the participants concluded interculturally competent teachers must make the curriculum and instruction relevant and engaging, monitor and communicate student progress, and differentiate by being flexible, persistent, and maintaining high expectations.

Bridging barriers through critical conversations and accountability.

The seven participants were chosen as exemplars and their insight into IC bridges many of the barriers discussed in earlier sections. Still, it involves critical conversations and holding teachers accountable. These types of conversations occurred during the observation of Brian at a school leadership meeting and of Fiorella at a planning meeting with ESOL and SPED specialists. Both meetings included agendas that were used in the artifact collection. Through purposeful agendas with targeted outcomes, Brian and Fiorella were able to facilitate school leaders and specialists in having critical conversations about how to increase achievement for the SPED and ESOL subgroups. Fiorella considered the holistic nature of it all and how to truly shift behaviors and instructional practices within teachers, teams, and the school. She explained:

I think it starts at the top by the culture you create at your school, I really do. I think that with that comes accountability. It goes back if we believe this, what does that look like in our daily practice? How do we monitor it so it's supportive and bridges barriers? It is like that existing state versus the desired state. If the vision is a culturally competent staff and a culturally inclusive school, how do we keep ourselves and each other accountable? That's the only way that you can really shift culture. Change happens one conversation at a time. If this is what we believe, this is what we must do to make it happen.

Summary of Theme #1

Context influenced the degree in which a person can demonstrate IC. As participants defined and described their IC in this school context, the findings answered RQ 1. Their insights elaborated on how attitudes, knowledge, mindset, critical reflection, and effective instructional practices play a role in contributing to IC. Attitudes (respect, openness, and curiosity) were at the foundational level and drove the iterative process. Participants explained that being open to perspective taking and withholding judgment taking led to acquiring context specific knowledge and avoiding misunderstandings. Critical reflection was the top skill named to develop IC, and according to the research, openness and vulnerability allow for deeper, more thoughtful reflection. Mindset was an essential component of IC that emerged in the findings, and mindset involved believing that all students want to learn, maintaining high expectations and positive presuppositions, and viewing diversity as an asset. Finally, the findings showed that the effective and high leverage instructional practices were making learning relevant to

culture and student identity, creating authentic learning and assessment opportunities, providing differentiation and scaffolding, and engaging in critical conversations to build a culture of equitable practices.

The last section, external outcomes, was twofold: to further understand the teachers' actions as they demonstrated IC *and* to recognize the perceived impact of their IC on students (RQ 3). The findings encompassed two critical factors, student engagement and ensuring all students' needs are being met through equitable instructional practices. When students feel excited about learning and supported academically, they are held to high expectations, monitor their own progress, and know how to advocate for additional support or enrichment opportunities. Additionally, the data showed that perceptions of students included increased self-esteem and cultural awareness. As a result, theme #1 helped capture the findings of how participants defined and described their IC (RQ 1) and their perception of the difference it can make with their students (RQ 3) in this school context. While context remains at the forefront of this study, the next theme emphasizes the power of experiences.

Theme #2 – Personal and Professional Experiences Influence the Development of IC

Personal and professional experiences influenced the development of IC. Furthermore, respondents suggested these experiences and their IC led to their ability to employ effective instructional practices when working with struggling students. Participants described development in the areas of self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and frame of reference shifts. These shifts involved experiencing discomfort when needing to navigate an intercultural situation and persevering through difficult times.

The participants attributed these frame of reference shifts to building critical thinking skills, flexibility, and tolerating ambiguity – all helpful tools when working in the school context of the study. Intercultural experiences encouraged teachers to demonstrate empathy and maintain positive presuppositions to promote feelings of trust and safety with students. These experiences helped teachers feel confident and equipped to communicate with parents. In the following sections, these findings explore how participants explained what experiences they attribute to their IC (RQ 2). Furthermore, these experiences contributed to their overall description of their IC (RQ 1) and how the participants perceived their IC to influence students in the classroom (RQ 3).

The word experience is multifaceted, and the open ended, semi-structured interviews allowed for participants to share the personal nature of their experiences. The findings were organized and presented in the following categories: childhood, studying and teaching abroad, influential professional experiences, and influential personal experiences. All of the participants described occurrences with positive, neutral, or negative connotations. Six of the seven participants shared at least one experience that was uncomfortable to an extent, and they were able to express how they grew from it.

All seven teachers and administrators were asked to describe some of the cultural experiences they have had. Since they were not explicitly asked about what time period or type of experience, each participant had a different starting point. Darcy, Fiorella, and Erin began by explaining their childhood and family dynamics growing up; however, Arlene started off by describing two experiences studying abroad during college. Instead of sharing personal experiences, Brian, Carmen, and Grace opted to discuss professional

experiences initially. While Brian reflected on the diversity at some of the schools he worked at earlier in his career, Grace and Carmen talked about specific experiences that had an impact on them at their current school, the setting of this study. The follow up questions asked about what they learned from the experiences and how it affected their worldview. The participants were asked how the experiences impacted their work as teachers or administrators. Supplemental questions involved how the experiences impacted their work with students, parents, and faculty and their decisions related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Based on the data collected and analyzed, the following results and findings emerged.

Of the childhood experiences shared, there was a scope ranging from not very diverse to exceedingly integrative. Arlene stated, “It wasn’t very diverse in any way, shape, or form. It was the most white bread that you can imagine in Connecticut. So, one family from Puerto Rico, another from Korea, a German exchange student, and a Jehovah's Witness.” Like Arlene, Grace was raised in a predominately White neighborhood, and her classmates were in a particularly homogeneous group. She shared, “I grew up in Little Silver, New Jersey...So, two square miles, my town. I went with the same 54 kids from kindergarten through eighth grade. We weren't diverse; we were all White. But we were divided by socioeconomics.” Both Grace and Brian described socio-economic issues as a circumstance, but he acknowledged it to be a unifying factor as opposed to a dividing one. He noted some diversity in his town, compared to Arlene and Grace:

Ohio was mostly Appalachian culture. It's not far from Pittsburgh, so it was very steel driven in the 70s. Once the steel mills closed, life got a lot harder for a lot of people. There were a mix of White and Black but not a lot of other ethnic cultures at that time. And the best that I remember, the White and Black relations were good for Ohio. I think poverty can be a uniting factor more than a dividing factor at times.

When asked about the impact of these experiences, Grace shared her insight about differences in SES. She said, “I learned that it is interesting what people put value on. I had plenty of friends from extremely wealthy families, and I had friends who were like me. My family didn't value material things, and I understood that...” After considering how this experience connected to Grace’s current role at the school, she reflected on conflicting views on requesting money from parents for field trips:

We're a Title 1 school...one of 19 schools at the poverty line. Still, if you ask people to pay for a field trip and no matter what their economic situation is, they will pay for it if they value that experience for their child. Doing all the PTA fundraising events, I hear, “Well, our population can't afford that.” On paper that might be, but if they see this as a fun time for their kids, it is definitely cheaper than going to Chuck E. Cheese.

This example relates back to the confusion over parent involvement on the PTA. On one hand, Grace provided insight about her family teaching her to value experiences over material things. On the contrary, there can be many differences between the meaning of low SES for Grace, Brian, and any of the students at the school. Some of the distinctions

are time period, location, reasons related to low SES (immigration factors versus steel mill closure). Therefore, while empathy and understanding can contribute to the IC of a teacher, caution should be taken in not overgeneralizing to the point of potential misunderstandings.

Like Grace, Darcy went to school with the same students in a small town, however, Darcy grew up in Puerto Rico and was part of a very large family. She said, “The same kids went to the elementary, middle, high school, and a lot of us went to the closest University of PR campus. So, it felt like we were family.” Darcy differentiated between her school life and home life by stating, “I am the 11th child of 18. It was a huge family. My mom and dad were amazing about knowing every one of their children. They knew we all were different, found our talents, and helped us discover ourselves.” As Darcy considered how her family dynamic transferred to her identity as a teacher, she shared, “Every child is different and learns differently. That was very important as a teacher because I could see that every sibling was so different – personalities, tastes, talents, strengths and weaknesses. So that helped me be very aware of that.” These results are important because asset language, valuing strengths of students, and being able to differentiate based students’ needs are essential to quality teaching and learning. In addition to Darcy’s family experiences developing her IC, she also credited the Puerto Rican culture for her close relationships with the students in her classroom. She explained, “Island people are very welcoming and affectionate. They will give you a hug even if they don't know you. It is very rich in culture, with singing and dancing, and Puerto Ricans love their island.” Darcy considered the impact of her background by

stating, “I tell my families when your child enters my classroom, he's part of my life and one of my kids. Sometimes, the kids call me Mom by accident! I see that so quick because I really care.” During an observation in Darcy’s room, students were singing and dancing during a brain break, suggesting her rich descriptions are also evident in the daily classroom environment.

Erin and Fiorella shared similar stories and agreed it helped them make connections with parents at the school. Erin shared, “I am from Columbia, and I moved here 18 years ago. It's easier for me to understand people from other countries, especially people from Central America and South America, because we share many things. It started with the language.” Fiorella was able to relate due to a unique upbringing with her French mother and Puerto Rican father. She explained, “Although I was born in Paris, my early childhood was in Corsica, an island to the south of France, so there was an additional layer of cultural differences. I completed most of my education in Puerto Rico.” On the other end of the spectrum of Arlene, Fiorella had the most integrative experience during childhood. She shared how her experience traveling back and forth to France at least once a summer provided her with a greater understanding of multiple perspectives. Also, by completing her ninth and tenth grade years at a school in Paris, she connected with students from all over the world. She explained, “I always say I never went to Disney World because we were always going back to France from PR.” This brought her perspective, and she explained:

It really opens your eyes to the fact that there's more than one way to believe in things or do things. It is understanding that when people try to convey a message,

they may do it in different ways. I think when you have access to other cultures and experiences, you start noticing those multiple perspectives. When you must relate forcibly with others and realize that there's more than one way to communicate, agree, or disagree on things.

Unlike Fiorella's time in Paris, Erin, Darcy, and Grace were not exposed to a mixture of cultures growing up in Columbia, Puerto Rico, and New Jersey. Still, they had travel experiences during their childhood, which they attributed to providing a more ethnocentric world view. Darcy and Erin both shared they were able to visit Chicago and other big cities in the United States. Grace stated, "Being in an isolated community, my family wanted to travel. So, in fourth grade, my father went on sabbatical to England to the Royal Shakespeare Academy. So, I knew that there was a world outside of there." According to participants, these experiences contributed to their understanding of culture, community, and overall worldview. Additionally, these experiences, whether it be living on an island or traveling overseas for a year, seemed to develop attitudes of respect and openness, along with increased self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness.

While most of these experiences have been positive, Fiorella and Brian reflected on more difficult situations. Fiorella shared some of her challenges growing up. She shared:

Although I don't know what others are going through, I know exactly what it feels like to be a second language learner and how it feels [to] not know what's going to happen, where you're going, and the anxiety and uncertainty that a lot of families

have moving from one place to another. I know the trials and tribulations of being in a foreign country and having to sink or swim. I was lucky to have my parents supporting me constantly, but I had friends who did not have the same support and struggled.

Fiorella continued to explain how this increased her knowledge and awareness of the time it takes for ELLs to acquire language and adapt. She stressed, “My experience is not comparable to our students, but at least I feel like it's giving me an opening in the window into what some of the students are experiencing and feeling. So, it helps a lot.” Fiorella continued to share a specific experience from her schooling, as did Brian, and these negative experiences prompted both administrators to want more for their students. Brian explained that his experiences in school shaped his view of education that is different than most, but part of the reason he chose this career:

I believe that most teachers liked their experience in school, and I felt the opposite. I felt like I really could've liked school and done a lot better if somebody could've connected to me. I liked the social aspect, but academics were hard for me. So, I wanted to help kids like that. I had such a challenge in school that I see myself in a lot of these kids.

Brian discussed that this challenging experience developed a *mindset* of not giving up on students and trying new strategies until something works. He said, “It may not happen today or tomorrow, but if we keep pushing, sooner or later, something is going to work, and there's going to be some kind of change.”

Fiorella also shared a negative memory and felt strongly that teachers must promote a growth mindset and positive classroom environment. This suggests that the consequences of students developing a negative mindset can impact important life decisions. She stated:

Environment is key. It was the difference between my ninth-grade math and French classes. In math, I felt like I was a donkey and couldn't do anything. So obviously I felt safer going to letters than to math. I never thought to even seek a career in math because I knew I wasn't good enough. So, when teachers provide the opportunities for kids to thrive, they will pursue the deepening of that knowledge. That's my experience.

