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UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND TEACHER EFFICACY

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

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Approved By:

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Advisor   Date

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to my beloved mother, Ammi--may God rest her soul. Her love for learning; respect and admiration for academicians has been my source of inspiration to pursue higher education. She sacrificed her own college-education to stay at home to raise her four children and dedicated her entire life to us. However, one of her aspirations in life was to be well-rounded and empowered through education. I am grateful to have had such a person in my life who has always been supportive of my goals and wished for nothing but happiness for me. Her example of inner strength and definition of dedication are constant motivations in my life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Imagine you are in high school, but you can't read even at a second- grade level! Add to this dilemma that you are in a new country where a different language is spoken while you are adjusting to a new culture, and while your parents are bouncing from one job to another to make ends meet. Now, continue to add the pressures of being a teenager dealing with social taboos and being in a classroom where your teacher doesn't understand you and neither do you understand her. Now reverse the scenario and examine yourself from the teacher's perspective, you have just been assigned this "newcomer" to your classroom. You have a critical role as the teacher to help the student succeed. How will you impact their learning? What are the challenges and opportunities that you will face? First and foremost, ask yourself, how will your teacher's self-efficacy and cultural competency impact the students' learning trajectory from day one?

Background

Immigrant education is presenting public schools in the US with a groundbreaking challenge (Capps, et al. 2005; National Center for English Language Acquisition, 2005). Most immigrant families are from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, making serving the adolescent immigrant population one of the most difficult endeavors in the American history of educating American youth. This has a direct implication for program development, curricula and funding. As a result, educational leaders currently face the unprecedented challenge of providing equitable and socially just curriculum and resources to adolescent immigrant students (Frey, 2010).

The Problem

In many high schools across America, immigrant students who try to pursue high school are often advised to abandon formal high school experience and, instead, enter adult education programs. As schools face intense scrutiny under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Elementary

and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and now Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) standards, school accountability compliance is the main driver for most school districts. Educational policy makers and stakeholders need to consider transformative leadership, as a way to build cultural competency in educators, which would then create a synergistic momentum in helping ALL students to attain a better educational experience in the U.S. schools (Anderson, 2008).

Many educators are under pressure with current accountability standards built around a "rewards and sanctions" based system (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Hamilton, 2007). This automatically generates a lack of enthusiasm for serving students who may become "liabilities" in terms of meeting annual accountability measures. Often times, school leaders and teachers may not see immigrant students as value-added, which results in an unwelcoming attitude. These sentiments are compounded when many students who speak little or no English must be integrated because of required school accountability measures. Therefore, schools may place themselves at a risk of not meeting annual progress due to the addition of ELL students in their districts. Schools also face challenges when resources and funding related to migrant students are limited. This will result in increased pressure on schools to further "split the pie." As a result, having significant numbers of ELL students may give a perceived notion that they are draining resources from other students.

Under rapid-fire accountability measures, districts face critical challenges of developing infrastructures to serve a linguistically and culturally diverse group of students (Capps et al, 2005). In recent decades, immigration patterns have shifted from traditional "receiving" states such as California and New York to emerging gateway communities in the Midwest, and Southwest (Marrow, 2005; Massey, 2008). Since the 1920s, immigration patterns have fluctuated based on economic and immigration policies. Based on past migration trends, most immigrants settled in

urban communities; however, newer trends show a stronger pattern of settlement in the suburbs. Adding more to the diversity dilemma, trends also show a larger movement from urban to rural areas. The new destinations are more ill prepared than their previous hubs in terms of providing students with a culturally sensitive and educationally equitable program of student achievement. The acute challenge entails closing the achievement gap between EL students and their English-speaking counterparts.

Immigrant students are now the fastest growing student population in the U.S. public school system (Nieto, 2015). However, school leadership practices have been under emphasized as immigrant students find themselves underserved by a lack of administrative advocacy (Liore, 2016). According to the Migration Policy Institute, the U.S. population has experienced a drastic surge in the past three decades, with almost 30 million immigrants entering the U.S. This increase in immigration reflects a sea of change in the American classroom's landscape. An estimated 25% of children are from immigrant families and live in households where another language is spoken other than English (Mather, 2009).

According to the Migration Policy Institute, in the decade between 1998 and 2008, the number of English language learners in the public schools increased by 51 percent, while the general population of students only grew by 7 percent. These data reflect the inevitability of having ELLs in the mainstream classroom. It is important to note that even with this rapid growth in the ELL population, schools have not fully prepared themselves to serve the needs of this population. The mere fact that nation's teachers will encounter a wide diversity of learners should awaken the school systems of the need to change their discourse about their teacher quality and preparation.

Unfortunately, the rapid growth of immigrant population has not been matched with growth in teachers' understanding of how to better educate these students (Garcia, 1999). According to Samson & Collins (2012) only 2.5% of certified teachers hold bilingual or ELL certification, which provides them with targeted training in serving the ELL population. However, most ELL students spend the majority of their time with a general education, mainstream classroom teacher who is not equipped with the skills or specific training to work with ELL students (Marrow, 2005).

Research studies reference a plethora of challenges that new immigrants and their children face in a new country. These challenges include linguistic barriers, cultural and social adaptation and poverty. Immigrants face challenges in a new country; not being able to speak English or communicate in the American cultural context can be a stressful experience for students. Immigrant parents often face challenges with job security, which often leads to greater family transience. Lack of financial and residential stability can lead to further gaps in children's education. The poverty rate of children of immigrants is 21 percent, in comparison to 14 percent for children in native-born families. Most of these children live in crowded housing with no health insurance and where paying for food is a concern (Haskins, Greenber & Fremstad, 2004). Adolescent immigrant students who are newcomers face significant pressure with limited time to complete all the coursework and requirements for graduation. As a result, many students become at-risk of failing.

LEP children are twice as likely than their English-speaking counterparts to drop out of school. About 23% of LEP students never even enroll in schools so the data might be understated in terms of lack of opportunities for these minoritized students. When secondary LEP students do attend schools, many of them do not complete their diploma requirements and consistently score

less than their English-speaking counterparts on standardized assessments (Children's Policy Initiative, 2005).

Given the fact that one in five children in the U.S. comes from an immigrant home, reflecting various cultural and ethnic diversities, Suarez-Orazeo (2003) notes that school leaders play a critical role in building a school culture that respects diversity. Fullan, (2004) along with other contemporary scholars, recognizes that school leaders are essential in helping to raise student achievement and build schools in which all students thrive. However, few research studies have focused on the extent to which school leaders actively use the assets of immigrant students or adapt a school to its changing population (Magno & Schiff, 2010). According to Magno and Schiff (2008) most leaders recognize the presence of immigrant students. However, most also favor assimilation and acculturation over the preferred practice of celebration of diversity where students' individual cultures make them who they are and hence allow for unique perspectives to be appreciated (Magno & Schiff, 2010).

According to Samson and Colins (2012) diversity in the teacher workforce is one way to build a teacher labor force that is more equipped to deal with the challenges of reaching ELL students. They suggest that call from NCATE is to urge teacher preparation programs to attract candidates who are diverse, from a variety of different backgrounds and field experiences. Nevertheless, our school systems reflect the exact opposite. For example, according to Frankeberg (2006) an overwhelming majority of teachers are White in our K-12 classrooms; many of them have not received adequate training to teach diverse classrooms (Gay, 2000 & 2001). While the proportion of racial and ethnic minority children in public schools has increased from 22% in 1972 to 45% in 2008, the teacher demographics have not changed to adapt to this classroom landscape

(NCES, 2008). This cultural mismatch also adds to the challenges that many teachers face when they prepare for ELL students to be mainstreamed and engage them in inclusive activities.

Cultural competency is another factor in addition to pedagogical competency when working with the ELL students. Horm (2003) asserts that teachers' lack of knowledge and ability to engage in culturally responsive teaching can result in negative consequences, which could have a detrimental effect on student achievement. Usually, teachers who lack the adequate training, in teaching students from diverse backgrounds end up lowering their expectations of ethnic and racial minority students. This, in effect, could have many additional consequences such as being misidentified for special education programs (Gay, 2002) and academic and social failures (Townsend, 2002). Many researchers and leaders have expressed a need for culturally responsive and social justice-based approaches to teacher education programs (Townsend, 2007; Gay, 2005). Gay (2005) has elaborated on models of such programs that would incorporate integrated approaches to cultural competency, separate multicultural education and other dual curricular models that emphasize diversity and equity in teacher preparation programs.

Scholars may not agree on a specific approach, but they all concur that teachers' self-examination of their own biases and self-efficacy in teaching diverse populations is essential, along with knowledge of other racial groups as core essentials of multicultural competence (Gay, 2002; Grant & Gillette, 2006). Then, what is the relationship between teachers' cultural competencies and teacher efficacy? The role of self-efficacy has continued to intrigue many researchers and practitioners (Bandura, 1997; Nauta, M. 2001; Hoy, Clayson & Sheffet 2006.) According to Gibson and Dembo (1984), teacher efficacy is described as a "belief, that they have the skills and abilities to bring about student learning, p. 573." Teacher efficacy can influence an individuals' expectation of success within a task and how much effort they are willing to put forth (Fry, 2009).

Looking at the context of cultural competency and how this may relate to teacher efficacy, Moseley and Bilica (2014) assert that" few studies have been conducted that explicitly investigate the relationship between teaching efficacy beliefs and successful culturally relevant teaching practices, p. 316." Given that teacher efficacy is context and subject specific, (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998) to understand the relationship between cultural competency and teacher efficacy would contribute to literature.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to explore the relationships between cultural competency and teacher self-efficacy and investigate in which ways, if any, cultural competency influences teachers' efficacy in working with ELL students. The following research questions will provide guidance for the proposed study:

Research Questions:

1. How do teachers understand cultural competency?

2. How do teachers say they implement cultural competency?

3. What are the relationships between teachers' background experiences and cultural competency?

4. How does cultural competency affect teachers' perceptions of efficacy?

5. What is the relationship between professional learning and cultural competency?

Situated Self

The reason I selected this topic is because I work in a charter school management company that serves a large immigrant population with diverse needs. Part of my responsibilities as the Director of School Improvement is to mentor teachers and provide professional development. In our district, teacher retention is a major goal due to a high teacher attrition rate. Many teachers

leave the school within one-year or less due to lack of skill-sets in working with immigrant students. Teachers have identified their inadequate training in teacher education programs and lack of experiences in working with immigrant students as reasons for leaving.

However, a phenomenon that we have observed is that a few teachers, who have also had minimal experiences and lack of formal training in school of education programs, somehow manage to show greater grit and perseverance with the ESL students. It is this phenomenon that sparked my interest in this research. During my interactions with the teachers, I discovered that there are many dynamics to urban, ELL based educational systems, but a one-size fits all formula is applied as a reform measure. This discovery is what has inspired me to dig deeper into the question of what affects, or influences does cultural competency have on teacher efficacy towards ESL students.

Rationale

There have been numerous studies on self-efficacy within social science research (Bandura, 1977; Gibson & Dembo,1984; Billings, 2015; Gay, 2002, 2010; Driver, 2017). Even teacher efficacy literature has been studied well and continues to intrigue researchers. There is also considerable research on culturally responsive teaching, multi-cultural education, cultural competency and their effect on student engagement (Gay, 2002). However, cultural competency and teacher efficacy studies are extremely limited in qualitative research and more specifically within the context of immigrant ELL students. This study contributes to the literature in terms of exploring a relationship between cultural competency and teacher efficacy. The implications of this study have benefits to the school leaders, teachers along with university preparation programmers who may use the insights of this study to design meaningful professional development activities and/or immersion-based programs to prepare educators to better serve the

culturally diverse immigrant student communities. It is my hope that this study will help to find better ways to serve the immigrant students so that they have fair and equal chance of succeeding in the American classrooms, even when their teachers speak a different language and may have different cultural values and background regardless of skin color.

Overview of Literature

"Researchers use the scholarly literature in a study to present results of similar studies, to relate the present study to an ongoing dialogue in the literature, and to provide a framework for comparing results of a study with other studies" (Creswell, 2014, p 48). Chapter Two will discuss the two theoretical frameworks, which will guide my study: teacher efficacy and cultural competency. A major goal in today's schooling philosophy is to ensure that ALL students have access to a fair and equitable education, but in order for this to come to fruition, it is critical that our teachers are prepared to teach a diverse group of students with a socially just lens. Teachers must develop reflective cultural, national, and global identifications themselves if they are to help students become thoughtful, caring, and reflective citizens in a multicultural society" (Banks, 2001, p.5).

The literature review for this study focuses on the theoretical frameworks of cultural competence and teacher efficacy. Diller and Moule (2005) state that "cultural competence demands dispositions, sensitivities, pedagogies, and knowledge that result in effective cross-cultural teaching, p.5" Gay (2000) explains that cultural competence incorporates the "cultural knowledge, experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant and effective, p.29" Gonzales and Gabel (2017) argue that it also involves linguistic knowledge and sensitivity. Cultural and linguistic competency requires teachers to be responsive to the dynamics of the differences of culture and be self-reflexive in engaging

with the students in culturally appropriate ways to help meet the needs of the students (Brisk, 2008).

The literature review on teacher efficacy was based on the Social learning theory as studied by Bandura (1977) and as extrapolated by Gibson and Dembo (1984). Based on these theorists, self-efficacy is noted as a highly defined cognitive process in which people form beliefs regarding their own capacity to perform a given task. This application of self-efficacy to teaching helps frame the concept of teacher efficacy. According to Moseley and Utley (2006), teacher efficacy is associated with effective practice, job satisfaction and commitment to teaching. I addition, the literature review includes a brief examination of teacher attitudes, culturally responsive leadership, second language acquisition and cultural and linguistic competencies of teachers.

Overview of Methodology

This study utilized an interpretive paradigm using qualitative methods to understand the relationship between cultural competency and the self-efficacy of teachers who work with English Language Learners. According to Creswell (2014), the use of multiple data sources such as interviews, observations, documents and audiovisual information is recommended in qualitative studies to ensure that analysis is based on various sources so that the researcher can make sense of all the data by organizing and categorizing it within the themes. According to Check and Schutt (2012) survey research is defined as "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions, p. 12." This method allowed the researcher to collect data and identify participants who fit certain criteria based on the survey results. According to Singleton and Straits (2009) surveys are often part of social sciences research. This investigation was conducted using formal surveys of teachers and follow-up interviews with selected teachers. The use of a survey was a preliminary step in participant selection for in-depth interviews. The

Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Scale (D'Andrea, Daniels & Noonan, 1994) survey along with a questionnaire about teaching experiences was used to determine teachers' perceived sense of cultural competency. These surveys provided the researcher with participants who may have very high cultural competency scores and those with significantly low scores so that follow up interviews could be scheduled.

The results from the cultural competency scales were used as benchmarks for conversations during subsequent interviews and talking points for discussions. I interviewed 8 teachers and two school leaders selected on the basis of their varying responses on the scales mentioned above. The individual interviews provided in-depth insight into the relationships between teachers' cultural competency and their self-efficacy as perceived by the participants themselves. These interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. Interviews also provided another layer of understanding and allowed for a robust dialog to occur between the researcher and the participant. Using the process of domain-analysis coding, data were analyzed and then synthesized in a meaningful way.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and their definitions were used in this research.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as "Beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1995, p.2)

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is defined as "the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance" (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly & Zellman, 1977, p.137).

Cultural Competency

"Cultural competency is the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than our own. It entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, developing certain bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching." (Diller & Moule, 2005, p. 2).

English Language Learner (ELL)

ELL (English language learner) An individual who is in the process of actively acquiring English, and whose primary language is one other than English. This student often benefits from language support programs to improve academic performance in English due to challenges with reading, comprehension, speaking, and/or writing skills in English. Other terms that are commonly used to refer to ELLs are language minority students, English as a Second Language (ESL) students, culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, and limited English proficient (LEP) students.

English as Second Language (ESL)

English as a second language (ESL) A term often used to designate students whose first language is not English; this term has become less common than the term ELL. Currently, ESL is more likely to refer to an educational approach designed to support ELLs.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

LEP (limited English proficiency) A term used by the U.S. Department of Education to refer to ELLs who are enrolled or getting ready to enroll in elementary or secondary school and who have an insufficient level of English to meet a state's English expertise requirements. However, the expression English language learner (ELL) has started to replace LEP, to avoid the implication

that nonnative-English-speaking students are deficient (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008).

Newcomer Student

A newcomer is an immigrant student who has been in the U.S. for less than one-year.

Bilingualism

The ability to communicate successfully in two languages, with the same relative degree of proficiency. It is important to note that bilinguals are rarely perfectly balanced in their use of two languages; one language is usually dominant (Baker, 2000).

Limitations and Delimitations

This study which sought to understand the teachers' perceptions of their lived experiences and their impact on teaching and learning has many strengths and a few limitations based on the research design that I have selected. It is important to note that limitations are part of all studies and it is the researcher's obligation to understand them to help avoid pitfalls in the dissertation process. Using various techniques, the researcher investigates the human part of a story (Jacobs & Ferguson, 2012, p. 1). During these interviews and observations, good faith was incorporated via trust and rapport that the participants would provide honest and sincere accounts of their experiences. In addition, researcher self-reflexivity can also be a limitation in terms of observing an objective mindset and avoiding any biases in interpretations. Moreover, given the time limitations, only 10 educators were interviewed; hence the delimitations lie significantly in the size of the respondent group. Finally, the last source of limitation falls within the population dynamics. Given the time and resource challenges, this study was limited to the teachers from a single high school selected for the parameters of its demographics.

Significance

In view of the influx of immigrant students in this country and a changing American classroom landscape, it is imperative that teachers are prepared to teach children who are not of their own culture. The assumption of this research is that through greater cultural competencies, teachers will be more efficacious with the students who are English Language Learners. It is important to study the teachers who deal with large immigrant populations so that we can identify the challenges that they face and gain a better insight as to what helps them succeed in the classrooms with these students. This understanding can help us provide better teacher training programs, professional development and or experiential learning programs to develop teacher work force that is ready to tackle the challenges of immigrant education programs.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"Researchers use the scholarly literature in a study to present results of similar studies, to relate the present study to an ongoing dialogue in the literature, and to provide a framework for comparing results of a study with other studies" (Creswell, 2014, p. 48). This chapter discusses the two theoretical frameworks which have guided my study: teacher efficacy and cultural competency. A major goal in today's schooling philosophy is to ensure that ALL students have access to a fair and equitable education, but in order, for this to come to fruition, it is critical that our teachers are prepared to teach a diverse group of students with a socially just lens. Teachers must develop reflective cultural, national, and global identifications themselves if they are to help students become thoughtful, caring, and reflective citizens in a multicultural society" (Banks, 2001, p.5).

The first few sections of this chapter provide some historical background on schooling challenges of English Language Learners and provide a perspective on federal and state legislation's endeavors in helping these students. Next, I have included literature on "culturally responsive leadership" which provides some articulation on the importance of culturally competency as it relates to school leaders, I extrapolated from this research that leadership is not just for the administrators, but it is for teachers too. In addition, strong, transformative leaders also cultivate a culturally dynamic environment for their teachers, which embraces, diversity (Shields, 2012). Anderson (2008) and Branch et al. (2013) found that principals can influence teachers' own learning, instruction and ultimately--student achievement. Moreover, Jacobson (2005) attributes transformational leadership as a source of creating an environment with strong relationships of "trust, vision, goals and sense of community" (p.1278).

After that, in the main sections of this critical literature review I elaborated on self-efficacy. I attempt to provide an overview of self-efficacy and then an in-depth framework of teacher efficacy is discussed. Later in the chapter, the cultural competency framework is synthesized. These two frameworks provide a critical lens for this study and help to illustrate that teacher efficacy is instrumental in how much effort teachers put forth, how long they will persist in the face of challenges and their resilience in failures. This study investigated the relationship of cultural competency and teacher efficacy. Therefore, understanding the framework of cultural competency will allow for a robust investigation.

Promoting Equity for Immigrant Students

Historically, political struggles over immigration, language rights, educational rights and access for racial, cultural and national minority groups have shaped immigrant education policies in the U.S. Immigrants have traditionally been thought of as the "outsiders" and the general theme has been that if immigrants choose to come to this country, then they must be ready to acquire the norms of the dominant culture and give up their own cultural and linguistic traditions. Assimilation and acculturation were the dominant theories for decades (Torrez, 2001). During the eras of assimilation, policies were created to enlist schools with the task of "Americanizing" the immigrant students through pathways of "English-only" curriculum and by eradicating foreign languages and cultural studies (Torrez, 2001).

