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TEACHERS TALK:
A CASE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF WORKING ACROSS CULTURES WITH IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

A Dissertation Presented

By

ANNE LUNDBERG

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 2014

College of Education

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WORKING ACROSS CULTURES WITH
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A Dissertation Presented

By

ANNE LUNDBERG

Approved as to style and content by:

_____
Claire E. Hamilton, Chair

_____
Grace Craig, Member

_____
Leda Cooks, Member

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Christine B. McCormick, Dean
College of Education

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family.

Peter Scott, my loving partner and hard working yoke-mate in this life. With out his unending support — intellectual, physical, and emotional — I would never have finished. Peter has been there every step of the way and more.

The support and sacrifices that Peter and my three daughters — Ella Simone, Zoe Rose, and Diana Maria — have made during my time as a student have been enormous. Words cannot say how much I value what you have given to me. I know it has been a long journey to finish, thank you for being there for me. I love you each.

I think of two sayings I have heard about love:

Work is love made visible.

Justice is what love looks like in public.

Your love in my life has made it possible for me to work well in the world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first acknowledgement goes to the teacher-participants in this study. Without them, there would be nothing to report or to share, and I so appreciate their willingness to be engaged with my work. Their honest and reflective voices will always remain in my mind's eye. The level of commitment in their work to all in their classrooms, schools, and community was remarkable to witness.

My second acknowledgement is to my committee members — Claire, Grace, and Leda—who stayed with me through this process and its long overdue conclusion. Again, without them guiding me through the multifaceted process that research entails, I would not have been able to complete this work. Specifically, I thank Claire, who became my chairperson without even having met or known me as a student. Her clear, direct, and professional feedback and recommendations helped forge this document.

My third acknowledgement goes to the many teachers I have had during my time as a graduate student, whether as instructors, counselors, and those who served in specific roles and/or critical times. My life—personal and professional—has been enriched through their work, conversations, and persistent pushing of my development: Sonia Nieto, Janine Roberts, Sally Habana-Hafner, Alexandrina Deschamps, Irv Seidman, Kevin Nugent and Gretchen Rossman. Through the interdisciplinary worldview that each of these people hold, I have grown in my ability to work with my head, heart, and hands.

My last acknowledgement is this to thank specific people who have supported me on a practical level to succeed: The McNairs who bought me a new MacBook that made this research possible and has seen me through to the very end; and Ella and Jake who provided me with a writer's retreat in Montague this winter in their lovely home.

ABSTRACT

TEACHERS TALK: A CASE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE
OF WORKING ACROSS CULTURES WITH
IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

SEPTEMBER 2014

ANNE LUNDBERG, B.S., CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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One of the persistent challenges confronting our society is how to reduce inequities in educational and life chances of students from different socioeconomic, ethnic, language, and racial backgrounds. One of the most important factors in a child's success in school is the degree to which their families are actively involved in their education. These two facts framed this research work. The current large-scale immigration occurring in the U.S.A. is an important social development because children of immigrants currently make up 20% of all youth in the U.S.A.; first and second generation immigrant children are the most rapidly growing segment of our child population. Public schools are where immigrant children and families come into consistent contact with their new culture. The context for obstacles facing immigrant families are often clustered on language and culture, with particular impact on communication. Classroom teachers' roles and perspectives are key to understanding how communication works in cross-cultural learning environments.

Using a phenomenological in-depth interviewing methodology, I interviewed five experienced teachers working in large urban public elementary schools where classrooms contained more than 50% immigrants. Elementary level was selected for three reasons: (1) K-3 teachers engage most with families; (2) family life-cycle with young children finds parents more involved with their children's school; and (3) children under ten-years express more home-culture than school-culture. Each participant was interviewed three times for approximately 90-120 minutes. I open-coded salient themes from transcriptions that cut across my teacher-participants' contexts: self, classroom, and community.

A descriptive case study, the research was guided by two broad questions: (1) How do teachers think about culture, in their own lives and in the life of their classrooms, and how does their theoretical conceptualization of culture relate to their understanding of immigrant families? (2) What intercultural communication skills or tools do teachers have in their repertoire, and how do they use these to inform their inclusion of immigrant families? I discuss how the constitutive elements of my participants' experience in their cross cultural work can be incorporated into the development and implementation of skills in culturally responsive teaching and in educating the whole child.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO MY STUDY: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF TEACHING NEW IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND WORKING WITH THEIR FAMILIES

Family Involvement in Schools

> If teachers and parents can truly reach a level of mutual understanding and acknowledge their different worldviews, epistemologies, and cultural frames of reference without pathology, it is believed that their common grounds and interests will become more readily apparent. And if they can reach that next step, their caring and commitment to children promises better outcomes for all (Lawson, 2003, p. 128).