The participants' childhood experiences shaped their development of intercultural competence. Of the experiences shared, there was a scope ranging from not very diverse to exceedingly integrative. The more integrative experiences showed increased development of IC in the areas of openness, respect and deep cultural knowledge. Of the seven participants, only two shared experiences referenced to low SES or poverty, however, they did not attribute it to causing any sort of impact on their education. Whether the backgrounds and stories told by participants were positive, negative, or neutral, the data pointed toward increased self-awareness and a positive mindset. These mindset shifts that impact IC involve promoting a growth mindset, valuing strengths of all students, and creating a positive classroom environment. Finally, the childhood experiences encouraged participants to feel strongly about being persistent and flexible in trying new strategies and differentiating until something works for all students.

Studying and Teaching Abroad Programs

Arlene, Grace, and Carmen discussed studying or teaching abroad programs were significant experiences that developed their IC. The stories of navigating new languages and cultures demonstrated increased self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness. Furthermore, their responses suggested that the attitudes of valuing culture and tolerating ambiguity were likely reinforced. Arlene reflected:

I had two immersive study abroad situations in college...It was about not only physically getting to places, but meeting people, existing day-to-day, and the food, transportation, and language. In France, I stayed in a host family, and I went to a language school in Spain. My roommates were Norwegians, French, and Austrians, and Spanish was the common language. It made for a lot of fun cultural exchanges...

Carmen had a similar teaching abroad experience, and she shared, “My first year of teaching, a co-teacher and I went to Costa Rica for three weeks and each of us lived with a host family. Then, we took Spanish classes, explored, used the bus system, just figuring things out.” Two years later, she went to the Dominican Republic for a nonprofit project. Carmen said, “I wanted to work with a community to gain insight about where many of our students come from and what the schools are like.” Carmen and Arlene both stayed with host families, a significant experience that could have influenced their willingness to be flexible and demonstrate IC through optional home visits for parent teacher conferences.

Studying and teaching abroad gave Carmen and Grace greater insight into the experiences of ELLs and the language acquisition process. Grace stated, “I experienced this on a smaller level when I went to Vienna and had to learn German. I can understand it’s tiring because someone explained that they’re translating for themselves all day and literally saying everything twice.” Carmen shared why she went to the Dominican Republic and another valuable lesson about ELLs: “I get why some kids who had consistent schooling in their home language pick up English quickly. If not, the transition is difficult. I wanted to know what our families have experienced to understand how to work together here.” These reflections showed how their experiences transferred into attitudes of openness, respect, and curiosity toward their students. In addition to some of the attitudes shown, the internal outcomes of empathy and flexibility are described, particularly as the teachers revealed their perceived impact on their instructional practices. This related back to Chapter Four when Fiorella tried to explain the realities some of the parents were facing to the PTA. Carmen considered these same realities of the school community. When asked what her study abroad experiences taught her, she explained:

I think I gained an awareness that students and parents may or may not have grown up the same way that I have. So, understanding that while *I think* it’s really important that students learn X, Y, and Z, well, maybe their *parents feel* like, “I just want my kids to basically have a safe place to go to school so that I can go to work and not have to worry, and just make enough money to pay rent this month.” So, understanding that what I grew up hearing are the priorities, may not

be the same as other families. That's not to say that they don't think that learning their multiplication facts is important, but that the families may have priorities that I've never thought of because of different cultural experiences.

International experiences and home visits with families provided Carmen with the shift in mindset to maintain positive presuppositions. Additionally, recognizing the difference between priorities and value demonstrated IC.

Comparable to Carmen, Grace and Arlene adapted some of their instructional practices as a result of their study abroad experiences. Grace's mindset and behavior shifted when thinking about the ELLs in her class. She explained, "So, at specials, it's not so much that I feel like they're disrespecting my class. It manifests in different ways, like not answering questions or talking to your friends in a different language during instruction, which is fine." Like Grace, Arlene was conscious about how she could adjust her own instructional decisions. She considered the lessons learned from her studying abroad experience:

It made me more reflective about what I do and how I say things. Also, listening to the kids, asking them for their opinions. I think many teachers tend to think about being the one to give and not to get from the kids. So that's always part of that process, asking, "How do you think this went? What could've helped you more?" So, thinking about situations where you found the right way to explain something...that reflective piece is looking at the how the kids process it...

Arlene went on to explain the importance of making the curriculum personal and being flexible to changing things on the fly. To consider how to maximize learning

opportunities, Arlene asked the students to reflect with her, suggesting reflection and flexibility are vital to developing IC.

Flexibility and adaptability can be helpful in intercultural settings, and this is especially relevant when dealing with uncomfortable moments or instances when a negative situation is overcome. Since participants were asked about their experiences abroad in general, this suggests Arlene and Carmen incorporated these uncomfortable moments into their responses because of the insights provided. For Carmen, her worldview and self-awareness began to change when she was studying abroad in the spring of 2003. She explained:

This happened to be the same spring that we went to war. So, it was very interesting as we traveled through Europe, there were so many anti-war, anti U.S. protests and marches. In college, you're still a kid...and sort of semi clueless to things going on in the rest of the world. But [it] gave insight to America, like, "We're so great!" Well, you know what, maybe we're not. So, how we do look through the eyes of other countries? How do our actions as the United States impact other cultures? I would say that was sort of my first significant look at myself, my country, and where I'm from through another lens.

Referencing back to the results of the ICCSv2, the teachers and administrators were at different points on the spectrum of IC, suggesting that cultural self-awareness needs to be examined. As she described her own self-awareness developing during her time overseas, Carmen demonstrated several skills, including observing, listening, analyzing,

and reflecting. By doing so, her former reality of United States was altered, as she continued to develop intercultural competence.

Another experience that was uncomfortable, yet significant to gaining IC, was when Arlene studied in a small town in France. Her reflection about this incident involved stress and isolation but encouraged maintaining a positive mindset and finding mutual understanding:

I was heading to a bookstore to meet a friend in the late afternoon, but it was closed. So, I walked down an alley and knocked on the door...I don't know what transpired, but I was in this exchange with an angry man several balconies up who was swearing at me in French. He started spitting and throwing things at me in the street, and I didn't do anything. I felt like, how do you deal with that?

Years later, these moments of confusion prompted skills of observing and listening when working with students. Arlene also demonstrated outcomes of empathy and effective communication. She continued:

So, that always reminds me to listen to our kids when they talk about experiences. And knowing that sometimes things happen and how important it is to have somebody to talk to. I always think about how isolated, helpless, and confused I felt. So being mindful, observing the kids, and seeing that look in their eyes if they don't understand what's going on around them. You can't always solve the problems, but you can be a sounding board.

Both Arlene and Carmen realized the importance of safety and building trust.

Arlene said, “You have to rely on yourself for coping mechanisms. Some kids have gone

through detention centers or were separated from family. Just being aware and letting them know you're in a safe space.” Meanwhile, Carmen had a similar sentiment when asked how her experiences abroad impacted her as a teacher and the interactions with students. She reflected on the goal of building feelings of trust and safety while maintaining high expectations. She stated, “I hope students know they can trust me. Also, I'm not out to get them, but that I'm telling them they need to change their behaviors because I want them to learn and do their best.”

Summary of study and teaching abroad experiences.

The participants spoke favorably about their study and teaching abroad experiences, and the findings related to their development of IC. First, attitudes of openness, respect, curiosity, and the ability to tolerate ambiguity were displayed, and four participants attributed this to their experiences living with host families or international students. Their stories of navigating new languages, cities, and cultures demonstrated increased self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness. For example, teachers shared that their time in other countries provided greater insight into the experiences of their ELLs, the language acquisition process, level of previous schooling, and the reality of what some of the parents were facing. When describing moments of confusion or figuring out a new way of life, flexibility and adaptability were the most helpful attributes. Likewise, participants expressed that being flexible transferred into their instructional practice by making the curriculum relevant and changing things on the fly. Additionally, participants considered feelings of empathy and mindset shifts, which involved maintaining positive presuppositions and finding mutual

understandings. For instance, one teacher recommended slowing down and not assuming others' values, especially concerning safety or basic needs. The participants' experiences abroad were a contributing factor to offering parent teacher conferences as home visits to build relationships and trust.

Influential Personal and Professional Experiences

Three participants shared unique professional experiences for drastically different reasons, yet, all three seemed attribute these periods of time to have developed their IC. Brian shared his time at one of the elementary schools in the same school district and the insight it provided him. He explained his first cultural experience when he moved from Ohio:

There were families who were adamant about education, and they almost pushed their kids to the breaking point to be successful. Most families were upper-class and predominately White, and there were also African American families who had lived in the neighborhood for a long time, so a generational poverty piece to that. I felt my eyes were opened to some of the inequities of public education. I was intimidated driving into that neighborhood to go to work, so I can imagine how students bussed in probably felt.

Since Brian had not experienced international travel as a child or in college, this seemed to be a critical point in his development of IC. In addition to seeing the vast differences and potential inequities, he demonstrated empathy and perspective taking.

Another professional experience was shared by Grace when she was at the Manhattan School of Music in Harlem for graduate school. She reflected on the positive

living experience, the moment when she decided to become a teacher, and how it developed her IC:

It taught me socialization and independence. Everybody was from somewhere else, and we had great interactions. We did an outreach program in New York City Public Schools and performed a musical. Afterwards, the students got our autographs on paper towels. They truly connected to a range of classical to contemporary songs. I saw the power of music crossing boundaries and knew I wanted to become a music teacher.

The moment at the school was an informed frame of reference shift for Grace, and like the participants who studied abroad, her integrative living situation taught her about valuing culture, openness, and appropriate and effective communication.

Like Brian and Grace, the last professional experience of Darcy's involved eye-opening situations pushing her to develop IC and reflect on the impact on her as a teacher. She said:

My husband joined the military, so this Puerto Rican girl came to Kentucky. It was a culture shock, but people from the South have a Southern charm. So, they say sweetie pie, and I think that was like my culture. So, I worked for Department of Defense, and students had challenges because of frequent moves and deployments. One of my four-year-old kids said, "I haven't seen my dad for 25 years!" But then again, I was reading this report about how kids sense time, and time for them is so lengthy. So, I think military children are so strong and those challenges connect to many of ours here.

Darcy understood that feeling of a sudden cultural shift but found similarities where she could. Additionally, she transferred her learnings to her current professional setting by demonstrating empathy to students going through separation or the adjustment of a recent move.

Two participants shared personal stories about how their families persevered through difficult times. For Fiorella, she was speaking passionately about teacher mindset and how vital it is for teachers to believe in their students. This prompted her to consider examples of when living through something can result in increased understanding, empathy, and even promote advocacy. Fiorella stated, “There was a story of a Senator was entirely against policies benefiting special education until his grandson was born with a severe chromosome disorder. He became an advocate because you must live it to understand how it really worked.” She explained how this had relevance in her personal and professional life. Fiorella shared, “My son is in special education. He’s very smart, but he’s been considered mediocre because of slow processing. You must live it to understand how to best help kids. That doesn’t mean it’s easy, but you must work harder.” Whether it is chromosome disorder, a processing issue, or some other difficulty, Fiorella brings up a critical point about often needing to live through something to become an advocate. Erin also shared an experience that impacted her greatly, both personally and professionally:

I believe in early education because I have a special boy. He’s 30 years old now, but he was four and a half when he got meningitis. So, we left Columbia for a hospital in Miami, and the doctor said he’s going to die. He was in coma for 20

days, but it was a miracle...It's a long and hard story...Then, I was living in Columbia, and I worked with my son at home for six and a half years while traveling to Philadelphia twice a year. I learned so much about the brain.

When asked about takeaways from such an emotional experience, Erin stated, “I gained knowledge and persistence. They said he wouldn't be able to do anything, and he participated in the Special Olympics. So, when I teach the classes here, I share about children's brains and the potential.” Both of these personal experiences developed attitudes, knowledge, and informed frame of reference shifts to contribute to their IC. Erin and Fiorella modeled advocacy for their sons and the willingness to transfer what they learned into their instructional practices.