During the civil rights movement, long-term advocacy efforts led to Brown V. Board of Education (1954) which helped to end segregation of schools and the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, which helped focus on equal access.

The Role of Language

Through the hard work of local advocacy groups, the bilingual programs in many states were mobilized under the civil rights umbrella. However, the most groundbreaking court cases, Lau v. Nichols (1974) gave minority students a better window of opportunity. This Supreme Court decision required schools across America to take affirmative actions to provide equal education access for children who were not fluent in English. However, very little guidance was given to schools about what these programs should be. States had tremendous autonomy to interpret this decision and many interpretations of this law were left up to the local area agencies to implement. From a policy driver perspective, the intention was to get schools to provide equal access and opportunity to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students but from an implementation perspective, many policy actors and street-level bureaucrats interpreted the policy to their own benefit. This resulted in variances pertaining to teacher training, certification and role of home language, along with the degree of prescriptiveness for each of the programs.

According to Arriaza (1997) legal advocacy and court decisions emanating from lawsuits played a major role in defining the education rights and programs for language minority students and fundamentally shaped how bilingual education was prescribed and implemented. The 1970s and 80s were challenging decades for the schools as the immigrant population rose, which schools were not able to handle. Teachers were isolated from the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students whom they were serving. In addition to economic downfall, increasing linguistic and cultural diversity were perceived as threats by the "White" majority leaders (Arriaza,1997). The politicians at this time propagated sentiments that the "immigrants" were taking over and that this would shrink the White majority. This movement created a challenge to the bilingual education movement.

California's Proposition 227 in 1998 was a hallmark example of how policy entrepreneurs can change the waves of progress overnight. Proposition 227, which was written by a millionaire Silicon Valley businessman, dismantled the bilingual education program's progress in California by establishing an English in public schools- statute. It required LEP students to learn English through a full-immersion, 1-year program in which transitioned into mainstream classrooms in much faster time than bilingual programs. It also had a hefty price tag…$50 million dollars per year for 10 years (Proposition 227, 1998).

This had a significant ripple effect across the US public schools. However, another hallmark event would give immigrant students a fighting chance. The thoughtful work of the advocacy groups working alongside California Department of Education's bilingual staff members created an initiative to use a research-based theoretical framework that would guide the fieldwork in building bilingual programs for LEP students. Research teams comprised of linguists and second language acquisition experts such as Jim Cummins and Stephen Krashen helped to create the first framework, which emphasized the importance of home language and culture as part of the complete educational experience. However, due to political pressures, California decided not to publish this framework as it infringed on English as the primary language. California State University later collaborated and published the theoretical framework, which soon became the common language tool for educators to create bilingual programs. (Torrez, 2001).

Cultural Capital

Students' native language and culture are instrumental as new learning is possible through the transfer of ideas from students' home language to learn the target language (Krashen, 2003). Kumaravadeivelu (2008) suggests that language is used as vehicle to transfer an individual's

beliefs. Hence, language acts as a main component of culture and this link between language and culture provides a lens of rationalizing their behavior and their ideologies.

Gonzales and Gabel (2017) state that "teachers are often ill-equipped and indeed undereducated in the cultural forms of capital that families bring to school." (p.67). They further emphasize that teachers are not effectively utilizing the students' cultural resources which could eventually help "academic and linguistic growth." In an article by Gonzales and Gabel (2017), they refer to "subtractive schooling" methods based on the work of Valenzuela (2010). According to Valenzuela (2010), the subtractive schooling methods essentially, strip the students of their native language and cultural values in effort to acculturate them to English only and dominant cultural paradigms. These rigid classroom environments can "become subtractive" and essentially impact students love for learning (Valenzuela, 2000). Therefore, it is important for educators to understand and value the students' cultural capital. According to Lee and Oxelson (2006) as cited by Gonzales and Gabel (2017), "proficiency in the native language facilitates English language acquisition and leads to higher academic achievement." (p.454-455). Gonzales and Gabel (2017) assert that teachers and administrators can severely undermine students' learning outcomes when they engage in subtractive schooling methods that promote deficit thinking and marginalizes families' cultural capital. They claim that such systemic policies and practices impact learning outcomes of students by divesting students of their cultural and linguistic sets. Hence, they call for greater level of training and professional development to help prevent this cycle of unwelcoming school environment.

Culturally Responsive Leadership

Khalifa (2016) defined Culturally Responsive Leadership as "using diversity in a positive way to improve school culture and socio-educational experience for all students." Friedman

(2008) argues that, immigrant students bring multiple perspectives and cultural expertise that is needed more than ever as the US works collaboratively to gain the respect of other nations and bring strong leadership around the world to address complex international issues.

Khalifa et al. (2016) elaborate the importance of the school's leader in three behaviors; methodology, terminology, and leadership framework. In their review of research, they discovered that although culturally responsive school leadership has not been sufficiently studied or researched, there is information that can be drawn upon to provide insight into cultural awareness, education, and social justice. Khalifa (2016) uses the phrase "cultural responsive school leadership" (CRSL) to capture an action-based urgency of school leadership that creates school cultures and curriculum that responds to the educational, social, and political perspective of students. Khalifa goes on to define CRSL as building up a resistance of oppression and marginalization of minority and diverse populations.

Furthermore, Khalifa states that CRSL should protect students and institutionalize practices that challenge racism and sexism. Conversely, it should celebrate cultural diversity, traditions, and self- actualization. The researchers also place emphasis on the cultural self-awareness of the leader. The leader's ability to recognize and reflect on their own cultural competency and biases has a major impact on their ability to lead an organization that is diverse and demands cultural sensitivity.

An administrator's influence as cultural leader must and will trickle down to the teacher's practices and mental models. This, in turn, translates to student perceptions and cultural acceptance. Khalifa even begins by suggesting that leaders hire teachers with culture responsiveness in mind. This being said, there will always be teachers who require professional development and coaching in this area. For example, research from Ladson-Billings (1995)

recommends that teachers use cultural referents to reach diverse populations. Grey (2010) points out that cultural responsiveness needs not only be infused into instruction, but also school funding, policy making, and administration.

Khalifa notes the importance of parent and community involvement in CRSL, which is typically underrepresented in urban schools. Nonetheless, building these partnerships with parents, community members, and local businesses is priceless. The value of relationships cannot be underscored here. Khalifa suggests that respect and acceptance transcend and elevates relationships and self-awareness. Relationships are key according to Daniels (2012) who states that acceptance and quality student relationships translate into an environment of love and hope in schools. Khalifa's research places much emphasis on the role of school leader. He recognizes the administrator as not only the educator, but as the cultural trendsetter and model. Even research from Leithwood, Louis, and Anderson (2004) indicates that good teachers will eventually leave urban schools where the leadership is perceived to be low quality. Khalifa's research demands that more emphasis be placed on cultural responsiveness in college programs and increased professional development in schools.

Federal Efforts in Improving Educational Equity to ELL Students

Under Federal Law, ELLs must be provided with full access to equity in education through rigorous curricula and mandatory testing annually to ensure that districts are accountable for the growth of the ELLs. In addition, individual States can allow local districts to design the ELL programs that are research-based and meet the criteria of the federal law based on the proportion of the ELLs in a district. Federal mandates and teacher accountability laws put teachers at heightened pressures to perform, however many teachers feel uneasy about this due to their perceived lack of training to work with the ELL population (Center for the future of teaching and

learning, 2005). This matter is further exacerbated by the fact that many teacher education programs and district provided professional development fails to provide teachers with the research-based models on what works with ELL students (Garcia, 1999).

During the multiple stages of teacher preparation programs, teachers go through coursework and internship and take certification tests to become highly qualified teachers. A quick review of teacher education program curricula reflects the broad, yet surface-level, scope to prepare teachers in most states in the US. A general education teacher would be required to take courses in English language arts, science, social studies, art, assessment, child development, educational philosophy and classroom management. However, general education teachers are not required to take any courses pertaining to pedagogy for ELL students. Even the certification exams do not test general education teachers' knowledge or skills relevant to the ELL students. However, some states do a better job in preparing their teachers for these challenges than others. For example, New York, Florida, Pennsylvania and California have more explicit requirements for teacher preparation, which include extra course work and proficiency assessments to show pedagogical understanding of reaching ELLs. Although many inconsistencies are found in the US teacher education programs, many which fail to provide teachers with the adequate skill sets necessary (Harper & Platt, 1998.) For example, Youngs and Youngs (2001) assert that most classroom teachers have minimal training in tailoring curriculum to meet the needs of the ELL students. Walker et al. (2004) cites compelling research from McCloskey (2002) who claims that only 12% of teachers have ELL training based on national statistics of K-12 teacher preparation programs.

Literature Related to Self-Efficacy

It is a wide known assumption that individual beliefs influence our behavior (Shields, 2010; Bandura, 1997, Hoy, 1990.) As individuals, we judge our own capabilities and then make decisions on what we can be successful with. These decisions about what we are capable of, what tasks we might find challenging and which areas may be our strengths constantly connect back to our beliefs of self, hence the term self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is noted as an influential predictor of choices we make as well as the persistence to complete that task. (Weber & Weber, 2004; Sleeper & Schneider, 2004). This sense of self-efficacy affects the expectations of success and failure and is directly linked to motivation. According to Woolfolk Hoy (1998) if we have high self-efficacy we are more likely to set challenging goals and persevere during times of difficulties. On the contrary, low self-efficacy could lead to task avoidance or low grit in performing these tasks. The sense of self-efficacy is interpreted individually and interpretive based on the results of their attainment. There is strong evidence that this high sense of self-efficacy motivates individuals to be more optimistic and have high expectations and more resilient. (Woolfolk Hoy, 1998).

Many researchers have delved in to the sea of self-efficacy but only a few have been able to reveal the correlations between teacher efficacy and student achievement. According to Bandura (1994) teacher self-efficacy is defined as the "extent to which a teacher is confident enough in his or her ability to promote students' learning. Bandura (1977) asserts that self-efficacy is one of the most important predictors of human motivation. When characterizing individual beliefs at a cognitive level in terms of how capable one is to perform a respective task, self-efficacy has been linked to effort, persistence, optimism and success.

Self-efficacy theory is derived from the Social Cognitive Theory and is embedded in its roots. Grounded in an "agentic" perspective, Social Cognitive Theory subscribes to a triadic reciprocal causation (Bandura, 1986). The triadic reciprocal causation is the interplay of intrapersonal influences, the behavior a person engages in and the environmental forces that impact that behavior. Self-efficacy is rooted in intrapersonal influences. According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, there are two types of expectancy beliefs that influence individual behavior— self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Bandura (1977) also asserts that people with high levels of self-efficacy tend to select challenging but "just right" goals, which are attainable and appropriate. These individuals with high self-efficacy are also able to deal with success and failure more than their counterparts. Contemporary researchers (e.g., Brigido, Borrachero, Bermejo & Mellado, 2013) also claim that individuals with high levels of self-efficacy adjust better in demanding achievement and occupational context.

Teacher Efficacy

The concept of teacher efficacy was born when researchers at RAND organization (1976) decided to add two questions to an already extensive questionnaire, which examined the success of reading programs. A teacher efficacy index was identified using the sum of responses to these two main questions. The researchers identified that teacher efficacy was directly correlated with the success of the reading program and noted that it was a predictor of whether or not the program would continue even when funding was exhausted.

With the underpinnings of Rotter's (1966) theoretical framework of the Social Learning Theory and conceptual framework of "locus of control," this study produced compelling results and shed a powerful light on the idea of teacher efficacy, which would then lead to significant amount of opportunities for further research to take place in this area.

Teacher efficacy is defined as "the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance" (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977, p.137). Guskey and Passaro (1994) further elaborate that teacher efficacy is also a belief that they can influence how well students learn, even those who are unmotivated to learn. RAND researchers identified that teacher efficacy is related to teachers' belief about how they could control the reinforcement of their actions, that is, whether control of reinforcement lay within themselves or in the environment (Tschannen Moran & Hoy, 1998 p. 203).

Although the first teacher efficacy theory stemmed from Rotter's theoretical framework of Social Learning Theory, the second theory had its underpinnings in Social Cognitive Theory, which was based on Bandura's work (1977). For the purpose of this research, I will be using the theoretical lens of Bandura's model of teacher efficacy as this tradition is more in line with my research questions and plans which seek out to understand teacher efficacy, a type of self-efficacy in which people construct beliefs about their capacity to perform at a given level of attainment. The context of my study includes the domains of teaching English Language Learners in determining the relationship of cultural competence as it relates to teaching efficacy.

In research pertaining to self-efficacy with teachers, studies have explored the relationship between the teacher beliefs in their ability to foster learning and engagement with students. (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Hoy (1998) defines teachers' self-efficacy as beliefs regarding one's ability to teach, to regulate classroom behavior, as well as to motivate students to learn. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) assert that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy should provide better instruction due to the reasons associated with being efficacious. Highly efficacious tend to invest more effort in their teaching, thereby creating a mastery experience which in turn increases their self-efficacy.

Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) model of self-efficacy regarding teachers is based on two underpinnings. First and foremost, it claims that teacher self-efficacy is evaluated in reference to three major components: instructional strategies, classroom management and student engagement. The first two deal with teachers' ability to use effective strategies for teaching and regulating behavior respectively. The third factor alludes to the teachers' beliefs about how she can motivate her students to "value" and actively participate in the class. The Tshcannen-Moran Model emphasizes the key feature implication of high levels of self-efficacy, which is to promote teacher development as a result of mastery experiences, which are direct proxies to their own effort and high expectations.

Teacher efficacy is often related to the interplay between self-efficacy and outcome expectations. These two types of expectancy beliefs lead to influences with motivation. Bandura's self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by four main sources of information: mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and psychological and emotional states. Bandura conceptualizes teacher efficacy in terms of self-efficacy and outcome expectancy. This idea is further illustrated by Hoy, 2001 in an educational context to reflect to what extent a teacher believes that she can influence a student's learning. Multiple other researchers have composed their theories and explored the realm of teacher self-efficacy to indicate that teacher efficacy is associated with teacher effort and persistence in encountering difficulties (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Podell & Soodak, 1993, Hoy 2001).

In addition, meta-analyses of research studies conducted by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007), and Tschannel-Moran and Hoy (2001) clearly assert that teacher self-efficacy is related to their own behaviors and influences student achievement and motivation. These researchers also claim that teachers' self-efficacy should be "operationalized" to state "can do" beliefs rather than "will

do" phrases, as the "can do" focus emphasizes capabilities instead of intentions. Bandura (2006) further reiterates that self-efficacy measures must be directed towards a contextual domain rather than global functioning. For example, a global measure may ask "how confident are you in your teaching ability?" but a domain-focused measure may be more specific, in reference to a particular task, such as, "how much autonomy do you have to adjust instruction in the classroom?"

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) also assert that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to exercise their autonomy in the classroom whereas teachers with low levels of efficacy were less likely to exercise this. These researchers conclude that teacher self-efficacy as it relates to teacher autonomy are associated with adaptive motivation and emotional outcomes. Empirical research shows that there is a positive correlation with job satisfaction and teacher autonomy (Skaalvik &Skaalvik, 2009; 2010). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) also elaborate that self-efficacy is positively related to work engagement and job satisfaction and negatively related to burnout.

The work of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010, 2014) clearly demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between autonomy and self-perceived competency, which are both universal needs. To understand this better, the theoretical lens of self-determination theory sheds greater light on the research work that Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) conducted. According to self-determination theory, autonomy and self-perceived competence are fundamental universal psychological needs that are critical for motivation and psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In another research study by Gangne and Deci (2005) self-determination theory postulates that people need to feel competent and autonomous in order to maintain their intrinsic motivation. Hence, teachers with greater efficacy will then be more autonomous and in effect more industrious in their ability to experiment with teaching methods and gain better mastery experiences.

Deci and Ryan (2000) contend that teacher autonomy may be related to their capability to choose goals, methods and educational strategies in accordance with respect to their own sets of beliefs. Using the rationale of this self-determination theory, I would postulate that self-efficacy as it pertains to perceived autonomy would be a vital predicator of teacher engagement and job satisfaction. I would argue then that self-efficacy is critical to feelings of competency then we must understand how cultural competency impacts self-efficacy.

Measures of Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy measures vary depending on which conceptual strand we utilize and whether it is from Rotter's Model or Bandura's Model. Bandura's self-efficacy model is grounded on a future-oriented belief about the self-perception of individual's capability to be attain success with a task given a situation. Gibson and Dembo (1980) developed an instrument that would measure self-efficacy of teachers. This was based on a 30- item measure of teacher efficacy and helped the researchers to confirm the two factors from Bandura's model, which were termed personal teaching efficacy, that reflected self-efficacy and general teaching efficacy, which reflected outcome expectancy.

According to Gibson and Dembo (1984) teachers who scored high on personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy were more like to impact student engagement, persist longer in their challenges, ensure greater levels of academic focus and influence student learning in a positive way. On the contrary, teachers who scored low in personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy are more likely to have the exact opposite effects. High PTE and GTE indices also revealed that teachers were less likely to criticize students and more likely to organize students in small groups for target instruction. Coladarci (1992) also asserted that teacher efficacy has been linked to level of professional commitment for in-service teachers. To amplify the effects of

positive teacher efficacy, Allinder (1994) also provided strong correlations between teachers with high PTE to engage in instructional experimentation, fairness as a teacher, organization and planning as well as clarity and enthusiasm. Gibson and Dembo (1984) further identified that the relationship between highly efficacious teachers and student achievement was very positive.

Teachers with stronger GTE measures also were instrumental in helping shape students' positive attitudes towards learning and improving interest in school related activities. It is important to understand that the teacher efficacy measure is best assessed in the context or domain of functional abilities. No individual can be efficacious in all domains of human realm. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) contend that new research designs should develop new measures of efficacy. They assert that efficacy scales have to help determine greater levels of specificity. Similarly, Bandura (1986) recommends that the teacher efficacy beliefs should be assessed at the optimal level of specificity as it pertains to the domain and the task in order to be able to analyze the efficacy index.

Much research has been conducted with self-efficacy using quantitative measures and some blended models have been used to understand teacher efficacy. However, upon reviewing the literature there appears to be a greater need for qualitative discussions that explore teacher efficacy from various conceptual frameworks. Although self-efficacy and teacher efficacy have been studied for more than a few decades, there is still much to understand about what other social constructs continue to shape the cognitive process of these efficacies. Thus, this proposed research is designed to understand one such construct— the impact of cultural competency on building efficacious teachers.

Research Related to Cultural Competency

In order, to understand cultural competency, one must first understand the concept of culture. The word "culture" is used very much as a catch phrase in daily language. However, its deeper meaning and context might not necessarily be understood by everyone in everyday usage. Culture is defined in various ways, but most agree that culture is a set of behaviors and guidelines that individuals use to understand the world and how to live in it (Gregg, 2006). According to Pai, Adler and Shadiouw (2006) culture is a set of values that belong to a society. Spradley and McCurdy (1975) define culture as the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and to generate behavior. In essence, culture may include one's behavior, beliefs and worldviews. Every society varies in its cultural understandings and use of culture in a social context. Competency is described as highly developed abilities, understanding and knowledge.

Aspects of Culture

Before we get deeper into the cultural competency literature, it is important to unpack some of the underlying aspects of culture which are rooted in ethnic and racial identities. Bennett (1993) emphasized that in order for teachers to be successful with the growing diversity of students, they must first understand and recognize their own worldviews; only then will they understand the worldviews of their students. Contemporary researchers (Dee, 2014; Sue, 2001) assert that in order, for the teachers to interact effectively, they must confront their own biases and racism. Racism is "the systematic subordination of targeted racial groups who have relatively little social power…by members of the agent racial group who have relatively more social power" (Wijeyesinghe, Griffin, & Love, 1997, p.88). It is a well- known phenomenon that racism exists across cultures and is practiced by individuals and institutions both systematically and inadvertently. On the other hand, our society deals with prejudice within all social structures and

across cultures. Diller and Moule (2005) describe prejudice as a negative, unfair and inaccurate way of thinking about members of another group. This is true for even people of color; however, due to the fact that social power is more in the hands of the Whites, this power translates into unfair consequences as a result of White prejudice towards people of color. Another point that Diller and Moule (2005) assert is that racism is a pervasive phenomenon which is reinforced at all levels in society, but it also translates into cultural racism.