One of the persistent challenges confronting our society is how to reduce inequalities in the educational and life chances of students from different socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. One of the most important factors in a child's success in school is the degree to which the family is actively involved in the child's education. These two issues or realities frame the discussion and questions in this research. The reality of social class differences in families in our public schools, combined with ethnic demographics of current immigrants, creates a critical emphasis on this educational issue. Removing barriers that impede parent involvement in schools remains a public education priority in the United States. Parent involvement [PI] in schools is a large and complex matter.

There is widespread agreement in the academic educational community concerning the positive effect of parent involvement: kids do better in school if their

parents[1] are involved. On the surface, it makes sense. Policy makers, schools, teachers, and parents all view family involvement in their children's educational life as a good thing: some view it as an essential and critical piece for a successful experience in school (Chavkin, 1993; Comer, 1980; Comer & Haynes, 1991; de Carvalho, 2001; Epstein, 1996, 2001; Gordon, 1977; Lewis & Forman, 2002; Moles, 1987; Peña, 2000). So pervasive is the research and literature concerning the positive effects of family involvement that the question – *Does it make a difference?* – is hardly asked anymore. It seems to have become a "given" since the landmark studies of the 1960's, which created new shifts in awareness and action with regards to understanding the necessity of families being more involved with their children's life in school (Gordon, 1977; Moles, 1987; Olmsted, 1991). Substantial research since the 1960's (Chavkin, 1993; Epstein, 1996, 2001; Seeley, 1993; Thornburg, Hoffman, & Remeika, 1991) has shown that even *minimal* parental involvement carries over positively into success for children in school. So, what stops families from being involved in their children's schools?

Over the past two decades, research to understand what barriers or obstacles impede developing more family involvement in schools has taken place. Researchers have an array of information to define the barriers. This current work uses various research methods and involves the perspectives of parents, teachers, children, and school

[1] The term *parents* is used here to follow the terminology used in research literature. There is an inherent narrowness in using this term, as it leaves out stepparents, foster care parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents who are raising children, as well as other legal guardians. I bring this up here not to be politically correct, but rather to say that this narrowness in label is often reflected in narrowness of thinking about the issue; even to change the term from parent to family involvement would give us all a broader base from which to work together. For example, a term such as caregiver moves from a kinship model to a relational one; this provides a more flexible baseline.

administrations (Aronson, 1996; Epstein, 2001; Floyd, 1998; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Lareau, 1996; Peña, 2000). Researchers in education, psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Banks & Banks, 2004; Comer, Hayes, & Hoffman, 1991; Lareau, 2000; Lewis & Forman, 2002; Ogbu, 1994; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) have asked the educational community to put PI research, theory, and practice into an inter-disciplinary perspective. Their writings emphasize that for PI initiatives to be successful, they need to be contextually focused. We cannot address family involvement in isolation. Clearly, across the disciplines involved in public education, a systemic approach of some sort is needed.

From research with teachers and school administrators, there emerges the term *hard-to-reach-parents*. Teachers acknowledge that the parents, whom they are labeling as *hard-to-reach*, are actually from poor families, often are single parents, or from marginal groups. This labeling syndrome re-emphasizes why parent involvement is a critical issue. Many teachers believe that the causes for lack of involvement reside in the families themselves, or their communities or cultures (Aronson, 1996; Chavkin, 1993; Davies, 1987, 1993; Epstein, 1985, 2001; Swap, 1993). Do some teachers believe that culture and/or community can create this kind of deficit thinking? If so, what is their understanding of culture? How do they work across culture(s) in their classrooms?

Researchers involved with minority families, who have studied and understand barriers, challenge this viewpoint – minority families' lack of involvement – as myth (Chavkin, 1989; Comer & Hayes, 1991; Cummins, 1996/1986; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Delpit, 1991; Moles, 1993; Peña, 2000). "Often when minority parents do not participate in traditional parent-school activities, teachers interpret that behavior as indifference.