Summary of Theme #2

Regardless of which type of experience was being shared, shifts in mindset from uncomfortable situations or time periods stood out as an attribute of IC gained by the participants. When teachers were overseas and felt confusion, stress, and the need to navigate a new intercultural situation, critical thinking skills and flexibility were also beneficial. Study and teaching abroad experiences increased self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, sociolinguistic awareness, and greater insights into students' experiences. When considering personal or professional experiences, participants gained context specific knowledge (the brain), empathy, and perspective taking when navigating matters that required discussion and problem solving or even life-threatening illnesses. When reflecting on tough situations, participants expressed the importance and power of advocacy.

The teachers and administrators also considered how these experiences might have transferred into their instructional practices. When reflecting on how their childhoods were influential to their IC, participants were able to promote a growth mindset, value strengths of all students, create a positive classroom environment, and demonstrate flexibility in trying new strategies. Additionally, the participants felt that those moments of difficulty brought to light the how critical it can be to build trust and make students feel safe. Participants gained effective communication skills due to practice with perspective taking and maintaining positive presuppositions. Also, the experience of staying with host families encouraged two of the teachers to build relationships with their students' families by doing home visits. Overall, the most salient points learned from the experiences were: flexibility, persistence in trying new strategies, and promoting feelings of safety were essential factors when working with struggling students.

Theme #3 – Wide-Ranging Interpretations of Access and Opportunity

Meeting the needs of all learners was important to all participants, yet the teachers and administrators held wide-ranging interpretations how to do so through the lens of access and opportunity. The spectrum included descriptions of specific programs and classes offered at the school *and* extreme instances of poverty and trauma impacting students. For access and opportunity to involve the school being a safe place where students and families feel cared for and understood, this required a deep understanding of many of the challenges addressed in Chapter Four plus effective communication.

From the participants' perceptions, teachers' IC can impact the school community in positive ways. Students and parents feel valued, safe, and supported when teachers overcome stereotypes, understand multiple perspectives, and make time for teachable moments to overcome misunderstandings. Key factors involved building a strong connection between the school and community, valuing language and culture, and being open and curious, especially so teachers can understand many families' realities involving poverty, trauma, and immigration. Demonstrating IC in this school context required an understanding that values and belief systems are embedded into cultural settings (home and school), and values and priorities can differ. The following sections describe how a deep understanding of access and opportunity can be acquired through building cultural and context specific professional knowledge, empathy and flexibility, and effective communication skills. These three sections contribute to answering RQ 1 by describing and understanding the development of IC. The last section, the perceived impact of IC on students connected to RQ 3, and this was evident by the wide-ranging interpretations of how to meet the needs of all learners.

Cultural and Professional Knowledge

Brian, Carmen, and Arlene all discussed how to obtain cultural knowledge, and although they all explained it somewhat differently, the common goal was understanding to build relationships. Brian reiterated maintaining the attitude of openness and withholding judgment, especially when learning new cultural knowledge:

Start to learn about the cultures of the students and be willing to learn about the different traditions, religions, and cultural observances within these cultures. I

feel like you have to do that but without judgment. Even though it may not be the way that I believe, I am open to understanding and listening to why it's the way you believe.

Arlene and Carmen shared several approaches to learning about culture, and while teachers might be seeking knowledge because of concerns, increased awareness remains the result of this new learning. Arlene explained:

I think for a lot of teachers, it's been in response to a need or a situation. So, if I'm getting brand new students and I don't know anything about where they're from, I can show them that I'm interested by finding out. Also, just talking to them and asking them questions. So, I think part of it is doing a little bit of research and it doesn't have to be just reading. It could be movies, music, watching international news, and going online.

Carmen shared another approach to gaining deep cultural knowledge by reading biographies, studying history, and visiting museums:

I mean in reading biographies, reading biographies about people from all different types of backgrounds. This weekend I went to the Portrait Gallery with my mom for the new 19th Amendment exhibit that just opened since it'll be their 100th anniversary next year. And I was amazed by the number of women who I had never heard about, the number of women who had gone to college, Black and White, in the late 1800s or early 1900s.

Carmen considered the gaps in her own knowledge and how to embed this information into the existing curriculum.

Teachers and administrators are frequently sent to professional development and conferences outside of school. Instead, colleagues, parents, and community members are the closest in proximity, yet often the least utilized resource to gain knowledge. Deep cultural knowledge might be obtained through conversations and building relationships over time. On the other hand, opportunities can be more formal and planned, as shared in the following responses from Carmen and Grace. Carmen stated, “A while ago, we had a panel of parents and community members that came to speak with the teachers about their experiences as immigrants and as parents of students in the school.” The parent panel was planned by the school district, whereas, Grace took the initiative to collaborate with parents to gain their expertise. In fact, she sent a survey home with students asking what kind of music or dancing they enjoy. She said, “For African dance, Tesa’s family...they’re so great to watch. I think when they were in third grade, I did High Life, a Ghana celebration dance. Also, two of our custodians know parents from the community who dance as well.” This illustration of collaboration required a level of respect, openness, and willingness to think outside the box to gain knowledge and share it with the students. In the section about challenges, the ideas that “teachers are the holders of knowledge” and “parents are okay with whatever” were addressed. Instead, Grace and Carmen shared instances of the parents and community members sharing their cultural knowledge and becoming active participants.

Some of the challenges presented in Chapter Four related to the lack of socio-linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge. In addition to Grace wondering if students were fooling around, Arlene explained that confusion occurred when some of the

students use a different register, which can be perceived as disrespect by some of the teachers. Another difference related to language was Erin's frustration with a teacher mixing up the middle name and last names. This type of knowledge can also impact parents, and Darcy provided an example of overcoming a misunderstanding by explaining the importance of biliteracy. When parents were not reading to their children because they could not read in English, Darcy knew that strengthening a child's first language and valuing the skills the parents could bring to the table were critical to the success of the students. She used her cultural knowledge and socio-linguistic awareness to demonstrate effective communication, resulting in equitable practices for her students.

Grace, Brian, Carmen, Fiorella, and Arlene shared specific courses or PD they attributed to increasing their IC. Brian and Carmen both expressed that the courses related to responsive teaching practices helped teachers know how to maintain structure, manage behavior, and build relationships in the classroom. Carmen shared:

Responsive teaching PD helped because with classroom management, I'm not good at tallies, prizes, keeping up with stickers, stars, and all that. So, I prefer for responsive tools like logical consequences. And another idea in some of the books was about home visits and getting to know families just on another level and kind of creating that community. Just sort of seeing and understanding where the kids are coming from.

When asked about opportunities to embed cultural awareness into instruction, Brian also spoke highly of responsive teaching. He said:

I think there are lots of opportunities. We do morning meeting, so there's time to talk about different cultures or are [sic] aspects of cultures that might be similar across different groups. I think with history there's an opportunity to talk about similarities and differences or in science, when we are doing classifications - we don't have to just look at rocks and minerals. There are lots of opportunities within writing and reading about culture. Talking to somebody is probably the best way to learn...

Carmen was in agreement with Brian, and she explained, "I think that it also does a good job creating opportunities for students to share things about themselves or a celebration or a holiday occurring that week where you could fit in some extra time to talk about that."

In addition to building knowledge about interventions and enrichment, there were additional challenges related to poverty and trauma. Fiorella noted a class on trauma that was offered to the staff as an afterschool PD. Many of the critical issues that families are dealing with are addressed in this course. For example, reasons for trauma could involve family separation, fear of being deported, overcrowded living situations, abuse, or neglect. Fiorella explained, "We worked with the psychology and social services people to arrange for the PD on trauma informed practices. It is important to prepare our teachers to support students in crisis."

Understanding the meaning of trauma and effects of poverty is valuable. However, using the knowledge to inform instructional practices requires additional skills and outcomes. Brian reflected on how to prepare teachers and develop their IC:

We can't send everybody home with a book and expect them all to come back culturally competent. That's been tried with Eric Jensen and other books. I learned great strategies, but it didn't change the way I understood or interacted with people. It really is about listening and taking those opportunities to communicate with people from other cultures.

Arlene also mentioned Jensen's work (2009) relating to poverty when she reflected on her return from teaching at middle school for one year:

I knew what our kids needed and the situation they faced. It started me on the path of instilling a sense of urgency. We must do everything we can for these kids because if not, we're setting them up for failure. It led me to look at research like Eric Jensen and how poverty affects kids and other authors as well. I was mad when I read it.

While Arlene and Brian mentioned this resource related to poverty, their responses did not include the impact of the research in the classroom. This warrants additional discussion that will be addressed in Chapter Six.

Flexibility and Empathy

When participants were asked to describe characteristics of interculturally competent educators, four participants said flexibility. To describe what she meant by flexible, Grace described what it is not by saying, "Status quo or stagnant versus fluid and flexibility." Darcy echoed this point and stated, "I will say very flexible, always willing to try, it's just the willingness to learn about others." Her point about needing to try was also indicated by Arlene:

So, reciprocity and being flexible. You know just knowing that, hey I thought this was going to work but I didn't because you and I don't necessarily have the same experiences so we might have to come at things in a different way.

When teachers are describing flexibility and approaches to demonstrating IC, doing whatever it takes or perseverance, was essential to achieving the intended external outcomes.

Additionally, Darcy shared a story demonstrating the power of flexibility and observation, along with being curious and a good listener. This example showed how skills can lead to empathy and effective communication:

...And this community, the kids go through so much. The cost of living here is very high so they're not able to afford an apartment by themselves. So, three families - one lives in the living room, one in one room, and one in the other room. So, one day one of my kids, you can tell she's so tired, she's dragging. I asked, "What's going on?" The mama just had a baby, and she's sleeping in the same room with the baby, two other siblings, Mommy, and Daddy. So, of course, they cannot sleep. So, we have to be aware as educators of the needs and be caring. I will say the power of observation as an educator is so important. Observe, interview your babies, talk to them, relate to them, and be able to just feel like they're humans and respect them. Make sure they know you care!

While Brian was the only participant who discussed empathy in detail, Erin stated compassion which is similar. She said, "For me, I would say if someone is compassionate. Because it doesn't matter, it goes beyond. Because it doesn't matter who

the person is, where the person comes from, you care about the human being. Kindness.”

Accepting difference was also stated by Brian when he explained:

I think interculturally competent people are empathetic to what's going on around them. It's understanding what makes someone else tick and that other people see things differently. To me, I think that's fascinating... Some people believe different things based on where they grew up. Some people come from another culture and are not accepting of people from other cultures. It doesn't make you just to come from another culture and to live in this culture. It's about being open to new ideas, people, and beliefs.

When asked how empathy is acquired, Brian continued, “Be able to listen to somebody else's side of the story. You must be willing to withhold judgment to be empathetic. I don't feel like you can be very empathetic if you are judging them at the same time.” The research suggested the following: the attitude of openness and the skill of listening assisted in demonstrating empathy, and this can occur without an agreement on values and beliefs.

Appropriate and Effective Communication

Literature reviewed for Chapter Two included the importance of effective communication which can be determined by the individual, however, appropriate behavior can only be established by the other person. In this case, the perceptions of students, parents, and colleagues determined the appropriateness of a teacher's communication in relation to intercultural sensitivity. Many challenges were presented about communication, including Erin's example about a parent who viewed the teacher

as mean and uncaring. While the parent liaison was present to bridge the gap between the parent and teacher, the different views of appropriate communication still exist.

When flipping this scenario, how students and parents communicate with teachers can be presumed as appropriate based on the teacher's viewpoint. In Arlene's example about the teacher perceived the student as being rude and disrespectful. Communication is complex when considering who elects appropriateness, especially if either party has the decision-making power. The following findings expand on how communication in this school context require going beyond basic expectations to develop a caring culture.

Several respondents discussed the importance of taking a variety of approaches when communicating with parents and students. Brian expressed concern about the time constraint on teachers by stating, "Well, teachers traditionally are adept at communicating because that's a large part of the profession. I think in schools, it's creating the time to communicate with students and families." At another point in the interview, when asked how teachers can demonstrate their IC to go beyond tolerance, Brian provided examples of small moments that can have a great impact on effective communication. He included:

I think it is about listening, being open, and taking the opportunities that are provided. Those don't happen all the time, but when something comes up about culture or when you know when there is an issue and there's more to it, there's always more to it. So, listening and hearing them out. I know there's not enough time in the day to listen to every kid every day, but when a kid or a family is trying to say something, it really is our responsibility to listen. I feel like that

helps at least opens the door to the possibility of cultural competence or cultural understanding.