Cultural racism is defined as a belief that cultural ways of one group are superior to those of another group. Furthermore, most people either deny or avoid the hard conversations related to racism, which then exacerbates an already challenging situation (Diller & Moule, 2005.) This challenge then results in stereotypes and categorical thinking which pose greater problems that the society faces, such as in-group and out of group behaviors. An example of this might be sticking to one's own race and separating from those who are different. The concept of racism ties closely to the relevancy of cultural competence because the implication for teachers is that racism is an instrumental factor that impacts students of color and how students of color face problems in education due to the consequences of racism. To drive this point further, it is important to note that teachers must become aware of their own prejudices and stereotypes so that these do not interfere with educating students of color (Diller & Moule, 2005.)

Racial Identity Theory

As stated earlier, despite the changing demographics in the American classroom, the overwhelming majority, of teachers (82%) are still White. Irvine (2003) and Wilson, Floden and Ferini-Mundy (2001) assert that differences in racial and cultural background between teachers and students in low-resourced schools have created conflicts and misunderstandings due to poor conceptualizations of student needs and abilities. (p.31). Since, cultural competency is linked to

increased students' academic performance, self-esteem and over all well-being, there is a pressing need for teachers to be more competent culturally. Carter and Goodwin (1994) also assert that one of the key components to developing cultural competence is for a person to begin with their own identity development. In the case of the American classrooms, these would constitute a majority of White teachers, hence, we must turn to the White Racial Identity Development Theory to understand this.

Racial identity is described as "sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (Helms, 1990, p. 3). Scholars assert that it is not only important for White teachers to have a solid educational foundation in cross-cultural teaching, but they must also understand how and why they are teaching what they are teaching. For example, many teachers teach the way that they learned, usually from another White teacher. In reality, a teacher might advertently or inadvertently pass on her biases while interacting with the students. Interestingly, Irvine (2003) describes significant research studies in which African American students performed better with African American teachers but the results of the study revealed a deeper phenomenon. African American teachers were more empathetic in their worldview when compared to their White counterparts. Irvine (2001) referred to this aspect of empathy- based teaching as "teaching with a cultural eye." Taking a closer look at the White Racial Identity Development Theory, Helms (1984, 1990, 1995) provides progressive development of the White identity. He describes two phases: abandonment of racism and defining a non-racist White identity. There are six identity statuses that develop this sense of identity. The first status is contact; in this stage Whites are unaware of racism—they believe everyone has a chance at equal opportunity. The second status is disintegration, where Whites may realize that there is racism and may feel conflicts with reality and beliefs. In the third

status, reintegration, Whites recognize the superiority and inferiority complex. In the 4th status, Pseudo-independence, there are efforts made by Whites to understand racial differences and interact with people of color. In the fifth status, immersion, Whites begin to confront prejudices and stereotypes. Finally, in the 6th status, autonomy, Whites become more confident in their own identity by which they are able to value diversity and are no longer uncomfortable in discussing racism and more importantly develop a more non-racist attitude (Helms, 1984). The results from other studies (Block, Roberson & Neuger ,1995) within various social sciences disciplines suggest that individuals with high levels of Autonomy as referenced in the Helms model, had more positive reactions to interracial situations at work. Ottavi, Pope-Davis and Ding (1994) also reported that the "White racial identity explained variability in cultural competencies beyond that accounted for demographics" (p.150).

The field of education has several important studies that have also concluded similar results with teachers. Lawrence and Tatum (1997) found that White teachers who went through a 7-month professional development program had shifted in their worldviews and reported an improved attitude regarding race. Brown, Parham & Yonker, 1996, along with Brooks and Baker (1996) confirmed through their studies that there was a positive relationship between the interventions and White participants' racial identity. The conclusions on the past research suggest that there is a need for more concerted efforts in developing these competencies in all teachers.

Perspectives on Culture

According to Harris and Moran (1987) cultural concepts are embedded in three distinct levels as technical, formal and informal. The iceberg analogy is used to explain these levels. Technical level refers to the overall behaviors and appearances that are clearly visible to the eyes

as differences. Formal levels may include beliefs and rituals, while informal levels include the "unseen" and "unconscious" beliefs and or feelings.

The theoretical framework for cultural competence is rooted in two different traditions: cultural psychology and sociocultural psychology. These two perspectives have been used in many professional fields such as anthropology, nursing, medicine, social work and other fields of psychology. The predominant theoretical underpinnings of these perspectives conform to the notion that culture defines all aspects of human life. Shweder (1991) describes the sociocultural psychology perspective that proposes that the way in which individuals construct knowledge varies between cultures and within cultural groups. He asserts that knowledge is implicit or intuitive in the manners by which it is understood and conveyed. Shweder (1991) illustrates that general psychology and cultural psychology vary in their discourses and underlying assumptions regarding how humans come to know. General psychology focuses on the assumptions that knowledge is acquired through practice, training, developing skills and forming habits of mind. Here, Shweder (1991) signifies that there is a distinct line of separation between mind and culture. In his argument for the cultural psychology's perspective, he claims that the mind and culture are inseparable, hence identified knowledge construction as a cognitive process.

Cultural psychology perspective's underlying assumptions assert that knowledge is acquired through social interactions. Moreover, it is rooted in the notion that cultural values and norms are inseparable from the way human beings think and construct their knowledge (Frese, 2015.) Regardless of which discipline we draw from, some common terms emerge from comparative notions of cultural competence: patience, empathy, nonjudgmental attitudes and respect. These common threads surface as one endeavors to reach cultural proficiency. There are various perspectives on attaining cultural proficiency which point towards the interwoven methods

by which competency is cultivated. These could include social interactions, personal experiences, professional interactions, education, training and reading.

One of the most detailed works on cultural competency for teachers is available as primer for educators, which is written by Diller and Moule. It offers the following definition on cultural competency:

Cultural competency is the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than our own. It entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, developing certain bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching. (Diller & Moule, 2005, p. 2).

According to Cross et al, (1989) cultural competence is a "set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system agency or among professionals and enable that system or agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. (Diller & Moule, 2005, p.12.) Both these definitions exemplify the context of cultural competency to be that of a 21st century skill, next to the importance of communication skills, digital literacy, collaboration …etc. Cultural competency then could be essential in helping us increasing our understanding of the world around us and improving relationships across the cultures.

Kroeber and Kluckholn (1952) elaborated that culture is composed of traditional ideas and related values and it is the product of actions; it is learned and shared from one generation to the next. Kuhn (1970) uses the word paradigm to describe a set of shared assumptions and beliefs about how the world works, and that our beliefs define what we perceive. This idea of paradigms helps us construct our cognitive worldviews, which shape our reality. Since each culture perceives reality with a different perspective, it would be natural for one group to protect and defend what they view as their reality. Diller and Moule (2005) contend that it is this Northern European

cultural paradigm that is the most prevalent in the classrooms across the US and is imposed on the students of color. These researchers assert that the tendencies of ethnocentrism operate with the notion that everyone else views the world the way we and this is where the misunderstandings begin. Landrum-Brown (2013) provides a framework for various dimensions of culture: psycho-behavioral modalities, axiology (values) ethos (guiding beliefs) epistemology (how one knows) logic, ontology, concept of time and concept of self. They also offer the three major catalysts that culture evolves with—ritual practices, behavioral prescriptions and symbols (p.69). These frameworks allow for a unique way to understand then compare, and contrast cultures.

Synthesis of Second Language Theories

As often neglected component of cultural competence is the role of linguistic competence as an underpinning of cultural competencies. Teacher attitudes towards heritage languages help students and families maintain these to solidify their identities. Reardon and Galindo (2009) explain that there is strong association between language status and academic performance. Given this correlation, it would be vital to identify which methods work best with the English Learners. The answer is not an easy one because even after years of debate and comprehensive research, there is great variability in terms of "what works with EL students" (Goldenberg, 2008). The long-standing debate of English only vs. Bilingual education continues to be paramount in terms of debates with politicians and does have a trickle-down effect on teachers' attitudes about these debates. A closer look at second language theories may illuminate a better understanding of how language is acquired and how it is learned. This perspective of Second Language Acquisition is critical to exploring and investigating teacher's cultural competency and their efficacy in terms of working with students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. There are more than 40 SLA theories, however, according to Menezes (2013) eight main theories are part of an emergent

phenomenon: behaviorism, acculturation, universal grammar hypothesis, comprehension hypothesis, interaction hypothesis, output hypothesis, sociocultural theory and connectionism.

Even with numerous research studies, there continues to be a strong debate on how students best acquire languages. Although, no cookie-cutter program or method will be comprehensive in nature, it is critical that teachers are exposed to a variety of strategies so that they can incorporate trial and error; and determine which strategies work best with which students. Menezes (2013) affirms that the same teaching strategies do not have the same effect for all learners. Menezes (2013) also predicates that the role of the teacher is to "encourage constant contact of the student with as many forms of input as possible and to promote interactions among various speakers" (p. 411). Thus, it is imperative that teachers understand that language learning is an incredibly dynamic, social process which is not only interactive but also cognitive. Therefore, teachers must understand their role as facilitators in this didactic process.

So how do teachers' attitudes affect linguistically different students. Extensive research studies have showcased the importance of the students' native language and its primary role in students' achievement (Greene, 1998; Ramirez, 1992; Collier, 2002; Fay & Whaley, 2004). In addition, these same researchers identified similar findings which indicate that valuing and capitalizing on various students' cultures and languages are integral components of their success in school. For many students who have limited or no English skills, their native language remains their only means of comprehensible input. Their native language would be the only way in most cases to access the content language and to make sense of it. However, native language instruction which is traditionally viewed as bilingual teaching is not a feasible option when there is a large linguistic diversity. Based on the supply and demand of the teacher workforce, it would be impossible to find teachers who are highly qualified in each subject area to represent each of the

students' linguistic backgrounds. However, research points out that there are several things that mainstream teachers can successfully do with students to help them meet their learning outcomes. According to Fay and Whaley (2004), monolingual teachers can facilitate activities such as pairing students who speak the same language, utilizing paraprofessionals or parent volunteers to help translate and obtaining curricula that supports students in their native language. This linguistic empathy from mainstream teachers could help ELL students engage more actively in academic tasks and cognitive as well as social skills to help promote a positive self-identity for students (Nieto & Bode, 2008). There is a significant disconnect between what the research studies claim regarding best approaches to teaching a linguistically diverse population and what is really happening in the mainstream classrooms. Faltis and Hudelson (1998) assert that English only and immersion-based practices are critically evident in learning environments across the nation. Students native languages are often discouraged, and teachers often impose their ideologies of assimilation and monolingualism. In addition, teachers' hold certain perceptions and often times misconceptions about diverse groups of students who are linguistically and culturally different from them (Tse, 2001).   According to Samway and McKeon (2007), many teachers and administrators devalue the use of the students' native languages because of their erroneous belief that such engagement would slow down their second language acquisition. However, research studies (Ramirez et al. 1991; Cummins, 1981) assert that native language use supports target language growth and students negotiate their target language tasks in their native language. It is also important to note that translating and negotiating between two languages is a highly cognitive process and should be nurtured in the classroom.

American Cultural Paradigms

In the next few sections, I will summarize the literature on comparing cultural paradigms in America. It is important to frame the cultural paradigms from the historical context to demonstrate a paradigm shift. It is worth understanding this in more detail to appreciate the variances of differences that exist between the cultural paradigms of White European Americans to the paradigms of People of Color. Ho (1987) classified the cultures of the people of color—Asian Americans, and Latino Americans, Native Americans and African Americans. He argues that each of these cultures varies in its worldview and how it approaches life and living. As the literature suggests, each culture's perspectives on time orientation, human relations and work and activity differ in their own ways and most importantly, these contrast significantly when compared to the Northern European beliefs. Diller and Moule (2009) suggest that European Americans view concept time as linear and incremental therefore ideas such as being on time and using time efficiently are seen as positive norms. However, people of color, especially the Asian and Latino cultures, may prioritize the importance of past and present in their concept of time while African Americans and American Indians view time as present-oriented. When defining human relations, people of color differ in values compared to their European counter parts. Ho (1987) describes the European worldview as having a greater focus on "individual" compared to the cultures of color. He defines individual behavior as "actions taken to actualize the self, while collateral behavior involves doing things to contribute to the survival and betterment of family and community" (In Diller & Moule, 2005, p.72). These differences can have a great impact in the classroom if the teacher is not able to value the differences. Many Latin American and Asian students value cooperation and strive to suppress individual accomplishments. European American students are taught to compete and seek out individual success. Although Ho's

descriptions are sweeping generalizations, it is important to understand that there may be cultural differences among groups of students in the American classrooms.

Ho (1987) describes significant other differences in terms of how the cultures of color perceive work and activity compared to their European counterparts, but even with the cultures of color there are significant differences in this domain. The European Americans and Asian Americans are focused more on the "doing" which is an active mode. The active mode involves aspiring for goals, working towards those goals and rewarding one- self for achieving those goals. In these societies, there is a high regard for work and accomplishment, which is usually associated with a person's status. However, the Latin Americans and Native Americans are described as a society that is characterized by "being-in-becoming." This mode of activity is more passive and process-oriented. A lot of time is given to thinking and waiting for the world "to present an opportunity" rather than seeking it out. The African Americans fall in between the two extremes (Diller & Moule, 2005, p. 73). Again, I would argue that although the aforementioned generalizations may have some validity, these are not in any way an absolute reflection of any respective culture. However, I assert that it is important for teachers to be aware of such differences and be able to negotiate them in their own practices.

Cultural competence for teachers then implies that teachers are aware of cultural differences and respond to individual student needs. The "call to action" piece is critical part of exhibiting competency. Contemporary researchers on this topic have concluded that teachers have the capability of improving school and student success if they are knowledgeable and accepting of students' culture (Gay, 2000; Grant, Elsbree, & Fordrie, 2004). Many researchers have offered insights into what encompasses cultural competency but Garmon and Valentin (2006) provide a detailed framework, which includes the following factors which influence cultural competency:

openness to diversity; personal beliefs and intercultural experiences; self-awareness/self-reflectiveness; educational background; and commitment to social justice. This framework is inclusive of teacher attitudes, efficacious experiences and overall pursuit of providing equity in education to all students regardless of social, cultural or linguistic barriers.

Liang and Zhang (2009) assert that there are four major factors that influence cultural competence: belief that all students can learn; self-reflection and critical examination; high expectations and communicating these to the students and standing up to challenge and ameliorating prejudice and discrimination. Based on the study that they conducted, they concluded that the teachers' cultural competency was an evolving process within the four dimensions and found that the teachers engaged in a process from cognition to affection and then to action. Liang and Zhang (2009) also noted that professional belief that students can learn was the strongest predictor for self-reflection. However, there was even a stronger relationship which was also found between high expectations and ameliorating prejudice. The analysis of their work emphasizes the almost sequential phases that teachers go through in terms of developing their competence: starting with a belief in the value of diversity and situated within their ability to reflect on their behavior towards diversity and then finally responding to the needs of that diversity with critical self-examinations both inside and outside of the classroom.

The primary implication of this research is to provide a framework along with the holistic and measurable indicators of teacher preparation programs. Liang and Zhang's work are instrumental in helping teachers to gain more competence culturally, but more importantly, it reverts back to teachers' self-examination of themselves through engagement in self-assessments of their own cultural competence. The conclusions of their research lead to a key point that teacher expectations contribute towards teacher action especially in ameliorating prejudice and hence

teacher expectations seem to be more of an indicator to assess cultural competence. Michelli and Keiser (2005) assert a similar message by implying that teacher preparation programs should provide teachers with more classroom experiences where teachers should be engaging in exhibiting high expectations for all students using differentiated instructional methods.

Jeffreys (2006) illustrates a 3-Domain framework which provides a construct to understand cultural competence. He asserts that understanding cultural differences and appreciating these differences is a vital part of the learning process, which includes cognitive, interpersonal and environmental context of human life. Jeffreys (2006) noted that cultural self-awareness and knowledge are developed in the cognitive domain. In the interpersonal domain, he concurs that our sense of cultural appreciation and empathy are cultivated, whereas in the environmental domain we recognize skill sets such as language, space, and rules and regulations. In addition, the most critical lens for all these three domains is grounded in the culture of communities. Gonzalez (2002) along with Jeffreys highlights the importance of these backdrops as a rich source of information. It is here where the core underpinning of developing cultural competency lies: understanding and appreciating the culture and language of the various communities.

Another instrumental conceptual framework that is widely used in education comes from the work of Sue with its initial underpinnings from the field of psychology. Sue (2001) proposed a model to organize the multiple dimensions of culture with both emic and etic perspectives. This model is known as the Multiple Dimensions of Cultural Competence (MDCC) which includes three dimensions: specific racial and cultural group perspectives, components of cultural competence and foci of cultural competence (Sue, 2001, p. 791). It is important to note that the dimensions in Sue's model represent the sub-dimensions and dominant cultures of the US. The first dimension refers to the cultures of color and Whites and is race based. The second dimension,

which is what my study focuses on, includes the sub skills of cultural competence: awareness of attitudes/beliefs, knowledge and skills. The third section includes foci of cultural competence: societal, organizational, professional and individual (Sue, 2001).

I focused on the second dimension of the MDCC model for the purpose of acquiring a better understanding of these skill-sets as these components of cultural competence will offer insights for my study. Sue (2001) defines attitudes/beliefs as "an understanding of one's own cultural conditioning that affects personal beliefs, values and attitudes." Knowledge is defined as "an understanding and knowledge of the worldviews of culturally different individuals and groups." Skills are defined as the "use of culturally appropriate intervention and or communication skills. The core aspects of the second component of cultural competence from Sue's model will guide the lines of inquiry for this present study which seeks to understand the relationship of cultural competency and teacher efficacy. The research from Cross et al (1989) offers greater insight on Sue's second component of attitudes, knowledge and skills' dimension:

1. Awareness and Acceptance of Differences—culturally competence teacher will pay attention to differences and realize that these differences can impact learning.

2. Self-Awareness—culturally competent teachers will realize that it important to understand our own culture before we can understand someone else's culture.

3. Dynamics of Differences—culturally competent teachers will be more in tune with cross cultural miscommunications and how to go about it successfully.

4. Knowledge of the Students' Culture—culturally competent teachers will take the time to understand their students' culture so that they interpret students' behavior in their cultural context.

5. Adaptation of Skills—culturally competent teachers will adapt their teaching strategies to be more culturally sensitive and help students from all cultures to have an opportunity to learn.

Organizations that strive to build cultural competencies in their employees incorporate an iterative process to ensure that there is a level of open discussion, participation and disagreement in arriving at consensus about how to develop cultural competence among professional and how to infuse cultural practices in institutions (Overall, 2009 p.190). Cultural competencies develop overtime and involve a dialectical process by which individuals have to examine their own worldviews first and try to understand the worldviews of others. Overall (2009) refers to such a process as "adjustment and readjustment" and asserts that cultural competence is hence the ability to make the adjustments and to participate in making culture an important part of the ethos of an organization (p.190).

Based on the research, to understand the current problem that school leaders face, it is important to note the relationship between lack of cultural competence of teachers and the overall impact on school leaders to be able to do their jobs. Research points to the fact that there is a growing evidence of cultural gaps in our nation's schools and that our educators struggle to serve students who are different from the social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than their own. According to the NEA policy brief (2006) cultural competence is the key to providing equitable education to all students, even those from diverse backgrounds. Cultural competence gives our students a viable option to a successful educational experience. NEA suggests that states consider adopting stand-alone cultural competency standards. Currently, only nine states have adopted such standards and other states only infuse some links to these standards in their history and foreign language framework. NEA affirms that stand-alone standards, such as those from

Alaska, provide a greater depth of knowledge and experiences by elevating teachers' understanding to operate effectively in different cultural contexts. The major policy levers--preservice education, licensure and ongoing professional development, can help close the cultural competency gaps. Culturally competent teachers who value diversity, show self-awareness, understand the dynamics of cultural interactions and adapt to diversity are far more likely to have greater self-efficacy as a teacher. In return, these culturally competent teachers can work collaboratively with their culturally responsive school leaders to provide a culturally adaptive learning environment for our students.

Reverting to self-efficacy and more specifically towards teacher efficacy, we can conclude that the relationship between beliefs and actions is well documented. However, more is to be known about whether beliefs guide action or actions or results of actions shape beliefs, or if they interact in a way that they affect each other based on other factors. (Richardson & Placier 2001).

Teacher Attitudes and Beliefs Towards ELL

Research conducted by Byrnes, Kiger and Manning (1997, 1996) in which teachers were surveyed across three states, showed that the "most positive attitudes towards ELLs existed among teachers who: (1) who had participated in carefully organized, formal ELL training, (2) had completed a graduate degree, (3) came from regions where "strong and supportive," messages were passed down from the state legislature and by educational mandates (p.642) In contrast, negative attitudes from teachers have underpinnings of racism and prejudicial beliefs (Pang & Sabling, 2001). This references the deficit-thinking model, where racially biased teachers believe that students with linguistically different backgrounds bring too many challenges to the classroom, hence affecting their sense of efficacy in a negative way. Pang and Sabling (2001) comment that in-service teachers have more negative attitudes than preservice teachers attributing these

differences to plausible influence that the in-service teachers may have received in forming their beliefs. These might have resulted from the attitudes of those teachers who may not have found success with language minority students.

According to Valdes (2001) "attitudinal assessment" is an integral component of evaluating teachers' beliefs and attitudes because these views impact the learning outcomes for linguistically diverse student groups. "Teachers who hold negative, ethnocentric or racist attitudes about ELLs, or who believe in any of the numerous fallacies surrounding the education of language -minority students often fail to meet the academic and social needs of these students and work to maintain the hegemonic legitimacy of the dominant social order" (Walker et al., 2004, p.130). In the past decade, our schools are becoming increasingly more negative towards the needs of the ELL students. One example of this is seen in the recent bans on bilingual education programs even in the light of research that concludes that bilingual education programs have achieved greater success rates than English-only programs (Cummins, 1979; Goldenrbert, 1996; Ramirez et al., 2009; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). Krashen (2003) states that right-wing organizations such "English for the Children" and "English Only" have influenced the negative societal attitudes towards the language minority students and this has had a trickled down effect on teacher beliefs and their attitudes. Horencyzk and Tatar (2002) further emphasize this dichotomous relationship by stating that "teacher's approaches and behaviors toward culturally diverse populations do not exist in a social vacuum; rather they tend to reflect and be affected by—the norms and values both of the larger society and of the educational settings in which the interactions take place" (p.426). Walker et al. (2009) attest that teachers internalize these societal attitudes and carry these with them into the classrooms along with all other stakeholders in schools. These then become part of the ethos of the school culture which then reflects the dominance of societal views at large. Nieto

(1995) projects that if the greater society does not take steps to "embrace" the linguistically diverse community, then the school community will not embrace them either. Walker et al. (2009) states that teachers' attitudes towards the linguistically diverse population will continue to crumble for three major reasons: growth of EL population, lack of training for teachers, immigrants settling in areas that lack experience with EL programs and changes that are resulting from federal legislation surrounding the EL students' accountability measures. In lieu of these projections and compelling data that show an unprecedented trend of growth in the number of linguistically diverse students, it would be more than likely that the negative attitudes will continue to rise. Walker et al. (2009) argue for an immediate call to action to promote positive professional development activities that would provide teachers with not only training in how to adapt teaching strategies for linguistically diverse students, but also to overcome their fallacies and create a holistic, positive attitude that will help optimize the learning opportunities for these students. Walker et al (2009) call for proactive strategies to help teachers adjust to the new challenges. Based on his literature review, Walker et al. (2009) confirms that it is evident that "educational deficit beliefs" about ELLs and cultural racist beliefs can lead to negative teacher attitudes that in turn result in inferior educational services.

Summary

Based on this review of literature, it is imperative to understand how teachers' beliefs directly influence their attitudes and shape the discourse of their teaching. According to Clark and Peterson (1986), teachers' theoretical beliefs directly impact the way they perceive things in the classroom and how they behave. Rueda and Garcia (1996) assert that teachers' beliefs about dual language proficiency influence how they incorporate native language in the context of the classroom. Research studies show that teachers' attitudes toward native language are more

positive based on geographical region, experience working with ELLs, a completed degree and formal training. Overall, teachers who held positive beliefs of ELL students also believed that native language proficiency promotes students' performance in school and does not hinder second language acquisition (Karabenick & Clemens, 2004). Gonzales and Gabel (2017) state, "teachers with little exposure to culturally and linguistically diverse student populations may articulate pedagogical practices borne from their own culture's experience of school and schooling and from their belief about children and parents in their own cultural milieu" (p. 61). Gonzales and Gabel (2017) assert that schools are ineffectively prepared to appropriately address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students and argue that more research is warranted to address the changing demographics in the classroom landscape and the preparation of the teachers to support these students.

To summarize, there is extensive research conducted in the areas of teacher efficacy, cultural competency and teacher attitudes and beliefs. However, there were gaps in literature in terms of how cultural competency affects teacher efficacy. In the next chapter, the methodology of this study will be discussed to frame the context of the research with methods that were used for participant selection, data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to explore the relationships between cultural competency and teacher self-efficacy and to investigate in which ways, if any, cultural competency influences teachers' efficacy in working with ELL students. This study incorporated qualitative methods using an interpretive paradigm. This chapter will provide an overview of the methodology, personal standpoint, ethical considerations, data collection methods, data analysis and limitations and delimitations. To understand the teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy as it relates to cultural competency the following research questions were utilized to guide the study:

Research Questions:

1. How do teachers understand cultural competency?

2. How do teachers say they implement cultural competency?

3. What are the relationships between teachers' background experiences and cultural competency?

4. How does cultural competency affect teachers' perceptions of efficacy?

5. What is the relationship between professional learning and cultural competency?

Maxwell (2005) asserts that researchers use the best-fit model to select their research approach and it is a decision that they make based on the goals of their study. The researcher conceptualizes the study using a set of "assumptions about the world," the topic selected for study and "methodological preferences" (Maxwell, 2005, p.37). According to Creswell (2014) research approaches are "plans and procedures" that researchers incorporate to identify the steps and detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. I have selected a qualitative approach to my research because my study seeks to understand a phenomenon of making meaning through understanding the relationship between an individual's cultural competency skill and

teacher efficacy. As I embraced this interpretive method, which uses varied forms of surveys and interviews, I looked for in-depth meanings and interpretations of those who are living the phenomenon of working with the ELL students with success and efficacy.

Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific in a "real-world" setting where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2001). Hoepft (1997) suggests that qualitative researchers seek to understand and extrapolate findings to similar situations. Using interpretive paradigms, qualitative researchers immerse themselves in the research process by their involvement and role within research (Winter, 2000). Qualitative research is interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). Since my research topic involved an interpretive paradigm and required an analysis of themes and patterns based on what teachers say, do and believe, a qualitative methodology of data collection and analysis helped render the complex interpretations.

I chose an interpretive research paradigm as part of a qualitative approach to investigate my study because I planned to investigate how teachers' beliefs about their cultural competency impact their efficacy. The interpretive model of research has its roots in philosophy and social sciences. The primary lens through which people make sense of their reality subjectively but also associate meaning with it incorporates the interpretive paradigm (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). This approach of studying human behavior through individual and contextual experiences is given as much importance as "focusing on explanation or making predictions." The literature on interpretive design dates back to the nineteenth century to Dilthey's philosophy and Weberian sociology. The interpretive paradigm has also been connected to Weber's verstehen approach,

which can be conceptualized as an understanding of something in its context and it has elements of empathy, as reflective, reconstructive and interpretive of the actions of others (Weber, 1978). An important aspect of Weber's assertion was that a greater level of understanding and construction of meaning can be achieved by exploring people's intentions and their goals. Alfred Schutz (1967) and other scholars have taken Weber's concept of verstehen and expanded it to a macro-level making the interpretive paradigm- based research approaches where these can be applied in the social sciences. This model helped promote a positivist base endeavors towards more humanized form of study without compromising the scientific rigor (Gann, 2017).

An interpretive paradigm views the researchers as main tools since they are instrumental in constructing knowledge through an interpretive lens. Observations, interpretations and making deductions are essential in helping the researcher interpret a given phenomenon within a context to which people may assign meaning (Daetz, 1996). The most critical aspect of the interpretive paradigm lies in the way the analysis is reflective of the context (Reeves & Hedberg (2003). According to Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) interpretive design does not incorporate dependent and independent variables, but it does focus on the "lived human experiences" to help explain the phenomenon. Walsham (1993) states that there are no correct or incorrect theories in the interpretive tradition, however, the researcher can evaluate the value of the findings based on what is identified as "interesting." Interpretive paradigm provides a constructive approach to "change lenses" and help us see through the "lens of others" so that we may learn from their worldview.

Personal Standpoint

After almost nine years of serving as a principal at a private school, I decided to make a career transition to charter schools. I was offered a position as the Director of School Improvement at a charter school management company in southeast Michigan, which served a large immigrant

population in its k-12 schools. One of the districts that the management company serves has three buildings, elementary, middle and high school which host 98% Yemeni, immigrant students whose native language is Arabic. Eighty-percent of these students come to the US with gaps in schooling and/or illiterate family backgrounds.

One of my initial tasks was to develop a school improvement plan with the school leadership teams so I engaged in a "needs assessment" to understand the primary concerns at the high school using data analysis, surveys and face-to-face interactions. As I gathered more information and put a plan together, it was clear to me that one of our biggest areas to focus on pertained to culturally responsive teaching. This was a grand idea for most to understand. In simple terms, teachers stated that they did not know how to teach students who didn't speak in English, while others stated that: "these students do not want to learn, they want to work at gas stations and get married." Teachers also felt uncomfortable with the students' lack of prior knowledge in the context of American education. Many teachers felt that the students in this area were not assimilating but were holding on to their traditions in terms of language, dress and other customs that are clearly evident in the school culture.

School leadership teams had tried many interventions in terms of cultural sensitivity training for teachers, resource alignment for ELL students and Professional Development for ELL teaching methods, including SIOP. However, teacher retention continued to be a significant issue. During my work with the teams, which included one-on-one interactions and classroom observations, I noticed that some teachers were more efficacious with our students than most others. This was evident in how they treated the students, how they cared about these students and how they went an extra mile to provide students with what they needed. These teachers not only stay with the district, but they have an impact on students in meaningful ways. It was this discovery

that framed my research interest. I was interested in investigating this phenomenon through a qualitative and interpretive lens. What makes these teachers different? What beliefs and values drive their cultural practices at the school? Why do they seem more efficacious than their peers who give up so easily? I strongly assert that ALL students deserve an opportunity to have teachers who find ways to help them succeed and not give up on them. If this research sheds light on what would make teachers persevere and overcome the barriers of immigrant education, then it may carve a path to better understanding of immigrant student advocacy.

Researcher Reflexivity and Bias

"In qualitative research, the inquirer reflects about how their role in the study and their personal background, culture and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations." (Creswell, 2014, p. 186). Creswell (2014) also elaborates that this reflexivity is more than "advancing biases," it is also connected with the researcher's background and experiences which may shape their interpretations during meaning-making and advancing the direction of the study in a given way. Due to the fact that I was an active participant in the parts of the study and recognizing that I have significant background in the environment where the study took place, I considered many reflexivity protocols. First and foremost, I incorporated introspection in all aspects of research inquiry. Secondly, I utilized a reflexivity journal to note any of my prejudices or influences. Finally, I engaged in checking for clarification and triangulation of data from surveys, questionnaire and interviews to ensure that the research study is credible.

According to Creswell (2014) the "role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study" (p. 207). Locke et al. (1987) also assert that the investigator's contribution to the research setting can be useful and positive rather than detrimental." My role in the management

company did involve working with the teachers very closely during the first year, as I worked with the team to develop a strategic plan using a school improvement framework. During my second year, I was working more closely with instructional leaders in the building and provided professional development to teachers using a Cognitive Coaching model. In the year of data collection, I mostly worked with the school leaders; therefore, my role did not involve direct supervision of teachers. However, since I was involved in professional development and strategic planning at the central office level, there were certain biases that I assume I may have brought to this study. Using a thoughtfully designed research plan, I used full objectivity to shape my research using researcher reflexivity.

Research Site

For the purpose of this study, I identified the management company's high school as my research site. I have used the pseudonym Phoenix International Academy to refer to this high school in the future sections. Phoenix International Academy is located in an urban area near Detroit with a student count of 350 students. The charter school management company manages five low-performing schools in the Hamtramck and Detroit area. Research was conducted in the high school building which, serves 9-12 grade students. There are 350 students (40% female and 60% male) with twenty teachers and ten administrative/support team members. This area is home to a large migrant population representing Yemeni and Iraqi immigrants. Almost, all of the parents have limited educational backgrounds and face challenges with communication in English. There is a high level of teacher turnover each year and high mobility of students as well. The leadership in the school has struggled with stability but things are bouncing back and getting better. There is an ESL program in place, two ELL teachers per building plus a few paraprofessionals who provide extra support to disadvantaged students. Almost, 80% of the total population has an English

Language Learner identification based on the WIDA (an English proficiency exam taken by ELL students annually as required by the state) assessments; these assessments provide language proficiency evaluation. Close to 25% of our total population comprises newcomer students who do not speak in English. In addition, 99% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunches, which qualifies our schools for Title I Programs. Students' proficiency on MSTEP and SAT was below 10% for the past couple of years. Teacher attrition is high with more 40% change in staff members each year.

Participation Selection

I purposefully identified the high school teachers to be part of this research because my observations for the past few years in my capacity have piqued my interest for this research. This study was conducted to discover from teachers the possible relationships between their self-perceived cultural competency and their teacher efficacy. Prior to beginning the research, I sought verbal and written permission and authorization to conduct research onsite at the high school which is in one of the districts that the management company operates. A written information sheet was provided to all staff members including ESL teachers, paraprofessional and administrators during a staff meeting with permission from the building principal. The purpose of the information sheet was to explain the purpose of the study and to seek participants for the surveys and the interviews. All 26 staff members received copies of the Cultural Competency Surveys. The baseline criterion that was used for interviews was that participants were full-time, certified teachers at the high school who spent at least 75% of their day on instructional activities, which involved direct contact with students.

The informed consent provided clear guidelines and explanations for the participant. This consent included the scope of the study, participant rights, ethical guidelines, how results would

be used and a disclaimer that participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any point in the study. All teachers and administrators were requested to complete the survey based on the informed consent. The Cultural Competency surveys along with an open-ended questionnaire which asked teachers about their experiences, challenges and successes with English Learners was provided to the teachers using hand-scoreable forms. Each survey was hand delivered to the respective teacher so that the researcher could code the surveys to prevent any identifiable information. All participants who completed surveys returned these in a secure envelope which was available in the Principal's office to avoid identifiable information. The envelope was collected from the office by the researcher and no one besides the researcher and participants had access to the envelope. A form was attached to surveys that requested a contact for follow-up interview if the interview criteria were met and if the participant was willing to participate. If participants were willing to be contacted for the interviews, they provided their email address along with available times for the interview. This form was returned with the surveys. With the use of a purposeful sampling technique (Creswell, 2014), participants were selected for the next phase which included face-to-face interviews. Participants were invited to the interviews based on their cultural competency scores ranging from very high to very low.

Data Collection: Surveys and Interviews

The cultural competency survey was used to respond to question 1 and 2 respectively: How do teachers understand cultural competency? How do teachers say they implement cultural competency?"

A formal paper/pencil survey was used to determine each participant's cultural competency scale/index. The cultural competency scale consisting of structured, Likert-scale based questions,

along with open-ended questions from a questionnaire was used to collect initial data referencing

perceived cultural competency. The Cultural Competency index is based on the Multicultural

Awareness, Knowledge and Skills Scale which was designed by D'Andrea, Daniels and Noonan,

1994) from the University of Hawaii.

Using these respective indices, the participants were selected for the study and invited for

the interview if the researcher had written consent to contact them. Based on the results of this

survey and consent form agreements, the researcher identified ten participants for the interview

segments. Based on the results of the cultural competence survey index, four members had higher

relevant Cultural Competency index over 3.0 or above, while the four other members had a lower

index between 1-2.9. An additional two interviews were conducted with the school leaders both

of whom had high cultural competence indices but were selected to provide different perspectives

given their administrative roles and the fact that each identifies himself with a unique cultural

identity. Formal interviews were arranged between the participants and the researcher based on

convenience and mutually agreed on times. The interviews sought to investigate research

questions number 3, 4, 5:

- What are the relationships between teachers' background experiences and cultural
  competency?

- To what degree, if any does cultural competency affect teachers' perceptions of efficacy?

- What is the relationship between professional learning and cultural competency?

During the pre-interview process, the researcher provided detailed information regarding

the purpose of the research and provided a framework for types of questions that were asked during

the interview using the informed consent—Interview Information Sheet (see Appendix B).

Furthermore, face-to-face interviews yielded critical qualitative data. The following interview questions are illustrative of this investigation:

- What specific training have you had in cultural competency?

- What life experiences do you have with people from other cultures?

- How were you prepared to teach ESL teachers?

- What challenges do you experience in teaching ESL students?

- What successes do you experience with ESL students?

- How do these experiences affect your own teacher self-efficacy?

- What skills do you believe you have to have to accommodate the needs of the ESL students? Parents?

- What skills do you think teachers should possess to be successful with ESL students?

- What type of professional activities would help you gain more cultural competency?

- What type of professional activities do you think help you improve your own teacher-efficacy.

Participants were interviewed in the comfort of a private conference room after school. During the interview process, the participants engaged in a one on one dialog consistent with interpretive inquiry. The voice recordings were kept confidential along with other documents and data from the participants per IRB regulations. Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed (using Otter Voices) and the researcher engaged in additional note taking for coding purposes. All participants were assigned pseudonyms by the researcher to protect their identity.

Data Analysis

The cultural competency scale is on a Likert-scale and ranges from 1-4 with 1 being "very limited" competency, 2 being "limited competency", 3 being "good level of competency" and 4 being "very good level of competency." Once the cultural competency surveys were returned, these were hand scored using the scoring guidelines provided by D'Andrea, Daniels and Noonan (1994).

According to the scoring guideline, teachers scoring greater than 3.0 would be considered culturally competent while those who score less than 3.0 would be identified as limited in some of their competencies. In addition to the overall mean competency score, subset skills were also identified using a similar scoring system and given an average in each of the following areas: Awareness, Knowledge and Skills. The cultural competency scale was used to analyze data before the interviews and to assign a cultural competency index to the eight teachers and two leaders based on their perception scales. All participants also provided detailed information on their backgrounds, experiences in teaching diverse students, languages they speak and challenges as well as successes they have experienced. This questionnaire along with the cultural competency survey helped provide the researcher with preliminary information before the interviews.

In addition to the cultural competency survey, the questionnaire and interviews, it was important to gain a measure of each participant's self-perceived efficacy. Therefore, at the end of interview session, the ten participants were invited to complete a short form of the teacher-efficacy scale (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). This scale provided an index on the self-perceived efficacy which helped the researcher triangulate the information from the cultural competency surveys, the interviews and the efficacy surveys to comprehensively understand the research questions. The teacher efficacy scale was based on a Likert-scale which ranges from a score of 1-6. This scale

implies that teachers who perceive themselves to be efficacious would score in the 5, and 6 point spectrum and those who have a low sense of efficacy would have lower scores. Raw data, which was included from survey results, reflexivity journals and interview notes and, interview audio material was used to analyze data into categories.

After each interview segment, the researcher organized all the notes and began coding using domain analysis (to code relationships), taxonomic analysis (cross-cutting themes of manifest and latent nature), and complete matrices for componential analysis (Creswell, 2014). The recursive nature of data analysis involved raising questions and forced the researcher to use flexible thinking and clarify ideas about what was being discovered.

Lecompte and Schunsel (2010) emphasize the importance of "chunking" data into large conceptual categories or bins. Upon reviewing the notes from interviews and data from surveys which had details from what the teachers said and did, the researcher looked for what patterns showed up in those notes. Some key questions that were asked were: What topics were emphasized? Did there seem to be differences in how teachers talked? Which activities were associated with which other activities? What did they least talk about? Using inductive, bottom-up measures, the data were organized into themes and patterns. Once the broad topics emerged, the researcher framed future interviews to dig deeper to understand those crosscutting concepts. As Spradley (1979) mentions, this level of analysis is a reiterative process; thus, it required significant effort to organize, categorize and corroborate this information.

LeCompte (2010) refers to operational and conceptual levels of analysis, which allows researchers to move from concrete to abstract descriptions of the phenomena. The researcher moved to the next level of operational thinking by aggregating tangible items into categories, factors and or patterns of related items. Spradley (1979) refers to these patterns as cover terms.

Once patterns emerged, these were then categorized in subsets of domains, factors, sub-factors and variables. The researcher looked for linkages and co-occurances as well as the relationships between patterns. This process is where the researcher linked concrete and operational elements to theoretical and conceptual explanations. The data-analysis process used Tesch's Eight Steps in the coding process. This is also where the researcher identified congruency or incongruency related to the implicit goals of the research. Through structural analysis, the researcher put the "data story" together based on interpretations and giving meaning to the data. You cannot generalize from a qualitative, interpretive study. According to Creswell (2014), the final steps in data analysis involve a high-level of interpretation from the researcher. This final stage incorporates the "lessons learned" from the research, meanings derived from the research and implications for further studies.