In addition to impromptu moments valuable for discussions, Fiorella shared data from a community survey that prompted initiatives to encourage teachers to make more efforts to communicate with parents. Fiorella stated, “Survey results from the community indicated the need for increased communication with parents, particularly about academic progress. Therefore, we plan to require that teachers maintain communication logs and send home quarterly interim reports.” Two artifacts from participants provided secondary sources of data to suggest these efforts were occurring. Arlene created and translated the quarterly interims in Spanish, which are sent home at the half-way point of each quarter. Fiorella used her own communication log as an artifact and as a model for teachers to understand the expectation. Her log showed as many as 25 calls to parents in a week, mostly about behavior.

Erin, Carmen, and Arlene shared examples of going beyond expectations. Additionally, throughout criterion sampling, the informal conversations with staff prompted several detailed reasons Erin has done a great deal for the school community. At least two participants noted her dedication to getting families backpacks, supplies, winter coats, holiday food, and even gifts. They emphasized that she even gathers a lot of the donations outside of school hours. Erin went on to describe how being genuine and welcoming is vital to building trust, and the artifacts were flyers for parents about each of the classes she referenced:

I call the parents. When I see parents with little kids, I usually go and say hello to them. I have this thing, it's easy for me to make others feel fine because I am a welcoming person. A few days ago, when I saw a couple over there, so I went to say, "Oh, what did you need?" So, they say, "Oh, we just found out that you have these classes." So, I said, "You can come, too. We have other programs, HIPPY programs, nutrition, and early literacy programs." The mom started coming to our program. So, it is the way that you talk to them and make them feel. That's why they'll believe what you say to them. They can feel that you're saying the truth. I can't say anything that I don't believe.

Like Erin, Darcy values authentic connections that ultimately help students feel comfortable to achieve their maximum potential. In a nomination letter for Teacher of the Year, a colleague wrote examples of going beyond the typical and expected:

She does a lot of extra things that are not part of her job description, just because she knows it will benefit our students and school community. She has interpreted for other people's conferences, taught a Spanish after school program, and sought out opportunities to promote our Spanish immersion team and Hispanic culture. We now have a yearly Hispanic Heritage Month celebration for the entire school. She has organized a visit from a group of mariachis for Cinco de Mayo. She greets everyone in Spanish no matter if they understand her or not, and eventually they greet her back with a "¡Buenos días!"

Building trust with families is a priority for Carmen and Arlene. When Carmen took a course to expand her professional knowledge, she discussed home visits as an

alternative to the traditional parent – teacher conference at school. Arlene recalled how their efforts started:

There was maybe a year or two before that we tried a welcome walk as a school, so it was a little different. Pairs of teachers would go and knock on doors and say, “Hey, I’m going to be your teacher this year and just wanted to introduce myself. Looking forward to seeing you!” That was the first time, and I thought that was great. Then, Carmen talked about the home visits, and I thought, yeah, I’m in! That’s been 10 years now.

When Carmen reflected on the home visits, she suggested her attitude, knowledge about the community, and flexibility resulted in effective communication:

I know that this family, they work until 5:00 or 5:30, so, okay, fine, I’ll take the extra time to be able to communicate. They go a little bit further. They go the extra step to be inclusive or to be aware. I think that their attitude, especially at a school like ours is we do have contract hours, but those kind of go out the window if we really want to be inclusive, if we really want to have parent involvement, if we really want to set these kids up for success. We have to go beyond the basic expectations for ourselves as teachers.

Arlene continued to reflect on their annual home visits and related it to the positive impact it can have on student behavior. She expressed that teachers and students get to know each other so much better, and it increases accountability and trust across the board. She stated:

We really thought about the sixth graders because we knew the group coming up had behavioral challenges. We just thought about what better way, like if your teacher has come to your house and sat in the living room with your parents. Then, I say to that student if we're having some issues, I am going to have a meeting at your house again. So now there's just that connection, and it breaks down the barrier. And especially because a lot of our kids start playing the language card. Like, well you can't talk to my mom because you don't speak my language and you start talking in their language, and it just becomes an easier relationship. Also, the parents feel like they're part of it, they're being welcomed into the school, and their opinion matters. It's continuous, it's a back-and-forth, it's not static or just one way.

Arlene's rich description captured her sociolinguistic awareness, deep cultural knowledge, and attitudes of openness and respect. Furthermore, taking proactive measures to support relationships and positive student behavior allows teachers to maximize the instructional time. Teachers effectively communicate with parents and with each other to build collective efficacy.

The effective communication with parents has a great impact on creating a positive classroom culture and building relationships with students. Brian stated, "I think communication is big for teachers who have higher levels of IC because you can have important conversations. You can have discussions about why some things are okay." Pausing to talk through issues is important for students and teachers, particularly to

overcome misunderstandings. Fiorella shared an example of taking the time to have the conversations to deescalate a given situation:

We get a lot of sixth grade girls that are always threatening to beat each other up because they don't like each other. So, it takes a lot of dialogue. They're exposed to things that we were never exposed to growing up. Our kids today are exposed to such social pressures that it's astounding the things they must process in a short amount of time and the turnaround of things that they must assimilate. So, when I am talking to kids, my biggest advice is to slow down and think, who told you this? Why is this happening? Is this something that's going to make it good for you or not good for you? OK, why do you think they said [that] to you? Did she say this to you face-to-face? It's dialogue.

The two administrators shared instances of having more dialogue to avoid conflict and behavior issues. These efforts are commendable, however, the roles of administrators alongside social services staff, like counselors, social workers, and psychologists was not addressed by participants.

Perceived Impact of IC on Students

Through the lens of access and opportunity, teachers and administrators shared their perceptions of how IC impacted the students (RQ 3). Teachers and school leaders are constantly making decisions that impact students. These decisions can involve curriculum planning, instructional delivery, assessment measures, differentiation, or communication with parents and colleagues. If a teacher participates in a coaching cycle, the goal might be on student engagement, student achievement, or classroom

management. At times, it is necessary to narrow the focus and by developing IC, any of those goals can be impacted. Investigating the perceived impact of IC on students required the data analysis of seven open ended semi-structured interviews, observation notes, and artifact collection. Findings of RQ 3 were intertwined within all three themes and closely associated with some of the findings of RQ 1 and RQ 2. Therefore, these findings are a synthesis and organized with the following themes: *I am important, and I feel valued; We are part of this community; I am excited about learning and feel supported; I know my teacher cares about me.*

When students feel part of the school and classroom community, ideally, they are cared for by their classmates, peers, teachers, counselors, administrators, and other members within the school community. The exemplars, interculturally competent teachers and administrators, shared several strategies, including using culturally responsive teaching strategies to promote a positive classroom climate. As a result, Carmen expressed decreased behavior issues when mutual understandings are created between students and teachers. Additional strategies to create a supportive community were shared by Darcy through her interview, observation, and artifact collection. She attributed her experiences (RQ 2) and island life in Puerto Rico to having a close connection with her students. Additionally, Darcy credited her parents and large family for developing a growth mindset and valuing all students' strengths.

Findings of RQ 3 included students developing social skills and increased opportunities to collaborate with their peers. During Darcy's classroom observation, students felt comfortable sharing math strategies in English and Spanish, and they were

singing and dancing during a brain break. In the recommendation letter for Darcy, the letter stated, “She also supports students in becoming better people, consistently modeling social skills for them and helping them to manage their emotional well-being.”

This collaboration with peers was also evident through a description from Arlene:

We had a student come in from Brazil who speaks Portuguese, and I had the other Spanish speakers who were excited to learn. I made some tools for him, so we could share some phrases back and forth. It made the students reach out to him, and he felt like part of the group and it just seemed very natural and fluid at the beginning. They talk to each other and that kind of makes a bridge for them as opposed to a barrier.

This type of environment allows for feelings of safety, and this was of utmost importance after a highly publicized and troubling event occurred. During a staff presentation (included in artifact collection) following a White nationalist gathering, Brian stressed that we must ensure our students feel welcomed and part of the school’s community. This example demonstrates the need to keep students’ essential needs in the forefront.

With socioemotional needs in mind, it was not a surprise that empathy and mindset continued to emerge throughout all themes and when answering all three RQs. When a student feels like their teacher cares about them, participants expressed that the students feel heard, understood, and that their teacher is not out to get them. To create this environment, teachers and administrators reported the following key components of IC: attitudes of openness and respect, skills of observing and listening, and informed frame of reference shifts involving positive mindset and empathy. Finally, participants

pointing out the importance of teachers advocating for students, and this seemed vital to demonstrating what caring really means.

In this larger school community, students could see the access and opportunity extended to parents through classes and programs ran by the parent liaison, Erin. For her artifact collection, she shared some of the fliers that explained the Early Literacy Program, Hippy, and a technology course. When observing Erin with parents, they were learning about biliteracy, websites and applications to support learning, and even nutrition recommendations (food goes home once a week to select families). It was evident the families felt informed and like a valued part of the school community.

Summary of Theme #3

The participants held wide-ranging interpretations of access and opportunity for the student population in this school context. To connect back to RQ 1, the attributes describing IC were associated with constructing a positive cultural identity and demonstrating a positive disposition toward diversity through critical knowledge, skills, sustaining relationships and interactions with the school community. While this could involve a specific class or program providing extra support, enrichment, or language immersion, the data continued to echo participants' concerns about students and families needing help with having their basic needs met. When parts of the school community are dealing with poverty, trauma, and safety, gaining access and opportunity or taking advantage of it becomes increasingly difficult.

Theme #3 relates to having awareness of the varying needs of students and how providing access and opportunity can make a difference in the lives of all students. When

the teachers and administrators reflected on their own IC, there was a wealth of evidence related to the impact on students (RQ 3), which is summarized in Table 8. By developing IC and understanding the multitude of ways to provide access and opportunity, teachers expressed the following impact on students: increased self-awareness; cultural awareness; student engagement; self-confidence; development of social skills; collaboration with peers; feelings of safety by the school community; feeling supported academically; student advocacy skills; and the feeling of knowing their teacher looks out for them.

Table 8: Interculturally Competent Teachers and Perceived Influence on Students

Theme	Interculturally Competent Teachers	Perceived Influence on Students
I am important, and I feel valued.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • value identity and culture • show interest in students and their background • create a safe student-centered environment 	self-awareness; cultural awareness; student engagement; self-confidence
We are part of this community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multiple perspectives valued • positive classroom climate • classes and assistance for families in community 	developing social skills; collaborates with peers; feels safe and cared for by school community
I am excited to learn and feel supported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective communication about strengths and areas of growth • analyzes, reflects • differentiation/scaffolding ESOL/SPED/AAP 	feels supported academically; monitors own progress; advocates for oneself
I know my teacher cares about me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • openness, respect • observes and listens • demonstrates empathy, positive mindset, and advocacy 	feels heard and understood; feels like my teacher looks out for me

Chapter Summary

Chapter Five presented three themes that connected the investigation of intercultural competence in this diverse school setting. Theme #1 involved how teachers and administrators viewed context play a critical role in the degree of IC able to be demonstrated. Theme #2 highlighted how vital teachers' experiences were to the development of IC. Finally, theme #3 pointed out the wide-ranging interpretations of how to meet the needs of all students through the lens of access and opportunity.

Findings related to RQ 1 showed that being open to perspective taking and withholding judgment taking led to acquiring context specific knowledge and avoiding misunderstandings. Furthermore, critical reflection, mindset, and effective instructional practices were essential components of IC. The effective and high leverage instructional practices were making learning relevant to culture and student identity, creating authentic learning and assessment opportunities, providing differentiation and scaffolding, and engaging in critical conversations to build a culture of equitable practices.

The findings answered RQ 2 involved the power of personal and professional experiences. Discomfort in intercultural situations can develop flexibility, critical thinking skills, and shifts in mindset. Study and teaching abroad experiences developed teachers' self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, sociolinguistic awareness, and empathy. These experiences transferred into teachers' instructional practices, which contribute to RQ 1 and RQ 3. Childhood experiences were influential, and participants reported promoting a growth mindset, valuing strengths of all students, creating a positive classroom environment, and demonstrating flexibility in trying new strategies. The

findings of RQ 2 supported RQ 1 and RQ 3. As teachers developed their IC through experiences, they had more flexibility and persistence in trying new strategies. As a result, participants perceived students to have feelings of safety and increased academic support.

The findings of RQ 3 encompassed two critical factors, student engagement and ensuring all students' needs are being met through equitable instructional practices. When students feel excited about learning and supported academically, the teachers perceived students to have high expectations for themselves and increased self-esteem. Additionally, the findings suggested that students' felt safe and cared for, two essential ingredients for learning.

Intercultural competence is often seen as an abstract or difficult to obtain aspiration. The themes and findings in this chapter serve to emphasize how the descriptions, means of developing IC, and perceptions on the impact of students can make a difference within one school context and potentially used as a guide in other similar settings. The exemplars serve as a model or patchwork of how the IC of individual teachers and collective efforts of many can come together to support the larger school community. In Chapter Six, findings are discussed and connected back to previous chapters. Recommendations for research and practice will also be described.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' and administrators' descriptions of intercultural competence (IC), experiences contributing to the development of their IC, and the perceived impact of their IC on students. The development and understanding of intercultural competence at a diverse elementary school needed further investigation for several reasons. In the United States, the ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, and economic diversity calls for quality education that places value on culture, language, and equitable practices (Hernandez et al., 2009; Skelton, 2007). The school serves as the context of the study, and interculturally competent teachers and administrators can play an important role. Specifically, as immigrant students navigate identity negotiation, motivation and achievement can be impacted (Graham & Hudley, 2005). To avoid cultural misunderstandings which are detrimental to the learning process (Duckworth et al., 2005), IC is essential for the success of the students, teachers, and the school community.

In Chapter Two, a literature review was provided to understand how IC has been defined, conceptualized, and assessed. Several models and theories showed the development of IC, and this study applied Deardorff's (2009) Model of Intercultural Competence. The key components in this process model are *attitudes*, *knowledge*, *skills*, and *outcomes*, and two additional aspects relevant to IC are examined: teachers' past

experiences and the school's *context*. Additionally, topics addressed in the literature review included diversity in education, cultural settings, and student achievement.

Qualitative inquiry was used to investigate the IC of teachers and administrators within one diverse, Title 1 elementary school. Engaging in a constructivist approach, multiple perspectives were gathered, and the data collection was completed in two phases to allow time for criterion sampling to guide the process. Phase one involved the instructional staff completing the ICCSv2 and 10 participants recommending exemplars. Phase two included the selection of seven teachers and administrators to participate in semi-structured interviews, observations, and artifact collection. As the process unfolded, it was critical to gain insight into the perceived impact on students. From a critical theorist lens, this multifaceted understanding of IC can result in recommendations for teachers about why context and experiences must be factored in when developing IC. As a result, increased IC can lead to equitable teaching practices providing opportunities and access to all students.

As the data was collected and the story was told, participants shared rich information related to their personal and professional lives. Initially, there was no intent for a lengthy presentation of data about misunderstandings and challenges. However, as teachers and administrators shared their realities, there was a need to explain the context in Chapter Four, especially to explore the multiple perspectives offered and any systemic and structural inequities. With no simple solutions to the challenges, Chapter Five provided answers to the research questions as the exemplars reflected deeply on their IC. Chapter Six aims to bridge the previous chapters through discussion, and the chapter is

organized by RQs with discussion and conclusions for each. Recommendations for research, practice, and final thoughts are presented.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked how teachers defined and described the development of their own IC, including attitudes, knowledge, skills (Deardorff, 2009), and how their IC can be demonstrated in the current school setting. Over the course of several interviews, the interconnectedness of attitudes, knowledge, and skills became evident, yet, each was still important independently. As participants pointed out their thoughts on how attitudes were essential to acquiring knowledge and skills, these were noted in the conclusions as catalysts. Furthermore, as noted in Chapters Four and Five, a lack of sociolinguistic and cultural knowledge caused misunderstandings between teachers, parents, and students. This led me to realize I underestimated the importance of the knowledge component because I assumed it was the most concrete and easily attained compared to attitudes or skills.

Another consideration for discussion involved how participants' responses fit into the individual versus interactive parts of the process model. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) explained that cognitive and behavioral factors are often confused in compositional models. For instance, skills, like listening or analyzing, are often thought of as outwardly demonstrated, but the internal information processing occurs before the outward behavioral actions. Another powerful example was in Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) with *challenging discriminatory acts* listed as a skill. To clarify, the skill, having the *ability to process* the injustice, is an internal process, whereas, the *act of challenging*

would be placed in the external outcomes in Deardorff's (2009) more nuanced model. Despite the clear cautionary message, it took completing the data analysis to better understand the cognitive and behavioral factors within Deardorff's (2006) Intercultural Competence Model and the models referenced in the literature review (Bennett, 1986; Berry et al. (1989); Hammer et al., 2003; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

A final discussion point related to RQ 1 involves the need for conceptualizing how a process model can include more specific attributes specific to teaching. Based on the findings, the subsequent conclusions explain the importance of professional knowledge, reflection, mindset, and instructional practices. Ultimately, being able to merge IC and pedagogy requires a substantial understanding of both and of psychology.

Building on previous models toward a process orientation.

When utilizing Deardorff's (2009) Intercultural Competence Model, it was necessary to consider some of the past models and theories that contributed to the field and to my understanding of this study, particularly when the data points could be considered in various conceptualizations (Bennett, 1993; Berry et al., 1989; Ezekiel, 1968; Harris, 1977; Howell, 1982). For instance, a participant described *knowing what you don't know* which aligns with conscious incompetence in Howell's (1982) Interpersonal Model, and another teacher referenced the pressure for students to assimilate, which connected to Berry et al. (1989) in the Model of Acculturation. The principal thought teachers were at different ends of the spectrum of IC, illustrating the

usefulness of developmental models and recognizing stages of growth and IC, individually or relationally, evolving over time (Bennett, 1986; Hammer et al., 2003).

Participants provided an abundance of examples and descriptions of IC, and compositional models that identify research-based components helped organize the data (Deardorff, 2006; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

Despite their usefulness, Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) cautioned that compositional models are theoretically weak for two reasons: lacking the ability to show the conditional relationships between the components *and* unclear criteria of what constitutes competence or proficiency. The latter concern was confirmed when one participant noted a person probably could not ever fully achieve IC. On one hand, never really achieving IC could be due to not having criteria or outcomes clearly defined, *or* it could be that when conceptualized in a process model, IC becomes an iterative process of continuous improvement (Deardorff, 2006). Nonetheless, circumstances can continuously change, prompting some researchers to suggest including context as a component (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2012), which was done for this study.

Catalysts toward intercultural competence.

The participants emphasized specific interactants to be the catalysts that move a person to another part of the process orientation. Therefore, if an individual's strengths and areas of need are known, the findings would allow for targeted efforts to strengthen the higher leverage areas. Whether it is a progression of learning in math or a construct as complex as IC, knowing the potential gaps and most influential pieces of the puzzle can have a great impact on one's IC development.

The following attitudes were identified by participants as catalysts:

- *Respect and valuing culture* promoted meaningful connections and effective communication between students and teachers.
- *Openness and withholding judgement* facilitated the desire to understand deep cultural knowledge and pointed to feelings of safety, mutual understanding, and avoiding misunderstandings.
- *Curiosity* was a critical prerequisite to acquiring any type of knowledge.

Increasing knowledge to avoid cultural misunderstandings.

Knowledge by itself does not develop IC (Deardorff, 2006), however, socio-linguistic awareness and deep cultural knowledge are of utmost importance in this diverse setting. Several participants attributed some of the misunderstandings to parents and teachers having different values and belief systems embedded into their culture (Fuligni, 1997; McInerney, 2008). These value systems are critical when analyzing cultural settings, primarily home and school that can impact students' motivation and achievement (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001; Rogoff, 2003). For instance, students could be receiving conflicting messages related to individual or social motivations, academic and behavioral expectations, and the meaning of appropriate behavior (Delpit, 2006; Plaut & Markus, 2005; Rogoff, 2003). Conflicting messages are also possible among parents, teachers, administrators, and the community. With that in mind, three assumptions emerged and are contested using sociolinguistic and deep cultural knowledge.

Teachers are the only holders of knowledge.

Teachers and administrators stressed the importance of building a two-way partnership with the community (Riehl, 2000), however, some participants pointed out that parents tend to sit back and defer to teachers. Erin, the parent liaison, educates parents about expectations in American public schools to encourage participation, and she also offers formal classes for parents to gain knowledge about technology, nutrition, and early literacy, as stated in Chapter Four. Serving the school community and welcoming parents are critical efforts (Scheurich, 1998), and an example that challenges the assumption that teachers have all the knowledge was when the music teacher asked parents and custodians to help with an African dance lesson. When teachers invited parents to share their cultural knowledge, this showed that anyone can be the holder of knowledge and promoted positive message about identity (Skelton, 2007). One last instance involved a participant who noted the students were coming to school without background knowledge due to inconsistent schooling. In this case, this was another misconception because all students come with their own unique funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2005) that can be valued.

If I don't read and write in English, I cannot help my child academically.

This assumption was made by parents, students, and occasionally teachers. One of the administrators explained that community survey results suggested that parents wished they knew more about their child's academic progress and ways to support from home. One teacher gave a specific example of parents not being able to read in English, and therefore, not reading to their children at all. Instead, the teacher worked with the

parents to understand why fluency in one's first language is vital and maintaining and developing immigrant students' bilingual skills can lead to increased achievement (Hernandez et al., 2009; Olsen, 1997). Furthermore, teachers would benefit from additional sociolinguistic awareness through research, PD, and collaboration with coaches and ESOL teachers. Language development of ELLs can be supported when teachers realize the classroom is a social arena where learning can be constructed, and Donato and McCormick (1994) suggested that participation in the values, beliefs, and behaviors of a community of practice can generate language learning. Additionally, newcomers learning through "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29) allows a learner to grow from others while gradually being a full participant.

Assimilation can equate to increased motivation and academic achievement.

This assumption has been challenged for decades (Berry et al., 1989; Olsen 1997; Lam 2006), yet, the misunderstandings shared demonstrate the need to consider how increase the staff's cultural and sociolinguistic knowledge. The example of a teacher mixing up the last names of a Hispanic student can negatively impact motivation and achievement (Denzin, 2007). Another instance was when a teacher referenced the pressure for students to assimilate but there were not many alternative suggestions made by participants. Instead, the ideal is for students to avoid assimilation, marginalization, and separation (Berry et al., 1989) and be able to be successful in school. Graham and Hudley (2005) suggested a pathway where individuals have a positive self-image relating to cultural identity and achieve at high levels. This requires students to be able to navigate between cultural settings and encouraging parents to teach their children their

ethnic history, heritage, and culture (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001; Lam 2006).

Furthermore, it means teachers must not only understand but be held accountable for maintaining high expectations, valuing language and culture authentically, treating students with love and respect, and instructing using a learner-centered approach (Cushner, 2011; Skelton, 2002; Scheurich, 1998).

Conceptualizing a model for teachers incorporating themes that emerged.

Professional knowledge, reflection, a positive mindset, and instructional practices are the four topics that emerged from the findings. These powerful tools are essential for an effective teacher who wants to continuously learn and improve. The findings suggested increased knowledge about poverty, trauma, and culturally responsive teaching would be beneficial (Cushner, 2011; DeJaeghere & Cao, 2009; Scheurich, 1998). For professional development to be meaningful, the power of reflection is needs to be ingrained into practice. Next, mindset was an internal outcome that emerged. It might be confused by some individuals to be an attitude; however, mindset is far more than being positive. A positive mindset means believing that all students want to learn and viewing diversity as an asset (Riehl, 2000). Finally, the desired external outcomes for a refined teaching model would include communication and instructional practices. The instructional practices include four essential actions: making learning relevant to culture and student identity, creating authentic learning and assessment opportunities, providing differentiation and scaffolding, and engaging in critical conversations to build a culture of equitable practices (Dooley & Villanueva 2006; Borman & Overman, 2004). These are

deeply embedded practices interculturally competent teachers and administrators should want within one's repertoire of teaching and engrained in a school's culture.

Research Question 2

This research question was designed to investigate about experiences teachers attributed to their IC. The participants were easily able to share professional and personal experiences. The more challenging piece seemed to be articulating how it influenced their IC, especially in the classroom. None of the exemplars seemed to take their experiences for granted, however, some were of a more reflective nature. This seemed to be almost therapeutic and eye-opening once teachers were able to articulate how the experiences impacted them.