<div align="center">**Trustworthiness**</div>

According to Robson (2011), trustworthiness is the degree of confidence that one has about a study and its and findings. Trustworthiness plays a central role in assessing qualitative research. According to Guba (1981), four specific criteria should be considered to establish trustworthiness in a research study: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility refers to the degree to which the researcher is confident in the truth of the study's findings. Triangulation of data from surveys, questionnaires and interviews was used to be sure that the study was credible. Transferability is the researcher's ability to apply the results of the study to other contexts. Other contexts could involve similar populations, and similar phenomena. Here, thick descriptions were used to show findings are applicable to other contexts. Confirmability is the degree of neutrality of the research findings. This refers to the idea that the findings of the study are solely based on

participant responses and free of researcher's biases or personal motivations. An audit trail would

be an example of how a researcher might ensure confirmability in her study.

Lastly, dependability plays a critical role in all qualitative research studies as this would

testify to the extent to which a study could be repeated by other researchers and yet the findings

could be consistent. An example could be an inquiry audit where an outside person examines the

research process and data analysis to ensure that the findings are consistent and could be repeated.

Creswell (2014) recommends eight strategies to incorporate validity, which are more detailed to

help the researcher in actively engaging in the process of validation. Creswell (2014) also

recommends triangulation of data sources to build coherent justification for the themes. When

these themes converge based on multiple data sources, then the study has more validity. In this

research, I incorporated triangulation strategies using the data from surveys and interviews as part

of the coding process. Creswell (2014) also emphasizes the use of member checking to determine

the accuracy of the data analysis. Using this strategy, I used thick descriptions and findings from

the study to go back to the participants to ensure accuracy of transcripts if I needed any

clarification. In addition, it is also important for the researcher to address any contradictions in

findings and be forthcoming in terms of any discrepant information. Finally, clarifying bias that

the researcher brings to the study is instrumental in qualitative research. Creswell (2014) posits

that reflectivity by the researcher helps the study to gain more authenticity with the readers when

the narrative resonates an honest and open dialog.

To summarize, this study employed coding and clustering strategies for data analysis

purposes. Data were hand coded using field notes and interview transcripts in an attempt to

understand and explain patterns. Using "thick descriptions", the researcher derived themes and

recorded these on a spreadsheet. Data were organized categorically and chronologically; and

analyzed by the researcher through an iterative process. Using member checking and internal audits, common experiences and findings were shared with participants. The researcher finally wrote the data story in a narrative format. External validity for transferability was achieved through rich descriptions and member checking. Reliability of the study was achieved through a detailed research plan, data triangulation and transparency with data collection and data analysis procedures.

Ethics and Confidentiality

According to Creswell (2014) ethical issues need significant attention. These issues pertain to all types of research and in all phases of the research study. Ethical questions are apparent today in such issues as personal disclosure, authenticity and credibility of the research report; the role of researchers in cross-cultural contests and issues of personal privacy through forms of data collection (Israel & Hay, 2006). Creswell (2014) emphasizes how researchers should protect their participants; build trust with them; promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations. (Creswell, 2014 p.m. 92) The participants' rights were carefully monitored throughout the study. Prior to starting this study, the researcher secured the site for the research with permissions and approval from the school administrator in a formal letter that described the research plan.

An IRB was submitted for approval in a timely manner. This IRB included information regarding potential risk to participants in this study. Once approval was granted, information sheets were provided to all participants who completed the initial surveys. Once, the key participants were identified using cultural competency surveys, questionnaires and written consent for contact, formal follow up interviews were organized. During the research study, the researcher was mindful of potential power imbalances and ensured that all interviews and observations began with

the premise that a power imbalance exists between the data collector and the participants (Creswell, 2014 p. 98). The researcher followed the IRB protocols to help protect the privacy of participants and data. All data collected were in locked in my office. Interview transcripts and recordings were securely placed in locked cabinets and will be kept for up to five years. The researcher used the guidelines from IRB and APA to ensure that ethical issues were addressed. Finally, the researcher intends to communicate the findings of this research study in clear and straightforward way to participants.

Significance of Research

Given the influx of immigrant students in this country and a changing American classroom landscape, it is imperative that teachers are prepared to teach children who are not of their own culture. I assert that through greater cultural competencies, teachers will be more efficacious with the students who are English Language Learners. It is important to study the teachers who deal with large immigrant populations so that we can identify the challenges that they face and gain a better insight as to what helps them succeed in the classrooms with these students. This understanding can help us provide better design teacher training programs, professional development and/or experiential learning programs to develop a teacher work force that is ready to tackle the challenges of immigrant education programs. This research contributes to these goals.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

Phoenix International Academy, which was selected as the research site, serves a diverse student population. Seventy-five percent of the students at the high school are from Yemen and 20% of students are from Bangladesh, along with a small of population of African-American and other ethnicities. However, the dominant demographic involves students from Yemen, so it is important to understand the background of these students to be able to understand the research findings in a meaningful way.

Yemeni Cultural Background

The Republic of Yemen was once known as the "cultural mecca" of the middle-east and is the cradle of one of the oldest civilizations. Now it is one of the poorest middle-eastern countries located at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula in Western Asia. It is bordered by Saudia Arabia to the north and the Red Sea to the west. Yemen has a rich cultural heritage and many archaeological sites along with the monuments that exemplify the first feats of engineering. Now, Yemen is one of the least developed countries, most of the population lives in rural and tribal communities. It also has a very young population with almost half of its people under 15 according to UNESCO (2015). Yemen has been in the midst of a political crisis for many years and refugees from this country are seeking asylum in many other foreign countries due to the war struck challenges. The predominant religion is Islam and the native language is Arabic. Due to deeply rooted socio-cultural issues and many political conflicts, the Yemeni population continues to face deterioration in terms of having proper healthcare, education or employment. According to UNESCO (2015) only 70% of the overall population is literate and only 55% of females are literate. However, illiteracy rates in rural and tribal areas are significantly higher. Since the educational system in Yemen is extremely weak in rural areas, most children do not even go to

school. There is no enforcement of the compulsory education laws to ensure that parents send their children to school. Based on enrollment records, close to 90% of the newcomers at the school are coming from villages. Most students and parents are not fully proficient in their native language. In addition, several different tribal dialects add to the differences in terms of linguistic challenges.

As most immigrants, Yemeni immigrants tend to be settling in this area due to a large existing population of Yemeni people. Many parents or students themselves select to come to the high school for its ethnocentric environment. Since 90% of the Yemeni female students wear a veil and full Islamic attire, this school offers a comfortable environment where students can express their own sense of identity. Almost, all of the newcomer students speak in Arabic and feel comfortable with students who are from the same culture. Although there are significant variations between students who have lived in the US for more than ten years and those who are newly getting acclimated, there is a strong affinity towards traditional cultural norms in terms of dress code, gender roles and linguistic maintenance.

Most of the students go through a process of acculturation but only very few are assimilating. Socioeconomic challenges force the boys in the school to take on employment usually, grave yard shifts to help contribute to the family's income. Girls also have many responsibilities at home that may not be typical of an American teenager. As they search for a sense of belonging and security, school is not a high priority. It is also important to note that since most of the parents are coming from a background with little or no education, the value of education is not prioritized. For example, most parents do not recognize the importance of college and its educational benefits in the American society. Due to their limited experiences in America, they are not able to communicate the value of education to their children. Often times, their goals

involve marriage and other customary practices which divert the students' attention from educational outcomes. Most students are married at a very young age with a dowry system. This system is institutionalized in the Yemeni culture to promote marriages and find a suitor who will be able to care for daughters and provide financial security. Most boys work odd jobs to save this dowry amount so that they can be married to the girls they desire. Although more girls are pursuing college, a common norm in this culture is for the girls to stay at home and raise children. For boys, the dream of college can come true, but most choose to pursue owning a small business. The value of education as a way to improving the quality of life is not yet established because the current norms of this culture promote short-term goals vs. long term ones.

Even though the need for safety and security prevails over other desires, with education being one of those, understanding the students' cultural norms helps teachers better serve them. Parents of students at the school are perceived to be not actively engaged based on the American norms. However, Yemeni parents have defined roles of engagement with their children. Mothers in this culture are very nurturing and provide emotional guidance to their children. They are instrumental in the upbringing of their daughters through modeling and "living their faith." Although most are illiterate even in their native language, guidance is passed on through wisdom, Friday sermons and personal experiences. Fathers have a more explicit role in the spiritual and financial aspects of the family. They are more in control of discipline and use traditional mediums such to punish and reward their children. Traditional "cultural scripts" for physical disciplining and implicit guilt of disappointment are very common in this culture. Parents, but usually the patriarchal figures, engage in one-way communication in dealing with discipline issues with their children and usually incorporate fear as a measure to change their children's behavior. Often times, school leaders face challenges when directing parents to utilize

more positive systems of disciplining their children because this does not fit their cultural practices. Even reward systems have cultural influences and include extreme freedom for the boys at a very young age. Fathers of the Yemeni students are very active in taking their children to the local mosque and other Saturday programs. There is a great sense of pride and tribal association with being "Yemeni." Students take out time from their busy days for prayers and have great respect for their tribal leaders. Although the parents do not participate in day to day activities at the school, there are small groups of parents who represent others. If there is an issue at the school, there are groups of parents who come to address this as part of their communal accountability.

Many teachers who come to the school experience a cultural shock and face linguistic challenges given the language barriers. Lack of perceived support from home and minimal parental involvement also compounds the challenges of educating students in a culturally responsive way. Socioeconomic disadvantages present further complications and add on to the plethora of other psychological and traumatic factors that may have impacted the students. It is important to understand that close to 25% of the newcomers are coming to a foreign country with little or no preparation to help them acclimate to the host country's norms. In addition, with survival as an utmost priority, schooling students who are teenagers from a war-torn country can be quite an undertaking.

The purpose of this research was to explore the relationships between cultural competency and teacher self-efficacy and investigate in which ways, if any, cultural competency influences teachers' efficacy in working with ELL students. The following research questions provided guidance for the proposed study:

Research Questions:

1. How do teachers understand cultural competency?

2. How do teachers say they implement cultural competency?

3. What are the relationships between teachers' background experiences and cultural competency?

4. How does cultural competency affect teachers' perceptions of efficacy?

5. What is the relationship between professional learning and cultural competency?

Survey Results: Multicultural Awareness Knowledge Skills Scale

As part of the initial survey collection, a paper/pencil copy of the Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Surveys was provided to twenty-six instructional and leadership team members. 24 out of 26 responded to the surveys which were based on the Likert scale of 1-4 which used the following scales to offer insight into self-perceptions of their skills sets in each of the areas of knowledge, awareness and skills of being culturally competent-1-very limited; 2 limited; 3 good; 4 very good. Each participant's survey was hand-scored to determine the cultural competency score in three subset areas and an overall mean score was calculated to identify the respective scores for each member. The following chart depicts the survey results in the areas of awareness, knowledge and skills.

Cultural competency scores are arranged from low to high.

Table 4.1 Cultural Competency Scale Survey Results

Survey Number	Awareness Score	Knowledge Score	Skills Score	Overall Score
7-Kelly	2.50	2.30	2.00	2.20
11	2.50	2.14	2.30	2.25

18	2.90	1.90	2.40	2.25
1—Cassie	2.80	2.00	2.48	2.29
17	2.50	2.40	2.20	2.35
8	2.90	2.00	2.80	2.49
22—Michael	3.30	2.50	2.50	2.60
4—Stacy	3.00	2.60	2.60	2.68
12	3.10	2.60	2.60	2.70
13	2.90	2.80	2.70	2.78
15—Moe	3.5	2.7	2.7	2.80
10	2.4	3.6	2.2	2.84
3	3.0	2.8	2.9	2.88
2—Sameera	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
6—Adam	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.07
16	3.6	3.0	3.2	3.19
9	3.4	3.3	3.0	3.21
19	3.3	3.0	3.5	3.25
20—Omar	3.1	2.8	3.2	3.25
23	3.5	3.5	3.2	3.35
26—Brad	3.0	3.60	3.28	3.37
25	3.00	3.60	3.30	3.39
14—Wayne	3.10	3.60	3.30	3.40

Awareness

Q1-Q8 were about multicultural awareness. However, three of these questions were critical to generating an understanding of the teacher's own perception of cultural awareness and its implication in the classroom. To understand this, I looked closely at the following question: "At this point in your life, how would you rate yourself in terms of how your cultural background has

influenced the way you think and act?" One- hundred percent of the participants answered with "good" or "very good." This is a foundational aspect of being a culturally competent individual as your understanding of other cultures begins first by understanding your own culture. The next question was number 4: "At the present time, how would you generally rate yourself in terms of being able to accurately compare your own cultural perspective with that of a person from another culture?" This question aimed to provide an insight into a higher level of awareness which forced the participants to think about not just their cultural awareness or someone else's but be able to compare the two. This is an important stage as it engages a person in reflective processes. Seventy-percent had confidence in responding to this question with "good or very good."

The last question that I identified as instrumental to the awareness subscale was Q.8: "How would you rate your understanding of the concept of "relativity" in terms of the goals, objectives, and methods of working with culturally different students and their families?" Only 60% of participants answered this question with confidence. This is an important segment of awareness for teachers because it helps to know whether or not teachers even recognize this as instrumental to their practice.

Knowledge

Based on the survey results under the "Knowledge" subscale, many teachers rated themselves lower in terms of their understanding of the vocabulary related to multiculturalism. Interestingly, those participants who perceived themselves to be limited in their awareness of being able to compare their culture to someone else's also had less degree of confidence in understanding the words such as: ethnocentrism, acculturation, pluralism, culture, ethnicity, conscious and unconscious bias.

Skills

The Multicultural Scales subscale had 21 questions but there were 5 primary questions that provided much more insight into the degree to which the participants felt confident in these skills. Here are the five questions and how the participants to responded to these:

Q. 31. "How would you rate your ability to teach students from a cultural background significantly different from your own?" Eight of ten participants answered this question with good level of confidence. Only 6 out the 10 participants answered this question with higher level of confidence:

Q.32 "How would you rate your ability to effectively assess the needs of the students and their families from a cultural background different from your own?", had a smaller degree of confidence in participants. Similar results were found when looking at Q.37, which prompted: "In general, how would you rate your ability to accurately articulate a student's behavioral problem when the student is from a cultural group significantly different from your own. Interestingly, ninety percent of the participants felt significantly confident in their skills of being able to provide appropriate educational services to culturally different students and their families along with their ability to assess the behavioral and educational needs of students who come from very poor socioeconomic backgrounds.

Interview Findings

Based on the results of the cultural competency surveys, I looked for those participants who had highest scores and those with lowest scores. My goal was to interview participants with high and low scores to develop an understanding of how they differed in terms of their perceived efficacy. I was also looking for experiences and other traits that were common for those with high competency scores versus those with lower scores. Ten interviews were conducted consisting of eight teachers (4 female and 4 male) and two school leaders (both male). These participants

indicated interest on the initial survey and provided me with their email address. I contacted them to set-up interviews at their chosen time and used a private office in the high school which was consistently available to ensure privacy. I assigned each participant with a pseudonym and notified them of this process which was to ensure anonymity in the research process. My interviews ranged anywhere from 30 minutes to 45 minutes in length. I was acquainted with all the participants due to my role in the central office leadership and my interactions with them while providing professional development sessions at the district level. Here is a brief description of each of the teachers with a pseudonym.

Brad is a 25-year male, veteran school principal who has had mostly suburban experiences in the past and was introduced to a cultural and linguistically diverse student population for the first time in this district. He has been a school leader at Phoenix International Academy for the past 5 years. He is a Caucasian-American who grew up in the western part of the state with hardly any diversity or culturally different population. However, Brad is a well-recognized school leader and admired by most for his ability serve a unique population with great finesse.

Omar is a 15-year veteran school administrator who has had a significant experience with culturally and linguistically diverse population. He associates with the students' culture and speaks fluently in Arabic. He has been with the district for the past 4 years and worked with other charter schools with similar demographics. He is middle-eastern by ethnicity but has lived in Dearborn since he was in preschool. He has excellent rapport with the students and students perceive him to be their advocate and respect him.

Kelly has been teaching at the research site for three years as a history teacher. She goes above the call of duty and has been successful with the students in terms of classroom management and student engagement. Students know that she is a tough teacher and an even tougher

disciplinarian, but most students respect her for this quality. Kelly came to this school with no other previous cultural experience.

Stacy is the new ESL teacher. She has had experiences and background in teaching students from culturally and linguistically diverse schools. She has lived in many countries and learned other languages. In addition to her African-American identity, Stacy associates closely with the Air Force culture which she takes great pride in. She has already hit-the ground running and adapted well to the school culture.

Sameera is a new middle-eastern teacher on campus who has had many diverse experiences. She is a certified ESL and Arabic Teacher. Although this is her first year, she has taught Yemeni students in similar setting for over 5 years. She associates herself with the students' culture and speaks fluently in Arabic.

Cassie is the ELA teacher at the high school and has been with the school for almost, four years. She has African-American and Jamaican ethnicity. Cassie has been very proactive about learning about the students' culture and taken many initiatives to attend community events. She goes the extra-mile to help her students succeed.

Moe is a math teacher and has been teaching in the research site for the past 6 years. He grew up in Bangladesh and came to the US during his college years. He has been very successful with teaching Bangladeshi students and these students look up to him as a role-model. He also identifies with the Yemeni culture due to similar faith-based practices.

Mike is a Caucasian teacher who teaches History and has been in the school for two years. He moved here from California and had prior experiences in teaching ELL students. He has built strong relationships with the students and has shown great motivation to learn about the Yemeni culture. This is his first experience working with large immigrant and Muslim/Yemeni population,

Anthony is a Caucasian teacher with a TESOL certification and teaches English. Anthony comes to the school with a wealth of training and skills sets to be able to work with linguistically and culturally diverse population. He is significantly respected by his students and commands admiration for his professional work by his colleagues. He has taken proactive steps to reach out the parents and is currently mentoring new teachers.

Wayne is a Caucasian teacher who has been in the district for more than 13 years. He teaches math and provides mentorship to other teachers. He is well-liked by the students for his sense of humor and his unique ways of motivating them. He is also well respected by the community and all the stake-holders because of his tenure and also because of his dedication to working with the Yemeni students in creative ways.

Teachers' Understanding and Implementation of Cultural Competency

How do teachers understand cultural competency and how do they say they implement cultural competency?

Teachers' understanding of cultural competency appeared to be very narrow and specific to the context of the school itself. Teachers were implementing cultural competence without realizing it, through their explicit and implicit attitudes towards valuing diversity. Teacher attitudes play a significantly large role in how they understand cultural competence. Kelly describes her first experience with the new culture with the Yemeni students:

> I believe that I have to be very open to other people, I don't consider myself to be prejudiced. I consider myself to be very open minded and I don't assume things about people, even though I did live kind of an isolated childhood over on the West Side of the State. So, I think that's worked out to my benefit, because I feel like depending on what your natural inhibitions or whatever these are, I can't even think of the right word, but are about people. I think that's the biggest barrier is to make assumptions about different groups of people be that they are black, Arab or Asians. I didn't have any assumptions when I came in, I just knew that I had to learn; my Principal said, "listen, you are going to come in and these girls are going to be wearing veils and you are gonna see their eyes and underneath, you just have to

know that they are just kids. And you take that in and you hear it but when you come in and you don't know that there are kids under there (referring to the garb/veil/hijab) because they could be women, for all, you know! It is not until you form those relationships with them, are open to forming to those relationships with them, that you go, yeah, you are just a silly teenager.

Kelly's comments helped illuminate the idea of open-mindedness as an instrumental factor in building bridges.

Omar, the vice-principal offers another lens in terms of his perceptions of how important it is for teachers to be culturally responsive in this way:

I think that teachers take the time to learn about their culture and background…if they can learn the background they will understand why students say certain things, are dressed certain ways, or what kind of lifestyle they live at home and knowing that lifestyles, teachers would be able to understand why the child might be acting up or why the grades might be suffering….so a little background research and a bit more cultural awareness can take them a long way!