Interestingly, the essential components identified as being helpful to avoiding misunderstandings were almost identical to the attributes gained from cultural experiences. Specifically, the more integrative experiences showed increased development of IC in the areas of openness, respect, deep cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness. This was not surprising because more integrative experiences such as studying abroad or living with host families tend to have more of a profound impact on IC (Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). It seemed like the depth of the internal outcomes, including flexibility, adaptability, mindset, and frame of reference shifts, can be significantly impacted by experiences. Furthermore, the negative and stressful experiences considered as a crisis of engagement by Skelton (2007) resonated with participants, and their reactions seemed to move toward active learning and doing. In

other words, based on their difficult experiences, the teachers and administrators were motivated to learn from them and even become advocates for their students.

In addition to becoming advocates, the participants felt strongly about being persistent and flexible in trying new strategies and understanding students' misconceptions (Duckworth et al., 2005). They knew that differentiation and scaffolding were not just buzz words, but it involved perspective taking to realize what the student might need and trying ideas until something works. It was surprising that participants did not bring up tolerating ambiguity at any point in the investigation (Deardorff, 2009; Dooly & Villanueva, 2006). This is a critical attitude attached to curiosity that makes a big difference when navigating unknown countries, cultures, or even the mind of a struggling student.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked about how teachers perceived their intercultural competence influenced students. Since RQ 3 has overlap with RQ 1 and RQ 2, similar points may be reiterated but with the emphasis on the perceived student outcomes. In efforts to bridge the research, theory, and practice, the semi-structured interviews were designed to flow logically. Therefore, there was a natural progression of participants sharing their own understanding of IC, some of their experiences, and then how their IC can make a difference for their students in the classroom.

In Chapter Five, the findings showed that teachers perceived their IC to facilitate students feeling important and valued. The idea of value created three critical factors: identity or how one feels about themselves; relationships with others; and the overall

environment or climate. In Chapter Four, participants considered the context of the diverse school setting and named the following factors: racial, ethnic, and linguistic differences, religion, learning styles, and socio-economic status (SES). For teachers to respect and value the many characteristics creating the unique student population, findings in Chapter Five included that meaningful relationships are facilitated when understanding similarities and differences and valuing culture are fundamental. Furthermore, the findings suggested that valuing culture can mean respecting the language acquisition process and previous schooling experiences. Valuing the previous knowledge students come with boosts self-confidence, student engagement, and motivation (Graham & Hudley, 2005; Moll et al., 2005), and this can be achieved by making teaching and learning culturally relevant (Pearce, 2007).

Another way to promote students feeling valued involved reasons for contacting parents. In Chapter Five, participants suggested the primary reason that teachers reached out to parents was regarding concerns. Instead, teachers should connect with parents to learn about culture and to communicate about students' strengths. Consistent and clear communication to parents impacts students, and the exemplars achieved this through home visits, conversations discussing the importance of biliteracy, and presuming positive intentions.

Another important finding presented in Chapter Five related to creating a supportive school community. Acceptance and togetherness are feelings that can be achieved through purposeful community outreach and by teachers developing an awareness of issues related to students' basic needs. Borman and Overman (2004) named

a supportive school community as the most powerful school characteristic promoting resiliency, and this is created by achieving an environment where students feel safe and comfortable, a finding that was confirmed in this study. To help students feel safe, it is important to understand the challenges many new immigrant families are faced with. As referenced in Chapter Four, these difficulties included lack of education, reasons for seeking asylum, trauma, separation of families, and fear of deportation.

With these extreme needs of the community, communication and support from the school and teachers is vital. However, Cushner and Mahon (2009) stated, “Teachers also report that uncertainty regarding communication with families of diverse backgrounds was a significant barrier to effective involvement” (p. 317). According to the results of the ICCSv2 shared in Chapter Five, this uncertainty was evident for some of the instructional staff. Some of the concerning findings included teachers identifying with the following: avoidance of people from other cultures, lack of understanding regarding translated communication, and apprehension to making initial contact with people from different cultures.

On the other extreme, the exemplars in the study identified several ways to promote community engagement and support, both in the classroom and the school. These findings were shared in Chapter Five, and they included providing a positive classroom climate through culturally responsive teaching and valuing students’ strengths. Additionally, parents felt supported through classes and programs ran by the parent liaison, and programs like this can be catalysts for schools to get parents involved and actively supporting their children.

In Chapter Four, it was clear that providing a positive and equitable learning environment for all students was a priority. However, there were contrasting views on how this could be achieved due to the numerous programs and priorities. Specifically, there were concerns about the divisiveness resulting in negative mindsets and low expectations, for both teachers and students. Three additional challenges at the overall school level included: problematic student behaviors; opportunities and support for intervention and enrichment; and meeting the needs of ELLs and students receiving special education services. While some of these programs provided access and opportunity; not all stakeholders saw it that way. To be clear, they seemed to think access and opportunity was being achieved for *some* of the students in the school but *not for all students*. Furthermore, the findings showed the need for additional support for the dually identified students eligible for ESOL *and* SPED services.

In Chapter Five, the ICCSv2 results showed that select teachers would benefit from building their skills and outcomes in the areas of flexibility, analyzing, and reflecting. To help struggling students, the findings suggested the importance of teacher mindset and being flexible, with an emphasis on being persistent or trying instructional strategies until something works. When considering how to differentiate and make students feel supported, Olsen (1997) calls for educators to challenge the Americanization process of disproportionate tracking of immigrant students. Therefore, the optimal environment would be a heterogeneous mix in classrooms allowing for students to help one another and work collaboratively. Skilled teachers who can differentiate through scaffolding, adapting instruction, and providing equitable

assessments can create an environment for students to feel engaged and supported (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006).

The findings suggested that when students and parents feel listened to and respected, the word *care* has more meaning. In Chapter Four, some of the challenges included a parent thinking her child's teacher *did not care* and the need for teachers to better understand parents' and students' realities, frequently involving poverty, trauma, and immigration. By developing intercultural competence, the teachers are more likely to bridge the gap with parents. The findings in Chapter Five suggested helping teachers with perspective taking, overcoming stereotypes, and presuming positive intentions. Furthermore, communication was key to building trust, particularly through home visits and taking a genuine interest in families. Participants found that when a teacher makes extra effort with families or advocates for students, they were demonstrating what *caring* really means. Surprisingly, the ICCSv2 showed that about a fifth of teachers would not know what to do about someone being made fun of. This was concerning because IC involves attitudes of openness and respect and the outcome of effective communication, which can include advocating for others.

Scheurich (1998) found the following to be critical components that need to be in place for students to feel cared for: building a strong connection between the school and community, treating students with love and appreciation, valuing language and culture, maintaining high expectations, and instructing through a learner-centered approach. The findings from Chapter Five supported these components, and a stronger degree of

empathy was possible when teachers were open, curious, and active listeners toward their students.

These approaches would be especially beneficial when taken with students who exhibit challenging behavior. In Chapter Five, a significant finding was that mindset involved the following: believing that all students want to learn, maintaining high expectations and positive presuppositions, and viewing diversity as an asset. This positive mindset would be particularly helpful in this setting because research shows ineffective practices relating to behaviors of students of color and institutional approaches to school discipline (Cushner & Mahon, 2009).

One approach is helping teachers understand that students are shifting between cultural settings (Munro, 2007; Lam, 2006; Rogoff, 2003), and they need guidance and support in doing so. In Chapter Four, a challenge was that teachers misunderstood a student's voice register for a lack of respect. With that in mind, it is imperative to help teachers navigate valuing non-standard and standard English, while also teaching students basic skills to act *appropriate* in different situations (Delpit, 2006; Scheurich, 1998). Overall, the findings showed the need for a balance between keeping up with the momentum of instruction *and* making time for discussion around teachable moments and misunderstandings to ensure students feel cared for.

Limitations and Delimitations

When the study was conceptualized, methodological issues and limitations were considered. In Chapter Three, sampling design challenges, triangulation, research credibility, assumptions, and ethics were addressed. This section explains the limitations

that were for the most part, outside of my control. Despite the research design being within my control, the limitations of the design restricted my ability to answer one of the research questions to the extent of the other two. Similar to the limitations impeding the RQs or inferences that that can be drawn in the findings, delimitations intentionally do so by defining the scope of the study. The decisions made in order to answer the RQs and for practical reasons are described in the delimitations.

Limitations.

1. Researcher Bias

In addition to Maxwell's (2005) Interactive Model of Research Design, Lutrell's (2010) Reflexive Model of Research Design was used because of the emphasis of research relationships. As an instructional coach at the school for three years, I felt very invested in the success of the students and staff. As an active participant on grade level teams and in implementing school wide initiatives, I knew the teachers well and had existing thoughts on their attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Furthermore, I was the school's lead in providing training about issues around equity and cultural competence. In short, I had many conversations with staff members through the years that demonstrated various degrees of intercultural competence, which led me to anticipate who some of the participants might be. Lutrell (2010) explains the criteria used to validate research with the terms authenticity and reciprocity, which are established through the research relationships. Concerns for the interests of the research participants are evident throughout the inquiry process and through the researcher's critique and

discussion that integrate the participants' perceptions. As an advocate for the teachers and students within the school, this integration, along with member checking contributed to addressing the limitation of research bias.

2. Longevity

The research approval process within the school district was lengthy, and the data collection window was small, comparatively. The data collection timeline, also shown in figure 4, showed the four weeks that were used to employ the survey, criterion sampling, interviews, observation, and artifact collection. This fast-paced timeline was due to the mid-April blackout period for research because of state testing.

3. Experiences and Context

Varying interpretations or ambiguities are deeply rooted within language, and this was evident with the word experiences during the semi-structured interviews.

While one of the research questions specifically asked about experiences, qualitative research and the interpretive techniques aim to understand the human experience (Denzin and Lincoln, 2002). When participants described their personal and professional experiences, childhood and study abroad experiences were noted by participants for having an important part in their development of IC. When participants discussed experiences at the current school setting, their description seemed to be less about development and instead about efforts to overcome challenges. The experience in the current context was difficult to separate because the participants and researcher were still within the daily grind

of the experience without the time and space to reflect. While this is a limitation, it is also addressing the Silverman's critique when he argues that qualitative research approaches leave out contextual sensitivities at times and focus more on meanings and experiences. By involving both context and experience, the research honors the participants' multiple realities and understandings of their IC.

4. Research question 3 investigated teachers' perceptions about how their own IC impacted students. While the study was able to gather results and interpretations of the findings, not nearly as much data was able to be collected without interviewing students or parents. Results and recommendations based on RQ 3 should be further investigated.

Delimitations.

1. Sampling/Participants

The sampling selected for this study identified exemplars who were named by their colleagues through criterion sampling. Therefore, the sampling was selective and purposeful, rather than representative of all educators within the school setting.

2. Location

The school setting was appropriate for the research questions being asked, and it was appropriate for issues of access.

3. Time/Expectations for Participants

The timing and expectations of participants were clear from the beginning to ensure teachers understood what was being asked of them and so they would not

be overextended. Therefore, ongoing observations, interviews, and artifact collection were scheduled within the timeline. The four-week window moved quickly but was enough time for the completion of the data collection for the scope of this study.

Recommendations and Implications

For practice.

Implications of this study for practitioners in diverse elementary schools with ethnic, racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity include the following:

1. Additional professional development is needed for teachers to understand how being interculturally competent can involve complex issues such as poverty, trauma, and immigration. Each of these issues has its own body of research and practical strategies for instruction.
2. Additional professional development is needed for teachers to understand sociolinguistic awareness and deep cultural knowledge to avoid misunderstandings. Two possible approaches are working collaboratively with the ESOL specialists and creating a parent panel from the community.
3. Collective efficacy around differentiation and scaffolding should be a school priority. This might be approached through collaborative learning teams and working with SPED and ESOL specialists. Building teachers knowledge, skills, and outcomes around these practices can have a great impact on students.

4. For the school district, consider obtaining perceptions on equitable and inequitable practices at the district level, school level, and within classrooms. Deep reflection and analysis on current systems and structures could provide significant insights.
5. For the school district, consider finding out the range of practices being implemented by schools and departments in supporting dually identified students who are eligible to receive support in the ESOL and SPED programs. Provide explicit expectations for schools on how to build the capacity of the instructional staff to implement best practices to support students' needs.

For further research.

Questions and research areas raised by this study that are recommended for further study include the following:

1. How does adding the interactants of reflection, mindset, professional knowledge, and instructional practices to Deardorff's (2009) model impact the process orientation?
2. How can student outcomes in relation to intercultural competence be considered in future process models?
3. How do individual measures of intercultural competence compare with process models? For instance, how might the specific ICCSv2 scores compare with the IC development shared through interviews, observation, and artifact collection?

4. How are teachers thinking about IC in relation to curriculum, instruction, and assessment? Is it one more thing or intertwined in everything they do?
5. How are specific subgroups represented in the school district's leadership and instructional support teams? Are there discrepancies to be examined?
6. How are the terms access and opportunity viewed by students, parents, teachers, and administrators? What effective practices are schools implementing to provide access and opportunity for all students?

Final Thoughts

It was eye-opening and incredibly informative to be able to conduct research at such a unique school with dedicated professionals willing to open up and share their stories. Relationships played a big part in this, and the honesty, vulnerability, and passion that teachers and administrators shared was so powerful. Many schools have challenges, misunderstandings, and inequities that need to be addressed at times. The key is being able to engage in critical reflection, analysis, and discussion, which is one of the best parts of the school environment. There were many descriptions of effective strategies and a positive school environment shared in the findings to the research questions. I am grateful for the insights gained on this journey of investigating intercultural competence. By uncovering the participants' experiences, unique perspectives came together to create a unified and strengthened IC school community.



Appendix A

Office of Research Development, Integrity, and Assurance

Research Hall, 4400 University Drive, MS 6D5, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Phone: 703-993-5445; Fax: 703-993-9590

DATE: December 14, 2018

TO: Beverly Shaklee, Ed.D.
FROM: George Mason University IRB

Project Title: [1356971-1] Intercultural Competence of Elementary Educators at a Diverse Elementary School

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: December 14, 2018
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The George Mason University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that all research must be conducted as described in the submitted materials.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form unless the IRB has waived the requirement for a signature on the consent form or has waived the requirement for a consent process. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the IRB office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed (if applicable).

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This study does not have an expiration date but you will receive an annual reminder regarding future requirements.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of five years, or as described in your submission, after the completion of the project.

Please note that department or other approvals may be required to conduct your research in addition to IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact Kim Paul at (703) 993-4208 or kpaul4@gmu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

GMU IRB Standard Operating Procedures can be found here: <https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/human-or-animal-subjects/human-subjects/human-subjects-sops/>

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within George Mason University IRB's records.

Appendix B

Criterion Sampling Interview Protocol and Question Guide

Protocol and Timeline

- Approximately ten teachers and administrators of varying grade levels, subject areas, backgrounds, age, and experience will be asked to participate in a brief three question conversation to assist the researcher in locating teachers to interview and observe for this study.
- The researcher will contact the educators individually to set up a 5-10-minute windows of time to privately answer the three questions. These conversations will happen over a 1-2-week period and information discussed will remain confidential as evidenced in the interview informed consent form.

Questions

- 1a. Tell me about a teacher(s) within this school who you perceive to have a global perspective and possible international experiences for personal or professional reasons.
- 1b. How do you perceive this global perspective and experiences to affect their work with students?
- 2a. Tell me about a teacher(s) within this school who you perceive to excel at connecting with families and the community.
- 3a. Tell me about a teacher(s) within this school who you perceive to value cultural awareness, risk-taking, and/or multiple perspectives within their classroom.
- 3b. Explain why you think so.

That's all our questions for you. Do you have any questions for me? Thank you for your time.

Appendix C

Criterion Sampling Participant Feedback

Participants	Notes
#1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Named three ESOL teachers (Participant A and two non-selected participants) - all have experience with international travel, living in the DC area with a diverse population, all open, receptive, and regularly interact with other cultures. They want to have this experience. Additionally, they all have kiss and ride and know the families; attend after school events; and see the students and siblings K-6 which sometimes classroom teachers don't get a chance to see. Named Participant A - Comes from a lower middle class so has perspective on varying income levels, along with different family dynamics; understanding of where students are coming from; speaks at least two or three languages fluently; understands how our students' families feel (pressure to assimilate into the culture).
#2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Named two classroom teachers who had military experiences overseas. Explained this gave them the understanding that life impacts and effects more than just us and that there's more outside the bubble some people tend to live in. Named some of the Immersion team including Participant D. Says she can have conversations with them about things we take for granted.
#3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Named Participant A - Explains that she knows personal and academic info about students. She understands different cultures because of the work she does. It impacts different nationalities as an ESOL teacher. If you discuss travel, you can tell she has background knowledge. Not that she knows everything but has a clear perspective. Named Participant C – The kind of work she does impacts our community, and she doesn't just stop with Hispanic families. She will help, give guidance, anything she can provide

for them. She also understands the diversity within Hispanic cultures, particularly with the various countries and dialects represented at the school.

- Named Participant D - She has a humongous rapport with families, understands diversity, and has a background being married to her husband in the military.
- Named Participant B - As an immigrant myself, I feel he is very welcoming and treats the staff and students well. As a Hispanic person, I appreciate that he wants to learn and evolve relating to cultural awareness.
- Named Participant F - She is multicultural herself, being from two completely different cultures and growing up bilingual. Her complex background allows her to better serve our community.
- Interesting Comment: I am not sure about other staff members to mention. They may or may not have a deep understanding, and I am not sure of the transfer into the classroom or what's in their hearts. Overall, the staff has good intent and understands the community who we serve. However, I can't tell if they have the global awareness and knowledge and trainings.
- Additional comments about culture, including handshakes, religion, holidays, assimilation. Add handwritten notes if needed.

#4

- Named a non-selected participant who is familiar with various parts of the United States. She seems to have been brought up with a different cultural lens and has a worldly view. She is open to really listening to requests and perceptive to differences. She catches on very quickly at meetings about what the parents' needs or what the community's needs might be.
 - Named two non-selected participants for their competencies with parents via email.
 - Named Participant E for doing whatever it takes to get parents in or going to them.
 - Named Participant C - Obviously, given that the nature of her job is to work with parents and families, she understands and excels at getting parents in the building to build their capacity. She never says no and will take the initiative to bridge the gap between teachers and parents.
 - Named non-selected participant because he is good with the Spanish Immersion parents.
 - Named Participant A - Oh my goodness, she understands and can see multiple perspectives, teacher, ESOL, admin, etc. She is the person to ask if you ever want to know how to best
-

communicate with families. She's a risk taker and not afraid to pick up the phone, make decisions, and advocate for students. Also, named another ESOL teacher for being very culturally aware. However, takes on more of a role of supporter, a distinct difference from Participant A.

- #5
- Named Participant A and Participants E and two non-selected staff members as being able to understand cultures and having awareness in situations where someone else might overreact.
 - Named various efforts made to better connect with the community, including neighborhood tour for new teachers, home visits, the summer reading van, etc. It's all about welcoming and warmth, even body language. Presence, eye contact, etc. We are just as uncomfortable as parents. We don't always know what to do.
 - Named a non-selected staff member and Participant D for thinking outside the box and doing something outside the norm.
 - Named a Participant G for really getting it, being introspective, and mindful.
- #6
- Named Participant D and noted her diverse background of being from Puerto Rico and being bilingual. Additionally, she understands military life and spent time in Kentucky and the Tidewater area of Virginia.
 - Named Participant E for her love of travel, ability to connect with families, and for going above and beyond to reach the school's community.
 - Named a non-selected participant for being able to make students feel recognized, acknowledged, and respected. She really explains holidays to her primary students, which can be a bit of a risk. She really understands both our African and African American populations.
 - Named Participant G for being someone who does so much for the school and community for the 9 years they've worked together. We are all in it together. She leads the celebration with the entire student body before winter break, does a ton for International Night, etc.
- #7
- Named a non-selected participant for her experience abroad and being more open that culture isn't a deficit. She also brings empathy, awareness, and willingness to reach out to parents.
 - Named a non-selected participant for her work in Ghana and volunteer work with Adult ELLs.
-

-
- Named Participant E for her international experience with Project Esperanza in the Dominican Republic. She builds relationships with families and got me on board for home visits. This has so much power, especially in the upper grades. The students feel more welcome at school if they've seen you sitting in their living room.
 - Named a non-selected participant for her military experience.
 - Named Participant D for how caring she is. She has a method to her madness within the utter chaos.
 - Named a non-selected participant for meeting kids where they are at and doing whatever it takes.
- #8
- Named Participant F because she can relate to challenges and gives ideas to promote success. She also understands how education works in another culture, which helps her to better communicate with students and families about expectations.
 - Named a non-selected staff member for his global perspective and ability to seek out cultures and experiences. He works to understand, and he's good with our Hispanic population and lately Middle Eastern.
 - Named a non-selected staff member because she does a good job empathizing how kids might feel, possibly intimidated, as they are learning the English language.
 - Named Participant C for her willingness to go above and beyond with communication and follow up with families and the community. She has a personal touch and people show up.
 - Named Participant E and Participant A for their calls, home visits, willingness to do whatever it takes for success. They are invested in the lives of their students, not just at school.
 - Named a non-selected participant who has a historical lens on the school (20 plus years). She helped begin some of the community initiatives, including the neighborhood walk, summer reading van, and home visits.
 - Named a non-selected participant for getting families baby gifts, staying in touch with families, going to kids' ball games, and tutoring. He also pushes students and challenges them to take risks and have productive struggle.
- #9
- Named non-selected staff member who stays informed on different issues and leads the mentoring program for students at the school.
 - Named non-selected staff member because of the way she communicates, not just to Spanish speakers. She has a true
-

respect for all children and makes sure they understand. She is great with her kids, and they feel comfortable, happy, and engaged.

- Named Participant C for making families so comfortable and connected so they walk in the door. Her and her husband went all the way to Fredericksburg to get donations for Christmas. She goes above and beyond. I never met anyone like that. She's been in education for 30 plus years and just invests a lot of time and the school is so grateful for her.
- Named Participant B and Participant F for how they connect with staff and students. Also, they listen and mediate with parents in tough situations.

#10

- Named a non-selected staff member because she has experience living in Mexico and Guatemala. She worries about families, understands students, and shows compassion and flexibility.
 - Named a non-selected staff member for how kind she is. Many times, parents come to register their children, and they are not very well organized. She is so kind and patient and listens carefully.
 - Named a non-selected staff member because she cares a lot about her students. She asks me questions about how we can help certain students. She understands and is willing to see if she can help.
 - Named Participant A and Participant E because they both understand about other cultures, and they are compassionate and care about others no matter where they are coming from.
-

Appendix D

Survey Protocol and ICSSv2

Protocol and Timeline: Convenience sampling will be used for the survey which will be emailed to the instructional staff and school leaders (approximately 75 participants). This will be completed using an online link to the online survey during the Weeks of 1/21/19-2/4/19 with a reminder email the week of 1/28/19. The survey will close on 2/5/19. Data will be sent and retrieved from Qualtrics, a survey software used by George Mason University researchers, students, and staff. Participants will be asked to give a number (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) corresponding with your level of agreement to 44 statements.

Informed consent: The informed consent will be shared with the survey participants via email and questions about the form may be sent to Gina Amenta. By continuing with the survey, the participants will give consent, however they will not be asked them to submit a signed form in order to protect their anonymity. The survey consent will inform participants that their completion of the survey indicates their consent to participate.

Confidentiality: The survey will be anonymous, and the questions will not cause psychological harm to the participants. The participants in this study are not members of a vulnerable population. An anonymous survey will encourage more truthful responses.

Survey Questions: Used with permission from the Inventory of Cross-Cultural Sensitivity (Cushner, 1986, updated in 2014)

Inventory of Cross-Cultural Sensitivity (ICCSv2)

The following questionnaire asks you to rate your agreement or disagreement with a series of statements. Please respond honestly as there are no correct answers. When answering the questions, try to keep in mind people and cultures with whom you have experience or personal contact.

Please circle the number which most corresponds to your agreement or disagreement with each statement.