Omar's comments suggest that students at the school have their own sets of beliefs and these, guide them in their way of life. Often times, teachers who may come to the school are truly shocked by the gender separation and the veils without understanding why the students are doing what they are doing. Omar also goes beyond the tip of the iceberg theory and suggests that understanding students' culture is not limited to the way they are dressed or what they eat but also the deeper experiences.

Michael states:

I am an extremely curious and empathetic person. And I really feel as I can, I can make connections with just about, anybody, anywhere. So at least from that standpoint of you know, creating a classroom environment and I am not saying I become friends with, with the students because I don't strive to do that. But at least create a place that, you know people don't feel uncomfortable in; I think some of the success is just relationship building with the students, which I know is very important for any kind of classroom culture.

Michael's outlook on the importance of relationship building and that sense of respect and open-mindedness that he has in working with diverse students pays off generously. He has excellent

rapport with the students and connects with the students in meaningful activities both in and out of the school.

The value of open-mindedness and respect for others resonated in my conversation with Wayne. He states:

> When I first came here, I had no real clue about Islam at all, or the culture that we deal with. So, I think I like to say that I picked it up pretty quick…and was respectful and open to interpretation of the Muslim faith. And that really is what led me down this whole time can change my opinions, that has kind of changed about just, I guess when I first started, I thought you know, almost the same, then you learn the differences between Shia and Sunni and that's the first thing they pretty much learn because the kids are willing to talk about that. And from there, you just start to kind of take an interest in different traditions, or I guess like, I think everybody kind of knows, that the Lebanese are more liberal than the Yemenis and Saudi's are more conservative in their faith. So, I take into consideration when people talk about it outside of school.

Wayne is a White resident expert in the students' culture based on his numerous years of experiences. He discussed deeply the process that he went, and still goes, through to learn about his students. He highlighted an important aspect of stereotyping and working with misconceptions and misinformation when you are new to a culture.

Stacy recognizes the importance of cultural competency and describes her experience in terms of realizing the significance:

> Cultural competency plays an important part…it took me a while to learn, you know, how students from other cultures work, their beliefs and how they function based on their culture. It is important to consider what they are used to and not used to. It is important because it reflects who the students are, and how they learn and how they view education. And so, if we as teachers don't know that we can make assumptions that are wrong and prevent a student from learning.

Teachers recognized the various social norms of a culture as instrumental in understanding the students' culture. When asked about the challenges that the teachers face with respect to teaching students from diverse and linguistically different backgrounds, teachers responded in the following way.

Kelly stated:

> Umm, I think one would be the cultural difference and what I mean by this is that
> they have different agendas culturally than maybe I have, like, you know, you
> talked about my values, timeliness and like work ethic. And I'm not saying that
> they don't have a work ethic, because they very much do. It's just that their focus
> is very different than mine. So, there's maybe… work and mine is academic. So
> that would be one of the cultural things…so how do I bridge that gap and get them
> to see value.

Kelly highlights an important aspect of negotiating her value systems compared with those

of her students. Although Kelly is aware of the differences and realizes that each operates with a

different agenda, there was an underlying sentiment that her focus might be more value-laden than

theirs. In terms of her skills, she appears to be a bit confused about how to bridge the gaps and

still be able to achieve common goals. She also continues to illustrate other cross-cultural

differences in this dialog:

> There is one more thing…there's a very different perception from me and as you
> say, a Northern European type of environment from our students…our students or
> at least my perception of it is that we have a sense of orderliness and what it looks
> like to be polite, and how we process through things like how we stand in line and
> how we are respectful of other people's space, and our students operate very
> differently. Like for them, it appears as though whoever is the most aggressive
> wins, not the most, polite like, you know they are happy to go stand in front of each
> other, at a water fountain. And for me, what it seems to signify and what I am
> gathering from it is, it is an issue of dominance and who the Alpha Dog is, and they
> like establish who the Alpha Dog is and this is something I have never experienced
> before because I have a very rigid sense of, okay, we stand in line, you know, we
> are respectful of other people, when they are doing something, we wait for them,
> you know, you do you do these things, So, I have noticed those things. And then
> I have had conversations with colleagues who have said, yes, you know, there are
> certain places in the Middle East where it is a sign of weakness for you to stand
> in line, and wait for someone, you have to push your way and you go do this. So,
> I watch it happen and I go, is this what is happening….and culturally that is normal.
> And so that's a difference that I have seen, like they are very aggressive, and you
> know they just deal with each other different. One minute, there is a smack and
> another minute they are kissing each other on the head. And, some of these things
> we laugh at and realize that it's part of their culture. So kind of identifying or trying
> to sit back and take it all in and go, okay this is normal when people are different
> than you if you know what I mean, I mean, I don't mean that in a rude way, because
> they are different than me but they are not. They have different experiences than

me and they have taught me different things. I learn something new every day…I don't know that I will ever stop learning here in terms of cultural norms with how students take compliments, and how they receive feedback and even reprimands.

Kelly's comments showcase how she is negotiating her own cultural norms with respect to an increased sense of awareness about the new cultural norms that she is learning about. Her insights also help clarify the dilemma of teachers who may experience cultural shock when they encounter student behaviors that may have such stark differences compared to the traditional American norms.

Michael also shared his cultural learning through some observations and talking to people who are from the culture. He recalled:

> So, what would come across as maybe being disrespectful with me not even realizing it is this, for example, this year, I learned that sometimes when students at this school smile at you when they are being reprimanded, it is not considered a rude response, necessarily. Does that make sense? Yeah, and it like because in the US, if I smiled at my parents when they were disciplining me, I would be in more trouble. So as a teacher, that's how it goes. It's like, okay, now you are challenging me, this is going to get worse. When I was informed earlier this year, it was like, no that is a cultural response to reprimands…finally I realized that it is more of a shame thing, like that's a response to like…okay I get it…Now…I am shrinking, I am not being defiant.

In this reflection, Michael recognized a key element in terms of how students in the Yemeni culture behave when they are reprimanded. I was enlightened by this comment and other teachers also made references to how students respond differently to discipline and redirection methods that are routinely used in the American classroom.

Cassie discussed her reflections of how she guides new teachers who come to the school to prepare them mentally for the cultural differences:

> At the end of the day, you have to get to know them. And, I tell my mentees, whatever you learn in school, you are going to have to just toss out the window because it is not going to work here. You got to find a new way of doing things here. This is a whole different population…you might have worked way out there

in Rochester, that's not going to work down here. So, you have to find a new way
of connecting with your students and working with them.

During the interviews, the most common theme that emerged in terms of the teachers'

understanding of the cultural competency is that they referenced the importance of this competency

in light of their work. Their beliefs and attitudes indicated that it is very important because

understanding a given culture helps them understand the students holistically which leads to better

relationships and to a better understanding of how they may learn and view education.

The fundamental underpinnings of this value for cultural competency appear to stem from

their own attitudes and beliefs as individuals first. Most teachers attributed their character traits

of being open-minded individuals as essential components of building an understanding between

two cultures. In addition, two other traits that emerged in almost all of the interviews were respect

and empathy. Most of the participants discussed the idea of empathy in their teaching practices

and this was a major cross-cutting theme in most of the interviews. Although it is a weak

relationship, I couldn't help but notice that the two teachers who had lowest cultural competency

scores were the only ones not to mention empathy in their dialog. Another overarching theme that

most interviewees discussed was the importance of relationship building to bridge the gap between

cultures and establish common understanding. Teachers recognized the value of building

relationships, especially with students and colleagues who were from the culture and associated

this to their perceived gains in cultural competence.

Many teachers recognized the value of their own experiences in terms of cultural self-

awareness and correlated this with a positive impact on teaching responsively in the classroom,

hence these experiences led to an improved sense of perceived self-efficacy regarding teaching of

students from linguistically and culturally diverse groups.

Background Experiences and Teachers' Cultural Competencies

What are the relationships between teachers' background experiences and cultural competency? The relationship between teachers' background experiences and cultural competency was evident in many forms and layers that have direct and indirect connections to their previous awareness, knowledge and skills. Not surprising but participants who were from the students' culture had a deeper understanding of the students' backgrounds. This gave them an advantage and their perceived sense of cultural competency was boosted by their perceived efficacy. Next, teachers not from the students' culture, who had significant experiences with immersion-based (on the job learning) gave credit to these experiences to help them become more culturally competent. Interestingly, teachers who were part of the ESL training and TESOL Program gave more credit to the immersion programs for their gains in cultural competence but associated ESL/TESOL Programs with helping them gain instructional strategies to help second-language learners. Teachers who had been working with culturally diverse backgrounds but not necessarily the Yemeni students felt confident in learning about the Yemeni culture. Both surveys and interviews indicated that there were several variables which predicated how teachers perceived their sense of cultural competency and were able to relate it to their background experiences. Although no single set of experiences was suggestive of any associations, a few major themes were generated in respect to attitudes within these experiences such as empathy, open-mindedness, tolerance and willingness to learn about other cultures.

Brad, the school leader, shares his understanding of cultural competency by stating, "I try to empathize with people who are coming from diverse backgrounds and experiences and try to be able to understand how they perceive other cultures. And you know obviously you know, respecting all of these cultures and beliefs, just as you would want someone to respect yours."

When asked about how he adapted to the new school culture with which he had no previous experience, this was his response:

> I reflected on how I would be interacting with them and it was more because they are kids and you treat them all the same. I mean you try not to you know treat people differently because of what they believe about their culture, but I was also worried about how they will perceive me, perhaps and what biases, you know they may have towards me.

He talks about the idea of "with eyes wide open," he sought to understand, "I tried to get a sense of who these kids are, what is their life about, what their problems and I think once you yourself go through that "awakening', then you can help your teachers go through it."

Omar discusses his experiences from childhood that helped build his sense of empathy for others, which he upholds as a direct corollary to his heightened perception of cultural competency, "I had no choice in my household, I am the oldest of the three, I was put into work at a very young age, not for just money but also for values…I worked with my uncles and worked with many different people and this helped me because you see how people live." He is a strong advocate of service learning projects and engages the high school students by participating with them in soup kitchens and food pantries on a monthly basis. He also has personal experiences of being from an immigrant family and learning two languages while going through an acculturation process. He attests to these experiences for making him empathetic towards students who are going through similar journeys.

Stacy who is an experienced and certified ESL teacher scored 2.68 on her cultural competency survey. She had a higher score in the area of awareness (3.0) but knowledge and skills questions were lower. Stacy perceives herself to be 67% culturally competent. She had a significantly large exposure to other cultures because her father was in the Air Force and they lived in multiple states and countries. She also studied Spanish for many years along with picking up a

few other languages during her visits to other countries. She took pride in stating that she had many friends from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. In addition, being from an Air Force Family also provided her with a strong sense of belonging related to how she identifies herself. During the interview, she discussed her life experiences which included living in Japan and Spain along with many other countries. Stacy recalled her background experiences in this statement:

> You know, we moved a lot in the United States too and living in Texas is definitely as different a culture than living in New York. And so, learning how to adapt to those different environments and different people, I think it prepared me to work in a classroom where I might have students from different countries. She says, "teaching ESL for the last 10 years has also broadened my perspectives about different cultures and different ways of learning.

> However, she still rated her abilities in terms of skills in cultural competency to be very

low. When I asked her why she rated herself low in these areas that someone else may perceive her to be stronger in based on the wide array of experiences, she noted the following:

> I think I am more aware because of just dealing with different cultures and backgrounds on a daily basis but having to balance…there are things students know or don't know or do or don't do based on their culture…so it is important to be aware of that but how do I balance those beliefs with the American education system?

> This was an important point that illuminates a critical aspect of my findings and contributes

to my understanding of this particular research question. It is not enough to have just awareness and knowledge unless these are balanced with a practical approach to changing the way we teach while we keep the student or students' culture in mind.

Sameera, who associates herself with the students' culture offered another vantage point to this research. She spoke confidently about her knowledge of the Yemeni culture and gender roles and expectations. She discussed her role as the "mother" in the school because students feel comfortable with her…they think, "she is one of us." She thinks this comfort is because of the

fact that she speaks in Arabic and that she is from their culture, so she gains automatic respect. Students know, she says, "I can call the parents and be able to address the issue and nothing will get lost in translation", she giggles with pride. She also talks about how the girls feel comfortable talking to her, some things they may not even be telling their parents, but she listens to them. She says:

> I understand how the girls feel…they have too much pressure at home. Some of the girls don't express themselves and they don't tell their parents. Most of the parents, they don't care about the education, but they are now trying to at least let them go to high school. And when they finish, most of them get married and they don't go to college…. they go to the kitchen. Their dads work too much, they don't have time to take them to college, obviously they don't want the girls to drive.

Sameera talked with great emphasis about how important she thinks education is for these girls and boys but also remains respectful to their customs. Although many people in America may think about such traditional views as oppression towards women, Sameera highlights an emic perspective by stating:

> For them (Yemenis) girls are like "diamonds." It is not because they don't trust her, they want to protect her so much. She is like a very expensive piece for them. That's why they want for them to cover and not let everyone see them. They have so much respect for the woman from the Quran and from Islam. That's why they depend more on the boys and they let them work harder.

She continues to state that she keeps all this in my mind in terms of approaching students and creating a conducive learning environment. She states, "Even if I want to open the classroom door I have to make sure no one is looking at them from outside…yeah, I feel like I want to protect them."

Cassie who is also an experienced, female ELA teacher brings a very different experience to the research investigation. She did not have opportunities to travel and had no other experiences to learn a new language. She grew up in a mostly African-American community but there was some diversity in her schools (mostly Chaldean and White). However, her friends were only

African-American. She recalls her early attitudes towards diversity in the following way: "I have always loved diversity, my mom has always made it a big thing, you know we are not in the world alone, we have to learn about other people." Her first experience in a diverse cultural environment was during her first teaching assignment. Interestingly, Cassie was the one teacher who described how she implements cultural competency to help her students:

> Umm, I try to cater, I mean, the book that we are using now is very diverse, which is awesome…I love the stories in there. So, it helps the students see that there is a bigger world out there than themselves. I love using videos and projects so that they can connect with the material. They just got finished a parental advice book. So, we are talking about families and connecting with families. And, so I said, okay, well, what kind of advice would you give to your parents, so they can connect to you better…so they were able to do that, and they enjoy that.

When I asked her why she rated herself so low in the "skills" area of the survey, she responded by saying "I am not perfect. I still don't know how to do this. I just teach people what I know, but there is always something out there more to learn…so I guess that why I kinda rated myself so low."

Although Cassie rated herself low in her own perceptions of cultural competency, she exhibits skills in the classroom and out of classroom of culturally competent teacher. She takes student interest inventories, modifies her instruction to cater to their needs and even attends festivals and community events. She illustrates an example of her experience at a community mosque:

> I wanted to learn about where our kids are coming from so I decided to go to the mosque. I was the only Black woman there…I didn't know about the bathroom (referring to the ritual of ablution in Islam) and how women and men are separated. And so, I just think that more experiences like that are very crucial. When I came back to work, a lot of the teachers were like…well I wouldn't do that, and I was like…you should, you should know where your kids are coming from and how they practice their religion because you will understand them little more.

Anthony had interesting and unique background experiences which he highlighted during the interview which brought greater emphasis on the word "tolerance." He mentioned his Chinese friend and his Korean adopted sisters to whom he attributed great respect. He stated, "So, I would say that growing up, I did have some close connections with people that were not from my culture, it did teach me a lot about tolerance!"

Wayne an experienced and certified teacher who has been at this school for 14 years had a very high score of cultural competence. He grew up in a very homogeneous White community. He learned Spanish and German during his travels to Europe. He discussed the significance of this European experience as it provided him with different worldviews for the first time. When he first came to the school, he had a cultural shock because he came to the interview thinking he was going to be in a city with a large Polish population, but he quickly realized that most of the students were immigrants from an Islamic country. When he first saw the women dressed in their traditional hijab and abaya (a long black gown) he thought they were dressed as ninjas but didn't understand why so he stayed open-minded. He stated:

> My own personal shock, I didn't know to expect the same old typical thing about Hamtramck. Oh, it is Polish. It is really not Polish as much as it used to be. And I can still remember seeing some ladies walking down the street where they were in their full garb/hijab and the first thing I thought of like…what, these are like ninjas walking around out here, you know because I had no experience. But totally open for it…it didn't bother me; but I was interested in how they live, you start to compare your life with there's and somethings you agree with and others you disagree with and compare religions with. I'm not a devout Christian by any means, but it is interesting to see how Muslims view Jesus…I had some parents give me books to read about because they thought I should know.

Wayne attributes his successful relationships with the students to his efforts in building relationships. He stated that body language and gestures are very different in this culture…it is a guilt culture and not a shame culture. He gave an example when trying to discipline or reprimand students, "the students just laugh at me…at first, I thought this was disrespectful but now I

understand that this is a defense mechanism which is acceptable in their culture, so I don't take it personally anymore."

Teachers' Perceptions of Cultural Competency and Efficacy

The next research question was: "To what degree, if any does cultural competency affect teachers' perceptions of efficacy?"

The findings on the survey for this research question did not clearly pinpoint a direct relationship because almost, all of the teachers felt somewhat, efficacious ranging from low to moderate or moderate to high levels. However, based on the interviews, teachers who are from the students' culture had a perceived sense of heightened efficacy. Based on the surveys and interviews, it was difficult to ascertain a direct link between being culturally competent in general and increased efficacy.

The following table provides information on each participant's teacher efficacy score and cultural competency scores based on the survey that the participants completed.

Table 4.2 Cultural Competency Score and Teacher Efficacy Scale

Name	Cultural Competency Score	Teacher Efficacy Scale
Kelly	2.2	Moderate-High
Stacy	2.68	Moderate
Sameera	3.0	Moderate-High
Anthony	3.07	High
Wayne.	3.4	Low-Moderate
Cassie	2.29	Moderate
Michael	2.6	N/A
Omar	3.25	N/A

| Brad | 3.37 | High |
| Moe | 2.8 | Moderate-High |

Most of the teachers associated a stronger home environment with student achievement rather than their own influence. Teachers also attributed greater credit to parents in Q.5 by agreeing with the statement, "if parents would do more for their children, I could do more." This viewpoint is suggestive of a deficit thinking mindset. Wayne is one of the teachers who has been working with this unique population of students for more than 13 years. He scored very high in his perceptions of cultural competency and he also provides mentorship to new teachers as he is recognized by the school community as someone who "understands" the school culture. Wayne illustrates this in his dialog during the interview "I think there are limitations like this survey kind of points out that my efficacy can only go so far…because there are limitations…family, social, economic and also just support in the education process."

Wayne also articulated in the following dialog about how he feels his self-efficacy is relative to certain experiences. He states:

> when you see those students that didn't speak a lick of English and four years later they are having a conversation and to see how much gains they have made, I don't think it's just about me…it is about the whole program and what we are able to provide for them. I think that really plays a part in my belief system of what we are doing good and we are giving them something that they need on an individual basis.

> Wayne describes the idea of collective efficacy and its impact on the students overall.

Michael, who teaches U.S. History, provides an example that helps frame how he is building his teacher efficacy by working in culturally diverse schools:

> I want to get better as a teacher, I think that I also have a kind of this social justice thing in my head all the time, where it is like, how can we compare our kids to those in the suburbs…that's why I want to keep coming back to schools like this. I don't want to teach at a school like that. I am driven to become a better teacher, I feel like teaching ESL population, it makes you hone your teaching skills in a different way.

Now some days I do wish I could have a conversation about, you know, Protestant Reformation as an in-depth conversation. But at the same time, it's like…how do I make this interesting to a student from Yemen, who has probably never heard the word "reform" …at least in English.

Moe, who teaches math to the students provided another vantage point since he partially associates himself with the students' culture. He discussed efficacy in terms of linguistic growth that he sees in his students in terms of articulating mathematical understanding. He stated:

When they come to our class in the beginning of the year, they can't explain much about what they are learning, towards the end of the year, they can read a sentence, directions… a lot of the students who come from Yemen, they can't speak in English but they know math, they have content knowledge but because they can't speak in English they are not able to communicate with us nor can take the assessments. But by the middle of the year they get excited when they are finally able to use the terms/vocabulary, they actually do very good…this boosts me up…the way I'm teaching, and they are actually learning and that I actually made a difference in the student's life. I am able to empathize with them because I went through a similar experience!"

He continued to articulate how he feels confident as a teacher and how is at an advantage compared to his colleagues in this statement: "I believe I have more advantage, because I am Bengali, I share the same religious culture with many students. We share festivals and similar beliefs…so they tend to, when it comes to culture, I understand them better."

Moe goes on to explain that he understands them from their cultural perspective, so he approaches them with this common set of belief systems. He elaborates this by stating, "I can actually approach them with the same belief with the same kind of respect to them, then they tend to listen to me more and respect me a lot more." He also noted his influence on the Bengali student quite explicitly. He stated that he is able to make learning easier for the Bengali students because of his ability to use the bilingual mediums to approach teaching math. He also took great pride in knowing Bengali methods of teaching math and how these are different from how math is taught in the US. He emphasized that because of his Bengali experiences he is more efficacious in the

classroom. He also made a few comparisons to teaching Arabic and Bengali students and how his efficacy varies. The language proficiency in Bengali helped him feel more confident as a math teacher than with the Yemeni students because he doesn't speak in Arabic. In addition, he discussed the variations in terms of how well Bengali students take redirection compared to Yemeni and this also impacts his efficacy.

Moe provided a very interesting dynamic to this research finding, given that he is Bengali, and a Muslim, he associated himself with both the populations at the school. However, during the interview, his self-perceptions of his efficacy with students appeared to be stronger with the Bengali students more than the Yemeni students. He shared:

> I tell the students, I came from a similar place as, not many resources and large class sizes, but I made a difference in the US. I got a master's degree and I have a good job here and living a decent life. So, when I share with the students, they tend to see me as a role-model…that's how they connect with me…if he can do it then I can do it.

Moe focused quite a bit on his abilities to translate directions in Bengali and also in having the content base to teach them math in Bengali. However, he took must pride in being able to relate to them culturally. He also emphasized how his experiences were similar to what the students are now experiencing, and this puts him at an advantage of leading by example.

Professional Learning and Cultural Competence

I then investigated "the relationship between professional learning and cultural competency." Based on the data collected from 24 participants from the questionnaire and 10 interviews, there was a strong consensus that professional learning opportunities have helped them increase their cultural competency. Almost, all of the participants discussed the value of programs such as Culture Links, Cultural Brokers, Master Teacher, TESOL/ESL training, and books /resources.

Culture Links

There was a unanimous support for "Culture Links", a professional development activity that the teachers engage in at least twice during the school year. The district provides a full-day workshop to all the teachers each year in the Mid-Eastern culture with an emphasis on "Increasing Understanding of Arabs and Muslims in America." In addition, another workshop day is dedicated to culturally responsive teaching. This is part of the diversity training goal that the school has identified in its School Improvement Plan. The consultant provides teachers with an overview of the Arab culture and then engages the participants in a few hands-on activities. A few years ago, the district was providing almost, four days of training with this consultant but the past few years' competing priorities have brought the training days down to two. The interviews highlighted that contrary to the district leaders' beliefs that these trainings were taking up time and not resulting in actual gains, teachers appreciated the training sessions. They felt that these training sessions provided them with a cultural worldview of the Arab students that they were serving.

Cultural Brokers

Cultural brokering is defined as the act of bridging or mediating between groups of people who are from different cultural backgrounds; and someone who is a go-between, the one who advocates on behalf of another individual or group (Jezewski & Sotnik, 2001). Teachers and school leaders both discussed how cultural brokers provided them with learning opportunities to understand the students' culture better.

Brad, the school leader of the building highlights the importance of the cultural broker who helped him succeed at the high school. He responded to the following question, "How do you build cultural competency in your teachers, teacher who may not have had experiences working with the student of the Yemeni culture?" Brad stated:

Well, I mean, we've, you know, that's where, you know, the culture links piece fits into the PD puzzle although I don't think it completes the puzzle, you know by any means; fortunately for me, when I came in, I had a Dean who had been with the school a very long time and had a very good understanding, you know of the kids, and so I really tapped into her political capital and her cultural competence…through a lot of seeking to understand and asking questions, and you know, eyes wide open. I tried to get an sense of who these kids are; what are their needs, what you know, what their life is about, what their problems and I think once you yourself can go through that, you know, awakening or metamorphosis, or what evolution whatever you want to call it, then you can guide your teachers, you through the same way of trying to find that empathy.

Brad's commentary highlights the significance of this cultural broker in terms of helping him learn about the new community that he sought to understand so that he can develop a solid relationship hence make an impact. Kelly, the SS teacher also makes the following remark about the importance of cultural brokers: "I also feel like you have a be a really good team-player. Because you have to be able to identify the things that you are not able to do and access the people that can provide you with those tools…. I feel like you have to be able to quickly assess your needs and not be afraid to ask for help from your bigger, broader team."

Master Teacher

Participants recognized the importance of the certification program that the district provided last year using the Master Teacher Program. Almost, all of the teachers completed an online, 17-hour program that provided teachers with strategies and skills to help ESL students learn better. Even though the initial response to this program was not met with optimism, teachers reflected on the benefits of it upon completion. The program was offered in separate modules; some examples of course titles were: Language Concepts, Factors Affecting ELL Students, Reading Activities, Methods of Assessing ELL students, Methods of Vocabulary Instruction, Common Language Difficulties, Building a Supportive Classroom Community and Family and Community Involvement.

TESOL/ESL Certification

Three teachers had either TESOL or ESL certification and expressed their strong sense of appreciation for these programs in helping them being more prepared to teach the ELL population at this high school. These teachers were able to articulate very specific strategies that they use with the students when compared to the other participants. For example, one of the ESL teachers noted the following when she was asked, "what strategies do you use to help your students reach their best potential in terms of what has worked for you in the classroom?" Stacy stated:

> I use lot of sentence frames. So especially with whether we are speaking or writing so that they are speaking in complete sentences to help them understand that structure. Because once they learn to speak correctly, the writing correctly is easier. And also, I try to do a lot of interactive activities…right now, I have more teacher talk than I want. So that's hard for me right now. I found out that some of my classes like it better and learn better that way, as opposed to what I'm used to with the different interactive strategies. So mostly the sentence phrase that I use a lot of instilling of for language domains, and every lesson is very important to me!

Stacy also elaborated on the fact that her classes in ESL truly emphasized practical strategies in terms of differentiating to the needs of the students. She describes the following way that she engages her students:

> Sometimes using some of the learning styles, but then, depending on their language level is you might have to adjust to your instruction…lots of teacher observation and seeing what works with them. And making sure that I am very hands on and not sitting at my desk is very helpful to see what they are doing. And also, being able to try and group my students and giving them independent work, and then pulling a few students aside, especially depending on where their language level is in the classroom.

Stacy, an experienced ESL teacher provided many other strategies that she uses but all of these strategies were in reference to language development. There was no mention of culturally responsive teaching practices. Adam, another ESL/TESOL certified teacher discussed the emphasis on second language acquisition in this dialog:

In that two-year program (referring to TESOL certification) I actually learned quite a bit about second language acquisition. There wasn't much in my bachelor's program, I mean, classes would occasionally touch on things like ESL learner, how to involve them in the classroom, how to ensure that they were learning and how to assess them accordingly, things like that. But the real meat of really understanding these challenging topics came from my TESOL certification…My program was two years long, there was a student teaching practice come at the end of it…. this was an invaluable experience." He continues to discuss his experience at SVSU…At SVSU, I really made connection with, not just some of the students there but a lot of the other teachers and just the entire group of students who study in the English Language Program.

Teachers' insights on professional development were very eye opening. There was a strong consensus that streamlined PD would benefit them and teachers provided explicit experiences of how they have improved their cultural competency skills. TESOL and ESL certified teachers illuminated on a different point one that is not understood conventionally by school leaders. Most teachers think ESL teachers are automatically culturally competent, but this was negated in the commentaries.

Summary

The findings from this research suggest that cultural competency is a dynamic and context-driven concept. Participants in this study had a unique understanding of how they understood cultural competency and most importantly, how they implement it in the classroom. For many, it is just about knowing the students' culture but for few others it is cultural knowledge and how they use it to drive their lessons. The following are the principal findings of this study:

1. Teachers' attitudes towards ELL students played a significant role in how they believed they implement cultural competence in their classroom. These attitudes also impacted their own definition of being culturally competent.

2. Teachers' understanding of cultural competence was based on their immersion-based experiences and unique to the population that they teach. For example, one might feel

culturally competent in working with African American students but less competent in working with Latin American students.

3. Teachers who associate themselves with the students' cultures had greater sense of self-perceived efficacy and culturally competency respective to that group of students.

4. Professional Development programs offered at the district level have had a major impact in building teachers' cultural competence.

5. There was no significant relationship between cultural competence and self-efficacy except for those teachers who are from the students' culture. The idea of self-perceived cultural competency impacted their teacher efficacy.

6. Teachers place tremendous emphasis on linguistic barriers and assert that if they spoke the students' language they would be more efficacious.

7. School leaders' attitudes and cultural competencies have a trickle- down effect on teachers.

In the next chapter, I will provide an overview of the study along with a more thorough discussion of these findings. There will also be recommendations and reflections based on the analysis of this research.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

In this qualitative, interpretive study, I used data from surveys and interviews to investigate how teachers and school leaders at the research site perceive their own cultural competency, and how this impacts their sense of efficacy. It was important to gain the perspectives of those who have worked with the unique school community to help illuminate the findings of the research question which was to explore the relationships between cultural competency and teacher efficacy. The interviews and surveys captured participants' viewpoints, attitudes, perspectives and experiences to help shed light on the findings.

In this last chapter, I will provide an overview of the investigation that I conducted as part of my research and will discuss the findings as they relate to the overall purpose of the study. I will also include my personal reflections and perceptions as they relate to the study. Additionally, I will provide a few recommendations for the school to use with its teachers along with some considerations for program developers and policy drivers. Finally, with respect to the implications of this research, some suggestions for future research will be recommended.

Overview of the Study

This qualitative study had five guiding questions and incorporated surveys and interviews to gather data using an interpretive lens. Chapter four outlined the data analysis for each of the research questions and presented a synthesis of the findings. This led to a discussion about how participants understand cultural competency and how experiences and professional development are related to cultural competency, and its impact on teacher efficacy. The purpose of this research was to explore the relationships between cultural competency and teacher self-efficacy and to investigate in which ways, if any, that culturally competency influences teachers' efficacy in

working with ELL students. The following research questions provided guidance for the proposed study:

1. How do teachers understand cultural competency?

2. How do teachers say they implement cultural competency?

3. What are the relationships between teachers' background experiences and cultural competency?

4. How does cultural competency affect teachers' perceptions of efficacy?

5. What is the relationship between professional learning and cultural competency?

Participants responses were scored and coded from the surveys and data were also compiled from the interviews based on the methodology described in Chapter 3. Using data from the surveys on cultural competency, I was able to provide each participant with a cultural competency score, this initial step helped identify how participants with different cultural competency scores understand cultural competence. Next, the interviews provided even more, in-depth understanding of how these perceptions are cultivated based on individual experiences and professional learning opportunities. The interviews and teacher efficacy surveys also helped me understand to what degree a sense of cultural competency affected teacher efficacy. This study provided me with a new understanding and insight about how teachers and school leaders perceive cultural competency and how it is practiced in the school.

Findings and Discussion

Cultural competence predicates that teachers are aware of their own culture before they attempt to understand students from other cultures. This understanding leads to a better understanding of how individuals from other cultures act differently and how we may act differently from them. The five cultural competence areas as identified by the work of Diller and Moule (2005) include:

valuing diversity, being culturally self-aware, dynamics of difference, knowledge of students'

culture and institutionalizing cultural knowledge and adapting to diversity. Based on the

interviews, there was a concurrence among the staff in terms of valuing diversity by accepting and

respecting diversity. Many participants spoke about tolerance, empathy and respect in terms of

valuing differences. A few teachers mentioned how the students' culture was an asset and that

they too have learned from their students. This was an area in which all the teachers felt a higher

degree of confidence. However, being culturally self-aware was something that each teacher

pointed out as something they wanted to grow in. Another challenging area for the teachers was

in reference to dynamics of difference. Most teachers identified the dynamics of difference, where

knowing what can go wrong in cross- cultural communication was seen as a primary barrier to

social interactions and confrontations. For example, one of the teacher's mentioned, "I can talk to

the girls about going to college, but this is not what their parents want, so I have to be careful." It

was apparent that teachers and school leaders who had been there for the longest had a greater

sense of awareness within the school community but the participants who were from within the

students' community demonstrated a heightened level of awareness. The fourth area of

competence was regarding knowledge of students' culture. Here many teachers who have been

with Phoenix International Academy felt confident about their knowledge base, although they

asserted that it is a journey and they learn every day. With the newer teachers, this is an area that

requires a lot of training and coaching. However, it is important to note that the findings suggest

that teachers' who felt more confidence in having knowledge of students' culture discussed their

efficacy with the students more positively. Finally, the fifth area refers to institutionalizing cultural

knowledge and adapting to diversity, here the participants felt the weakest in their use of

appropriate strategies. The findings pointed out the different members facilitated cultural

responsiveness in different ways. There was little evidence of institutionalized practices aside from the use of cultural brokers.

Based on the findings from the research study, I assert that teachers' understanding of cultural competency appeared to be very narrow and specific to the context of the school in which they are working. The primary finding of this research pointed out that teachers place a much greater emphasis on "knowing students' culture" and students' language, over the four other areas that Diller and Moule (2005) refer to. Moreover, these findings also suggest the relevance of linguistic competence and knowledge as part of cultural competency, as suggested by Gonzales and Gabel (2017). The synthesis of the interview dialogs can be summarized as "knowing students' culture and most importantly their language", would make teaching them easier.

Teacher Attitudes

Teachers' attitudes towards ELL students played a significant role in how they explained that they implement cultural competence in their classroom. These attitudes also impacted their own definition of being culturally competent. This finding is supported in the research literature where attitudinal assessment is directly correlated with educational outcomes for language-minority students (Valdes, 2001; Walker et. al 2004). Youngs and Youngs (2001) and Tse (2001) also asserted that teachers who operate with negative ideologies and implement ethnocentric and cultural racist attitudes about ELL students cannot meet the educational needs of these students effectively. Nieto (1995) emphasized the significance of societal norms towards ELL students and how embracing the ELL diversity can lead to positive educational gains for the students and the society at large. The participants from this research study discussed specific character traits that they believed impact their overall attitude towards to the ELL students. Some of the key traits that

were described by almost, all of the participants were empathy, respect, open-mindedness and patience. These traits are nurtured through positive experiences.

Immersion-Based Experiences

Teachers' understanding of cultural competence was based on their experiences with diverse populations and were unique to the population that they teach. For example, they indicated that one might be culturally competent in working with African American students but less competent in working with Latin American students. However, positive experiences where teachers were able to navigate through cultural differences increased their tolerance to uncertainty and provided them with greater levels of perceived sense of competency in newer and similar situations. Some of these positive experiences were described by those participants who had traveled abroad, taught other culturally diverse students, and/or identified themselves as being from a unique cultural heritage. Romano (2007) states that international experiences provide individuals an opportunity to navigate in a different "dominant paradigm." Milner (2006) also points out that our interactions help us focus on our experiences in relation to the others whom we may interact with. These interactions help us apply adaptive thinking skills. This finding is also supported by Merryfield, Jarchow and Pickett (2007) who assert that immersive experiences with diverse groups of students help cultivate and develop a strong global perspective.

Cultural Efficacy

There was no significant relationship between perceptions of cultural competence and self-efficacy except for those teachers who are from the students' culture. The idea of self-perceived cultural and linguistic competency impacted their teacher efficacy. Teachers who identify themselves to be from the students' cultures have greater sense of self-perceived efficacy and culturally competency respective to that group of students. Moe, Sameera and Omar aligned their

cultural identities with the students' culture and helped provide an emic perspective on their cultural efficacy with the students. All three of them spoke with great pride stating that they were at an advantage because they were from the students' culture. One of the key themes that emerged from their dialog was about their positive student-teacher/leader relationships due to their cultural connections. This group also alluded to their shared values and their importance in making a difference for the students. For example, both Moe and Omar talked about how they share similar faith and practices with the students and this helps them gain "automatic respect" from the students. Omar also mentioned that he is looked upon as a "second father" in the school, someone who is in charge when parents are there. Both students and parents trust Omar because they know he is from the same culture as them. Although, I was not able to find literature to help support this finding, I strongly believe that there is merit in extrapolating from research by Gay (2000) who claims that effective teachers of minority students are proficient in "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (Gay, 2000, p.29). As discussed earlier, the importance of the student-teacher/leader relationships could be understood better with such values and practices that may have a significant influence as in the case of Moe, Sameera and Omar. It is important to note that although it wouldn't be possible to have all the teachers, representative of the students' dominant culture but it would support a culturally responsive pedagogy to help all teachers incorporate the ideas of respect, open mindedness and empathy to help bridge the gap.

Another important finding within this domain was that even the most efficacious teachers held deficit thinking models with respect to parent involvement and student motivation as identified on the teacher efficacy surveys. Even teachers like Wayne, who rated themselves very

highly on the cultural competency surveys, the sense of efficacy was significantly lower on questions that pertained to aspects of parent involvement and student discipline. In addition, there were many comments about boys working at gas stations and girls' marriages, which although are very prevalent showcased a negative view of the school community and did not reflect a goal of the college completion.

Although I set out to understand the relationship between cultural competency and teacher efficacy, this research has provided me with a broader perspective of each of the theoretical frameworks within the context of the school population. I took the opportunity to look back at the article by Klassen (2004) who referenced the importance of cultural context of a classroom and/or school to influence teachers' sense of efficacy. Flores et al. (2007) describe "culturally efficacious teachers" as those who have positive teaching efficacy combined with "sociocultural" competence. This definition may describe many of the attributes of Moe, Omar and Sameera but also those of Brad and Adam even though linguistic barriers give the later a significant disadvantage.

Professional Development

Professional Development programs offered at the district level have had a major impact in building teachers' cultural competence. There was a definite consensus with the participants in terms of the value that they attributed to professional learning. All participants acknowledged the Culture Links training program implemented at the school for the past four years at least three times a year along with Master Teacher Program implemented last year to have had a beneficial impact on their culturally responsive teaching practices. Teachers testified that their worldviews were transformed after the Culture Links training and helped them understand our students better. This finding is supported in the literature based on the studies conducted by Lawrence and Tatum (1997) which found that White teachers who completed a 7-month professional development plan

had shifted in their worldviews and also reported an improved attitude towards race. There was another consensus that all teachers referenced to in terms of their university teacher preparation programs' weaknesses in preparing them to teach the diverse group of students they have now. Even the teachers who completed TESOL and ESL certification critiqued the lack of experiential learning opportunities and minimal hands on experiences they had had in their programs.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

School leaders' cultural efficacy promotes teacher's cultural competency. Both Brad and Omar described how they implement their culturally responsive leadership in the school in their unique ways. Principal Brad was explicit in terms of defining his own attitudes and awareness of his possible biases when it comes to working in a primarily Muslim, ethnocentric environment. However, he expounded on strategies that he uses to overcome such notions by being open-minded and non-judgmental. He also attests to his growth in being a culturally competent leader to the influence of his cultural brokers (his Dean of Students, Parent Liasion and Assistant Principal) along with specific cultural competency trainings through Culture Links and Saginaw Valley University Programs. Several teachers acknowledged the support that Brad gives to them and how this helps them overcome some of their challenges. Brad's ability to reflect on his own cultural competency and biases had a major impact on his ability to lead an organization that is diverse and demands cultural sensitivity. This finding is confirmed in the literature review based on Khalifa's (2016) work on culturally responsive leadership. Khalifa (2016) states that the administrator's influence as a cultural leader must and will trickle down to the teachers' practices and mental models. This phenomenon was also noted in Kelly and Cassie's comments.

Linguistic Competencies

Teachers place tremendous emphasis on linguistic barriers and assert that if they spoke the students' language they would be more efficacious. According to Barna (1998) language differences are one of the six intercultural communication blocks. This finding fits the narrative from research conducted by Taylor (2004) who argues that language defines the reality of an individual or a culture, it is not just a mere expression of self-identity. Siwatu (2007) conducted studies with preservice teachers' sense of preparedness and self-efficacy and concluded that teachers felt more efficacious in their ability to develop positive relationships but felt less efficacious in their ability to communicate with English language learners. This sentiment was present in the dialog of all of the teachers who didn't speak Arabic. When asked, "what is the greatest challenge that you face with teaching ELL students?" they all stated they wished they spoke in Arabic. Linguistic barrier was a major determinant of their sense of efficacy.

Recommendations

Teachers and leaders of diverse students need cultural competence in order to succeed in their given positions. The study highlighted the importance of professional development and hands-on experiences along with the significance of teacher attitudes in cultivating cultural and linguistic competence. Research findings also show that cultural competence affects teacher efficacy among teachers who associate themselves from the students' culture. The following recommendations are provided for the district, as well as for university teacher/administrator preparation programs.