	1= STRONGLY DISAGREE						7=STRONGLY AGREE		
1. I enjoy having people from different cultures to my home on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
2. I think everyone should be at least bilingual.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
3. I am more interested in national news and information on the web, than international news and information.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
4. I would like to live in a different culture in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
5. When something newsworthy happens, I seek out someone from that part of the world to discuss the issue with.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
6. I have at least one good friend with whom I interact weekly whose family speaks a different language than mine does.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
7. I do not think there is generally anything wrong with jokes about people from other cultures. Everyone needs a sense of humor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

8. I am likely to introduce myself to people from different countries or cultures, rather than waiting for them to approach me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. When I was little, my parents made it a point to make sure I had friends from different cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I avoid people from other cultures who seem different than me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I enjoy watching how people from other cultures do things differently such as eat, talk, dance, or cook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Foreign influence in our country threatens our national identity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I enjoy studying about people from other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I listen to music from other countries on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. It makes me nervous to talk to people who are different from me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. There are generally two kinds of people in a culture – extremists and non-extremists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I feel uncomfortable when I am in a crowd of people that are different from me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I consider myself a very outgoing person, but not when it comes to interacting with people who are culturally different from me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19. I feel like I know a lot about at least one other culture and am comfortable interacting with people from that group, but when it comes to other cultures with which I have no experience, I am lost and tend to avoid them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20. Culturally mixed marriages are fine until the couple has children, then it would be too hard on the kids to have different parents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21. People are generally very different from one another which causes problems in everyone getting along. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22. It is a good idea that people live in communities that are mostly their own cultural group, rather than lots of different people living together because there is too much potential for conflict or problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 23. I decorate my home or room with objects from different countries. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 24. I would not like to see someone being made fun of for being different, but I don't think there's much I could do about it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 25. There is always more than one good way to approach a problem. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 26. I think everyone should have a passport from the time they are in high school, so they have the opportunity to travel abroad. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 27. Because of my experiences with other cultures, I have learned that sometimes I have to change the way I do things around them from the way I might normally do it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

28. When I interact with someone who is different from me, and things do not go well, I wonder what I should have done differently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Having knowledge about other cultures and interacting successfully with them is vital to America's survival in the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. When I see someone being made fun of for being different, I get very angry.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I have a responsibility to learn more about different cultures so I can do my part in making the world a better place.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. If I have a problem with a friend who is from a different cultural background, I tend to ignore it and hope it goes away because I'm afraid we might have to talk about something that is different between our cultures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. Though it would have its challenges, I would enjoy moving into another culture so I could learn new ways of doing and understanding things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. I always try to talk to people sitting alone in a new setting because I know what it's like to be different.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. I do not understand why so much information is printed in other languages in the U.S. In general, it is the newcomer's responsibility to adjust to the larger culture, not the other way around.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. Crowds of foreigners frighten me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

37. There should be tighter controls on the number of immigrants that are let into our country.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. While there are exceptions, the reason most people are in poverty is because they do not have a strong work ethic.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. I enjoy being with people from other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. When I discuss controversial issues with someone who holds a different belief than mine, I generally replay the conversation in my head afterwards to consider what I might have said differently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. I would be more likely to learn about new cultures if there was something in it for me such as a promotion, money or other rewards.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. When I am in new situation, I often feel stressed because I do not know the appropriate way to behave.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. I generally accept the opinions of my friends and family when it comes to others – if they do not like a person, that’s good enough for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. Moving into another culture would be easy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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Appendix E

Hello Colleagues,

My name is Gina Amenta, a doctoral candidate at George Mason University, College of Education and Human Development. I would like your participation in this brief survey to help me the development and perceived impact of intercultural competence in elementary educators in a diverse school setting. It will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

If you agree to participate in this survey, you will be asked to give a number (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) corresponding with your level of agreement to 44 statements. These survey results will provide an understanding of the experiences and opinions of the participating staff. Please answer honestly and with the number that best corresponds with your level of agreement with each of the statements.

Risks, Benefits, Confidentiality, and Participation

- There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.
- There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research relating to intercultural competence of elementary educators in a diverse school setting.
- The data in this survey will be confidential. Names and other identifiers will not be placed on survey data.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

Contact

This research is being conducted by Gina Amenta, doctoral candidate at George Mason University. The reference number for this study is IRBNet # 1356971-1. Feel free to contact me at 703-283-1115 with any questions.

Thank you,

Gina Amenta

Appendix F

Name (print) _____ Signature _____ Date _____

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS IN A DIVERSE SCHOOL SETTING

INFORMED CONSENT SURVEY FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to discover how selected participants define and describe intercultural competence, what experiences participants attribute to their intercultural competence, and how it influences students in their classrooms. It will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

If you agree to participate in this survey, you will be asked to give a number (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) corresponding with your level of agreement to 44 statements.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research relating to intercultural competence of elementary educators in a diverse school setting.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this survey will be confidential. Names and other identifiers will not be placed on survey data. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission. The de-identified data could be used for future research without additional consent from participants.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party. The inclusion criteria requires you to be 21 years of age and older and employed at Groveton Elementary School as instructional staff or school leader.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Gina Amenta, doctoral candidate at George Mason University. She may be reached at 703-283-1115 for questions or to report a research-related problem. You may also contact the principal investigator, Beverly Shaklee, Ed.D., professor in the Graduate School of Education at 703-993-2388. You may contact the George Mason University Institutional Review Board office at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this information, and the completion of the survey, I am indicating that I agree to participate in this study.

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Appendix G

Hello Colleague,

My name is Gina Amenta, a doctoral candidate at George Mason University, College of Education and Human Development. I would like your participation in this study to help me discover how selected participants define and describe intercultural competence, what experiences participants attribute to their intercultural competence, and how it influences students in their classrooms. If you agree to participate in phase 1, you will be asked three brief interview questions with the aim of gaining your perceptions on teachers who demonstrate intercultural competence with your school building. This brief interview will last approximately 10 minutes.

If you are asked and agree to participate in phase 2, a series of interview questions will be asked about your attitudes, knowledge, experiences, and your perceptions of the effects of your current teaching practice. The interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes, the observation will last 30-45 minutes, and the artifact collection will be organic and on-going and not take any additional time.

Risks, Benefits, Confidentiality, and Participation

- There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.
- There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research relating to intercultural competence of elementary educators in a diverse school setting.
- The data in this survey will be confidential. Names and other identifiers will not be placed on survey data.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

Contact

This research is being conducted by Gina Amenta, doctoral candidate at George Mason University. The reference number for this study is IRBNet # 1356971-1. Feel free to contact me at 703-283-1115 with any questions.

Thank you,

Gina Amenta

Appendix H

Name (print) _____ Signature _____ Date _____

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS IN A DIVERSE SCHOOL SETTING

INFORMED CONSENT INTERVIEW/OBSERVATION FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to discover how selected participants define and describe intercultural competence, what experiences participants attribute to their intercultural competence, and how it influences students in their classrooms. If you agree to participate, you will be asked a series of questions about your attitudes, knowledge, experiences, and your perceptions of the effects of your current teaching practice. The interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes.

Additionally, the observation will last about 30-45 minutes, and you are being asked to carry on with your typical instructional block and lesson plans. The date and time will be agreed upon and scheduled in advance, but no additional planning or preparation is required from you.

As you think of lessons, resources, student products, planning documents, and curriculum frameworks, consider artifacts that demonstrate or relate to intercultural competence. For the artifact collection, this will be organic and on-going and not take any additional time.

RESEARCH WILL INVOLVE AUDIO RECORDING.

The interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in recording responses in the interview and to provide a basis for a transcript. The recordings will be transcribed, and the recordings will be deleted in July 2019. The transcriptions will be retained for 5 years in the researcher's safe following the end of the study. Additionally, a copy of the data will be stored securely on George Mason property by the Principal Investigator (PI). No other persons will have access to the data.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research relating to intercultural competence of elementary educators in a diverse school setting.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. Names will not be included on any of the transcripts; pseudonyms will be given. Pseudonyms will also be used for the school name. Through the use of an identification key with pseudonyms, only the researcher will be able to link interview data, observation data, and artifact data to the participants. Only the researcher will have access to the identification key. The identification key and transcriptions will be kept in the researchers safe, and they will be destroyed after five years. Identifiers may be removed from the data and the de-identified data could be used for future research without additional consent from participants.



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Appendix I

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol and Question Guide

Please introduce yourself by first name, the grade level and/or subject that you teach or specialize in, and the number of years that you have been an educator?

Experiences

- 1) Describe some of the specific cultural experiences you have had?
 - a. What did you learn most from this experience?
 - b. How did this experience affect your worldview?
- 2) How have your experiences affected your work as a teacher?
 - a. In terms of how you interact with students, parents, other faculty and staff?
 - b. In terms of curriculum, instruction and assessment?
 - c. In terms of any other work at the school (extracurricular activities, etc.)?
 - d. Your identity as a teacher?
- 3) In your opinion, what is the impact of these kinds of international educational experiences on teachers?

Diversity at Elementary School

- 1) How would you describe the diversity at the elementary school you currently work at?
- 2) How do you view the role of diversity in your classroom?
 - a. How do language and culture play a role in your classroom?

Cultural Awareness

- 1) How does cultural awareness play a role in daily interactions with students?
- 2) How does cultural awareness coincide with standards-based lessons?
- 3) When lessons incorporate cultural awareness, what do you perceive to be the student outcomes?
- 4) How does student identity relate to cultural awareness?

Multiple Perspectives

- 1) What do lessons relating to understanding multiple perspectives look like in your classroom?

- 2) What do you perceive to be the student outcomes of lessons involving understanding multiple perspectives?

Risk-taking

- 1) What do lessons relate to risk-taking look like in your classroom?
- 2) What do you perceive to be the student outcomes of lessons involving risk-taking?

Intercultural competence

- 1) How is intercultural competence developed?
 - a) What *attitudes* do interculturally competent teachers possess?
 - b) What *knowledge* do interculturally competent teachers have? How does one build this knowledge?
 - c) What *skills* do interculturally competent teachers demonstrate? How are these skills acquired?
- 2) When considering lessons you teach to your class:
 - a) How do you consciously create lessons that promote IC?
 - b) How do impromptu discussions happen with students related to IC?
 - c) How do curriculum guidelines and pacing guides assist and/or restrict your efforts?
- 3) What role does intercultural competence have in your school?
 - a) In your opinion, how can teachers ensure moving beyond tolerance to improve their intercultural competence?

That's all our questions for you. Do you have any questions for me? Thank you for your time.

Appendix J

Observation Checklist

Instructions: Rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (1= Never 2= Almost Never 3=Sometimes 4= Almost Always 5=Always) the extent to which you observe each of the following criteria for cultural competence. Circle the number which represents your perceptions. Please note or provide evidence or documentation to support your rating.

	Observation Area/Domain and Criteria	Scale	Evidence/Documentation
Curriculum			
1	Literature selections in the curriculum reflect a variety of cultural perspectives (classrooms and library).	1 2 3 4 5	
2	Global perspectives are integrated into curricula at all grade levels (world history and geography, culture studies, languages).	1 2 3 4 5	
3	Linguistic and content objectives are addressed for second language learners.	1 2 3 4 5	
Teachers			
4	New teachers are formally inducted through orientations and structured mentoring and support programs.	1 2 3 4 5	
5	Teachers team vertically and horizontally according to individual strengths, leadership abilities, and interests.	1 2 3 4 5	
6	Professional development is offered that addresses: a) race/ethnicity/nationality b) sexual orientation c) special needs d) language and dialect	1 2 3 4 5	
Teaching and Learning			

7	Instruction is differentiated to address students with special needs, while challenging all students.	1 2 3 4 5	
8	Researched strategies that account for various learning styles are used in classrooms.	1 2 3 4 5	
9	Connections are made to students' culture and prior knowledge.	1 2 3 4 5	
10	Teaching strategies accommodate the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners using a variety of grouping strategies, hands-on activities, visuals, oral language development, reading/writing workshops, etc.	1 2 3 4 5	
11	Practices to ensure classroom and school safety for all are in place (e.g. including systems for addressing bullying or developing positive student relations).	1 2 3 4 5	
Additional Observations			
12	Knowledge, Skills, or Attitudes Demonstrated		

Adapted from *The School-Wide Cultural Competence Observation Checklist* (Bustamante and Nelson, 2007)

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Biography

Gina Amenta graduated from Chartiers Valley High School, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1998. She received her Bachelor of Science in Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2002. She received her Master of Education in Educational Psychology from George Mason University in 2007. She was employed in as a teacher and instructional coach for 18 years.