For School District Leaders:

1. Provide professional development, for example, in Culture Links to all new teachers and returning teachers based on their respective needs. For this site, this would require a more tailored program with an emphasis on Yemeni and Bengali culture.

2. Identify and train the cultural brokers in the district more extensively so that they can support and coach the new teachers in a systematic way.

3. Working with all stake-holders to create a vision for culturally responsive school practices by first defining cultural competence and then by outlining a plan for development in this area. Establish cultural competency standards and use these to help cultivate staff members' understanding and application of these standards in the school community.

4. Provide further opportunities for those teachers who want to learn Arabic or attend community events.

5. Establish a resource hub that would provide teachers with guidance on how to implement cultural competency in the classroom which includes modifications to students' lessons based on the context of the students' backgrounds.

For Colleges/Universities

1. Provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to reflect on their cultural competence using surveys and self-reflections. Use this information to help guide teachers into professional learning opportunities.

2. Establish cultural competency standards to emphasis the importance of this in terms of pursuing social justice and equity in education for ALL students.

3. Include ELL rotations in urban classrooms as part of the immersion-based, experiential learning activities during the preservice training sessions.

4. In administrative training programs, provide opportunities for shadowing and interviewing other school leaders who are leading schools with linguistically and culturally diverse schools.

5. Implement a cross-curricular approach to multi-cultural education so that all faculty members find ways to help cultivate and develop a stronger sense of cultural competence in pre-service teachers.

For Policy Makers

1. Collaborate with stakeholders to establish Michigan Cultural Competency Standards for Michigan Educators.

2. Establish cultural competency indicators to be included in the highly-qualified criteria.

3. Provide incentives for teachers to work in urban, ELL districts.

4. Continue to develop sustainable, social justice-based platforms to help minority students succeed in the American classrooms through fairness and equity in accountability yardsticks, funding and resources.

When schools and universities have a clear vision and a shared set of standards for cultural competency then we could begin to see a teacher workforce that will be well-prepared to help diverse student populations have a fair chance in the classrooms across America.

Reflections from the Research

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between cultural competency and teacher efficacy. This research study was based on my curiosity when I observed

a phenomenon of many teachers leaving the school within a day or two of starting versus those who stayed for years in the same school culture. I heard many variations of why teachers leave and the most prominent one that surfaced was that they left because of the cultural shock they experience at the school. The findings from the research helped me understand that district-wide professional practices can help alleviate some of these preconceived notions.

The limitations of this research are primarily with the time limitations and sample size of the participants along with the ethnographic school context. It would have been more in depth if there had been more time to conduct observations and focus groups with the teachers. Due to time constraints and availability of participants, it was difficult to incorporate these in this research. In addition, good faith was anticipated during the interviews which emphasized trustworthiness with the participants so that honest and sincere account of experiences could be garnered. I felt that all the participants were very candid in their responses and asked clarifying questions to ensure that they were answering question in a comprehensive manner. While this study explored the relationship between cultural competency and teacher efficacy, further research would be helpful in shedding greater light on how cultural identity affects teachers' cultural efficacy with students. In addition, the implications of this research study suggest that the importance of teacher attitudes as being critical to developing cultural competencies' and hence, a further exploration of this relationship could also contribute to the existing literature on teacher attitudes and teacher efficacy. Additional research may also help schools utilize attitudinal assessments during the hiring process to engage teachers in an introspective self-assessment to match their own values with those of the schools.

Conclusion

I started this journey a few years ago when I first began my new position at my Charter School Management Company. One of the first tasks that I engaged in was to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and gather information from all the stakeholders. I conducted surveys, interviews and focus groups to help gather data to help me draft a strategic plan. Based on this needs-assessment, it was evident that many teachers felt frustrated with not having the skill sets to work with ELL students. School leaders alluded to their own challenges of not being able to retain teachers and finding ESL certified teachers. Even at the district-level, a common quick-fix strategy was to look for ESL certified teachers as this was the only perceived option to help reach ELL students. The management company set out with aggressive recruiting plans and rolled out special certification bonusses to attract teachers to these schools. Although we were able to hire a few additional teachers, it was not enough to solve our underlying issues. During the past few years, as I have been more involved in the community activities and privy to some of the concerns and issues that continue to surface, I realized that our problems would need more than ESL teachers to overcome our challenges. The findings from this research help illuminate this phenomenon and help solidify a better action plan to overcome the challenges with not just ESL certified teachers but by creating a more comprehensive and culturally and linguistically responsive program to help teachers. This program will incorporate professional development, cultural mentorship and increased community involvement.

With accountability standards and significant amount of pressure to perform and show results, teachers have often commented on being under significant duress. The fact that 40% of teacher evaluations are also based on making student growth compounds their stress even more. School leaders have also reacted under these accountability measures by engaging in practices that

may not be the most culturally responsive ones. For example, after a few years, most school leaders insisted on removing the five days of Culture Links training, in order to replace them with more time for high end academic initiatives. Often times, teachers are directly immersed in the classroom and learning things by "trial by fire" as mentioned in the interviews. This research study helps highlight the value of cultural coaching and introspective platforms for dialog.

By conducting this research, it was my hope to raise awareness and reflect on the importance of cultural competence in working with the ELL students. This study helped me understand a phenomenon that I had been observing for few years. It also provided me with insightful dialog with the teachers, which I am confident will benefit the students in the long run.

For the past few years, we have been in search of ESL teachers and although this will continue to be priority for us, I have learned from these findings that our energy and resources would be better used if we identified creative ways of coaching our current teachers and providing them with the professional development and immersion-based experiences that can only be attained in natural settings. First and foremost, we have to make a commitment and adopt a belief system that ALL students can learn and then only will be able to become culturally efficacious teachers, the ones who possesses very high teacher efficacy along with sociocultural competence. However, this would just be the beginning. I say this because, during our recent Education Program Review, one of the comments from the external team members was that our school's motto is about being college-bound but during the visit they observed the language barriers of our students and stated that we should offer vocational programs instead of college-bound programs. This attitude is symbolic of deficit thinking mindset and is detrimental to our society. I responded by saying that our students deserve a fair chance and hope. ALL of our students deserve a socially-just and equitable learning environment of love and hope in schools regardless of race, religion

and/or cultural/linguistic barriers. In conclusion, it is important to use the implications of this study to give value to the soft skills that teachers bring with them to the teaching profession. Essentially, soft-skills such as respect, open-mindedness, empathy and patience can be instrumental in helping teachers embrace a culturally and linguistically diverse group of students. In addition, the findings from the research show that meaningful professional learning activities, hands-on immersion-based activities and responsive school leadership may contribute to positive gains in building teachers' cultural efficacy. Although, students need a lot more than a culturally competent teacher to improve reach their academic potential, I assert that this skill set is essential in helping meet those long-term success goals.

Educational justice is a common pursuit in our societies. Whether it is in underdeveloped countries or modern empires, students' educational accomplishments are still too often based on their socioeconomic status. Our "call to action" lies within the scope of our mini-communities and the possible impact that we can make there whether it is as a teacher, a leader, a board member, a policy maker or a policy driver. Therefore, it is essential that we are aware of the injustices within our communities and that we are staying true to quote by Gandhi, "Be the change you want to see in others!" Weber (1978) reminds us eloquently regarding a paradox in the verstehen: "to understand one another, we must first acknowledge that we will never fully understand one another." This resonates with me as a leader that true cultural competence and empathy cannot be fully achieved because it is difficult to fully adopt the perspective of a person or community. However, as educators, if we recognize the importance of pursuit of cultural competence through empathy on student outcomes and take the actions necessary to help support our teachers in this endeavor then only we will find greater equity in promoting social justice in education.

APPENDIX A

Information Sheet Version 1—attached to the first survey

Title of Study: Understanding Cultural Competency and Teacher Efficacy

Principal Investigator (PI):   Azra Ali

                                                  Education Leadership and Policy Studies

                                                  248-904-7239

Purpose:

You are being asked to be in a research study of how if any, cultural competency may affect your sense of teacher efficacy because you work with ELL students in an instructional capacity. This study is being conducted at Oakland International Academy High School.

Study Procedures

If you take part in the study, you will be asked to complete survey about your perceptions of cultural competencies and answer some general questions about your experiences in working with ELL students using the attached questionnaire. You will complete one survey on self-perceptions of your cultural competencies. It will take you 15-20 minutes to complete the survey. Based on the initial survey that you completed, you will be invited to participate in the formal interviews. Interviews will provide my research study with better insight on the personal experiences and perspectives regarding the relationship between teacher efficacy and cultural competency. A robust, interactive dialog will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions that I am endeavoring to investigate.

Your interview will be 45 min-60 min onsite at a mutually agreed upon time. All interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Some sample questions that will be asked are as follows:

- What specific training have you had in cultural competency?

- What life experiences do you have with people from other cultures?

- How were you prepared to teach ESL teachers?

- What challenges do you experience in teaching ESL students?

- What successes do you experience with ESL students?

- How do these experiences affect your own teacher self-efficacy?

- What skills do you believe you have to have to accommodate the needs of the ESL students? Parents?

- What skills do you think teachers should possess to be successful with ESL students?

- What type of professional activities would help you gain more cultural competency?

  - What type of professional activities do you think would help you improve your own teacher-efficacy?

Benefits

  o The possible benefits to you for taking part in this research study are:

  Research participants could benefit from reflective dialogs and gain a better introspect on their teaching practices. Participants will also gain more insight into professional development needs and greater understanding of the ELL population that they serve

Risks
  There are no known risks at this time to participation in this study.

Costs
  o There will be no costs to you for participation in this research study.

Compensation
  o You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality:

You will be identified in the research records by a code name or number. There will be no list that links your identity with this code.

Voluntary Participation /Withdrawal:

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with Oakland International Academy.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Azra Ali at the following phone number 248-904-7239. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call the Wayne State Research Subject Advocate at (313) 577-1628 to discuss problems, obtain information, or offer input.

Participation

By completing the surveys, you are agreeing to participate in this study.

APPENDIX B

Research Information Sheet

Version 2—Given prior to commencing the interview

Title of Study: Understanding Cultural Competency and Teacher Efficacy

Principal Investigator (PI):   Azra Ali
                               Education Leadership and Policy Studies
                               248-904-7239

Purpose:

You are being asked to be in a research study of how if any, cultural competency may affect your sense of teacher efficacy because you work with ELL students in an instructional capacity. This study is being conducted at Oakland International Academy High School.

Study Procedures

Your interview will be 45 min-60 min onsite at a mutually agreed upon time. Interview questions will be semi-structured and open-ended. You may choose to opt out of any question at any time. Interviews will be audio-taped for transcription purposes. You will be invited to complete a short teacher efficacy survey at the end of the interview.

Some sample questions that will be asked are as follows:

- What specific training have you had in cultural competency?

- What life experiences do you have with people from other cultures?

- How were you prepared to teach ESL teachers?

- What challenges do you experience in teaching ESL students?

- What successes do you experience with ESL students?

- How do these experiences affect your own teacher self-efficacy?

- What skills do you believe you have to have to accommodate the needs of the ESL students? Parents?

- What skills do you think teachers should possess to be successful with ESL students?

- What type of professional activities would help you gain more cultural competency?

- What type of professional activities do you think would help you improve your own teacher-efficacy?

Benefits

o The possible benefits to you for taking part in this research study are:

Research participants could benefit from reflective dialogs and gain a better introspect on their teaching practices. Participants will also gain more insight into professional development needs and greater understanding of the ELL population that they serve

Risks

There are no known risks at this time to participation in this study.

Costs

o There will be no costs to you for participation in this research study.

Compensation

o You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality**:**

o You will be identified in the research records by a code name or number. There will be no list that links your identity with this code].

o Voluntary Participation /Withdrawal:

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with Oakland International Academy.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Azra Ali at the following phone number 248-904-7239. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call the Wayne State Research Subject Advocate at (313) 577-1628 to discuss problems, obtain information, or offer input.

Participation

By staying for the interview, you indicate your consent to participate in the second portion of the study.

Additionally, participation in this research is for residents of the United States over the age of 18; if you are not a resident of the United States and/or under the age of 18, please do not complete this survey.

APPENDIX C

Multicultural Awareness Knowledge Skills Questionnaire

1. Select your current position at the high school.
    a. Administrator
    b. Teacher
    c. Paraprofessional
    d. Non-classroom support

2. How many years have you been an educator?

3. What languages do you speak in addition to English?

4. How many cultural competency classes did you take in the Teacher Prep or Administrator Prep Program?

5. How would you rank your own cultural competency about working with the student population at this school?

    a. Very Limited b. Limited. C. Effective   D. Very Effective

6. Prior to coming to this school, were there any other teaching experiences that prepared you for teaching students of this culture?

7. Describe any cultural experiences that you may have been exposed to that may have cultivated your cultural competencies or promoted cultural-mindedness?

8. Do you consider your culture to be the same as the students' you serve?

9. Describe what personal activities you believe contribute to your growth in cultural competency.

10. Describe what professional activities you believe contribute to your growth in cultural competency.

APPENDIX D

Multicultural Awareness Knowledge Skills Survey

D'Andrea, M., Daniels, J., & Noonan, 1994 Teacher (T) Form

A. Multicultural Awareness Subscale				
Please rate yourself on the following questions:				
1. At this point in your life, how would you rate yourself in terms of understanding how your cultural background has influenced the way you think and act?	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
2. At this point in your life, how would you rate your understanding of the impact of the way you think and act when interacting with persons of different cultural backgrounds?	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
3. In general, how would you rate your level of awareness regarding different cultural institutions and systems?	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
4. At the present time, how would you generally rate yourself in terms of being able to accurately compare your own cultural perspective with that of a person from another culture?	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
5. How well do you think you could distinguish "intentional" for "accidental" communication signals in a multicultural classroom situation?	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
6. Ambiguity and stress often result from multicultural situations because people are not sure what to expect from each other.	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good

7. Teachers need to change not just the content of what they think but also the way they handle this content if they are to accurately account for the complexity in human behavior.	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
8. How would you rate your understanding of the concept of "relativity" in terms of the goals, objectives, and methods of working with culturally different students and their families?	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
B. Multicultural Knowledge Subscale				
How would you rate your understanding of the following terms:				
9. Culture	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
10. Ethnicity	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
11. Racism	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
12. Mainstreaming	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
13. Prejudice	1 Very	2	3	4

	Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
14. Multicultural Education	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
15. Ethnocentrism	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
16. Pluralism	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
17. Privilege	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
18. Equity	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
19. Conscious Bias	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
20. Unconscious Bias	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good

21. Assimilation	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
22. Equality	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
23. Race	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
24. Nationality	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
25. Class	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
26. Acculturation	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
27. Oppression	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good

28. Affectional orientation	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
29. Gender identity	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
C. Multicultural Skills Subscale				
30. The difficulty with the concept of "integration" is its implicit bias in favor of the dominant culture	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
31. How would you rate your ability to teach students from a cultural background significantly different from your own?	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
32. How would you rate your ability to effectively assess the needs of students and their families from a cultural background different from your own?	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
33. How well would you rate your ability to distinguish "formal" and "informal" teaching strategies?	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
34. In general, how would you rate yourself in terms of being able to effectively deal with biases, discrimination, and prejudices directed at you by students and/or their families	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good

	1	2	3	4
35. How well would you rate your ability to accurately identify culturally biased assumptions as they relate to your professional training?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
36. How well would you rate your ability to discuss the role of "method" and "context" as they relate to teaching?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
37. In general, how would you rate your ability to accurately articulate a student's behavioral problem when the student is from a cultural group significantly different from your own?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
38. How well would you rate your ability to analyze a culture into its component parts?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
39. How would you rate your ability to identify the strengths and weaknesses of standardized tests in terms of their use with students from different cultural-racial-ethnic backgrounds?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
40. How would you rate your ability to critique multicultural research?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
41. In general, how would you rate your skill level in terms of being able to provide appropriate educational services to culturally different students and their families?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good

	1	2	3	4
42. In general, how would you rate your skill level in terms of being able to provide appropriate educational services to culturally different students and their families?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
43. How would you rate your ability to effectively consult with another professional concerning the educational and behavioral needs of students whose cultural background is significantly different from your own?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
44. How would you rate your ability to effectively secure information and resources to better serve culturally different students and their families?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
45. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of female students?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
46. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of male students?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
47. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of older students?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
48. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of boys who may be homosexual?	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
49. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and	Very			

educational needs of girls who may be lesbians?	Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
50. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of students with mental health disorder?	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good
51. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of students who come from very poor socioeconomic backgrounds?	1 Very Limited	2 Limited	3 Good	4 Very Good

APPENDIX E

Teacher Efficacy Scale (Short Form)*

A number of statements about organizations, people, and teaching are presented below. The purpose is to gather information regarding the actual attitudes of educators concerning these statements. There are no correct or incorrect answers. We are interested only in your frank opinions. Your responses will remain confidential.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate your personal opinion about each statement by circling

the appropriate response at the right of each statement.

KEY:
1=Strongly Agree
2=Moderately Agree
3=Agree slightly more than disagree
4=Disagree slightly more than agree
5=Moderately Disagree
6=Strongly Disagree

1. The amount a student can learn is primarily related to family background.   1 2 3 4 5 6

2. If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline.   1 2 3 4 5 6

3. When I really try, I can get through to most difficult students.   1 2 3 4 5 6

4. A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement.   1 2 3 4 5 6

5. If parents would do more for their children, I could do more.   1 2 3 4 5 6

6. If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.   1 2 3 4 5 6

7. If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.   1 2 3 4 5 6

8. If one of my students couldn't do a class assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.   1 2 3 4 5 6

9. If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.   1 2 3 4 5 6

1O. When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.   1 2 3 4 5 6

*In Hoy, W.K. & Woolfolk, A.E. (1993). Teachers' sense of efficacy and the organizational health of schools. *The Elementary School Journal 93*, 356-372.

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND TEACHER EFFICACY

by

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Major: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

The teachers in the US classrooms are facing an unprecedented challenge of serving significantly large population of students who come from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds. These challenges are further exasperated because many teachers are not prepared to work with English Language Learners (ELLs) who have specific needs and require pedagogy that goes beyond content teaching. Therefore, many ELL students are not receiving the appropriate principles, practices and strategies necessary for them to succeed in the American classrooms. As the population of ELL students is steadily increasing, there is an immediate need for the mainstream teachers to be prepared to effectively deal with these challenges. Previous research studies have pointed out that intercultural sensitivity and cultural competence may contribute to positive educational experiences for students who are from diverse background, (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman).

The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore the relationships between cultural competency and teacher self-efficacy and investigate in which ways, if any, cultural competency influences teachers' efficacy in working with ELL students. This research was conducted in an

urban high school with a large, primarily Yemeni immigrant population. Using surveys and interviews, ten participants (4 females and 6 males) comprised of teachers and school leaders provided the qualitative data for this research. The findings of this research study were that teachers and leaders of culturally and linguistically different students need cultural competence in order to succeed in their given positions. This investigation also highlighted the importance of professional development and hands-on experiences along with the significance of teacher attitudes in cultivating cultural and linguistic competence. The findings from this research also indicate that teachers whose cultural background was similar to that of the students perceived themselves to have more efficacy in dealing with students' academic and social needs.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

I was born in India and migrated to the US when I was in elementary school. When we moved to a city, where there were several other immigrant families, so we immediately felt a sense of community. I faced the traditional challenges of being an ESL student in our classrooms. Although there were pull-out programs and bilingual education available for us, I felt a strong desire to be in the general education classrooms. During my first year, I was graded on "effort" and many learning opportunities were taken away due to my having label of an "ESL student". I was disappointed because I was not even allowed to prove myself because of the deficit thinking model that my teachers operated with. It was during this time that I made a commitment to learning English while I maintained my native language, Urdu. This commitment has made me more proficient in both languages and has set in motion a strong desire to work with schools that serve culturally and linguistically diverse students. I received my bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from the University of Michigan—Dearborn and master's degree in Education along with an Education Specialist Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Wayne State University. I have spent the past twenty years in various teaching, coaching, and leadership positions at private and charter schools. My expertise in curriculum design, staff development, and leadership skills helps me facilitate professional development throughout each our schools. I also completed the Art of Leadership Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which has provided me with the skills necessary to work in urban schools. A formalized training in the International Baccalaureate Program has also provided me with the unique lens for preparing youth for a global community. I am dedicated to serving the needs of the culturally and linguistically different students and engaging in professional practices to help our students succeed.