Many teachers do not understand the cultural differences between parents and school staff," according to Peña (2000, p. 44). Schools are incorrect to assume that minority families do not care about their children's education. Are teachers equating caring with participation?

Other researchers, working with minority, migrant, and immigrant families, also challenge this assumption by showing that some teachers successfully involve families of the most disadvantaged students in important ways. How are these schools, or their teachers, effective in doing this outreach? Research has shown teachers' involvement and supportiveness of parents to be one of the major characteristics of this success (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein, 1990, 2001; López, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Scott-Jones, 1987, 1993, 1996). What part of this might be working across cultures? How might teachers encourage involvement with immigrant families by building on their cultural values? The make sense and a contribution, this research needs to be embedded within the sociocultural contexts of teachers and families.

> Knowing that the human child is always embedded in a social context leads us to conclude that we must know more about the context. Both teachers and teacher education programs must begin to develop strong knowledge bases about the human contexts that serve to raise our children. Teachers must learn about culture, class, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, and any other characteristics or phenomena that affect and/or reflect these human contexts (Harding, London, & Safer, 2001, p. 511).

Culture emerges as a major obstacle: differences in values and patterns of living between middle-class teachers and minority families present clear problems. Effective schooling requires continuity between home and school environments (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003). What impact might diversity in teachers' backgrounds create? If teachers were

not monolingual or shared a similar background with their students' families, might their communications be received as support and not an obstacle? For families with diverse cultural, economical, and linguistical backgrounds, there can be significant discontinuities between home and school. One of the current realities in our search for solutions must be the acknowledgement of the great diversity of family histories, backgrounds, and resources in this country (Cummins, 1996/1986, 2001; Delpit, 1991; Floyd, 1998; Howard, 2010; Khan, 1996; Moles, 1993; Murrell, 2007; Peña, 2000). In the educational literature, some researchers currently name immigrants (those born abroad) as newcomers. This highlights that they are new to the United States and amid a transition for accommodation or acculturation, without labeling them migrants, refugees, guest workers, or documented/undocumented immigrants. Clearly, each of these groups would have different needs. In their longitudinal research with current new immigrants in U.S. public schools, Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova (2008) use the label immigrants to reference children who are the first generation living here. Whether they were born here into immigrant families or born abroad and moved here with their immigrant families, their social-cultural contexts as newcomers are similar. In my research, I follow this reference for new immigrants as first generation students.

Interdisciplinary researchers, who look at family involvement with a systems approach, focus on the culture of the school, classroom, teacher, and the child: they observe and document the role of communication between schools and families. The role of communication is key. The climate of the school, in terms of basic trust or mistrust, is implicitly linked to communication, whether verbal or non-verbal, direct or indirect, implied or spoken (Doyle, 1997; Floyd, 1998; García & Guerra, 2004; Gonzales-DeHess

& Willems, 2003; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1990, 2003; Lazar & Slostad, 1999; Miretzky, 2004; Nel, 1992; Rich, 1993). Perhaps this seems obvious to those who approach education from a relational perspective. Many teachers and administrators, who work in schools, approach communication from a more pragmatic view. Therefore, the role of communication as a possible barrier for parent involvement has not been seen. This idea has been a long time rising to awareness. It is here that this current research is situated. There is something ambiguous about the climate of schools in regards to family involvement. The tone is not always welcoming to families (Epstein, 2001; Fagnano, 1994; Feuerstein, 2000). Is this because of differences in class, power, language, or cultural background?

Researchers have responded by investigating parents' and teachers' attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and expectations of family involvement. There is considerable evidence that a major impediment to home/school communication results from teachers' stereotypes, misperceptions, and lack of understanding of family cultures (Constantino, 2003; Delpit, 1995; Gonzales-DeHass & Willems, 2003). Researchers looking more deeply into the nuances within the communication barrier find that attitudes, perceptions, values, status, and biases impact teachers' sense of efficacy (Cummins, 2001; Harding, London, & Safer, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). In this case, what strengthens efficacy?

In general, schools both define and determine to what extent parent involvement is allowed (Epstein, 1985, 1994, 1996, 2001). Simultaneously, patterns of communication between schools and families have been traditionally one-way, from

school to the home, mostly monolingual. Poor communication styles[2] mean that the perspectives and needs of families are largely unknown. Even white, middle-class, Christian families, whose cultures are more apt to match those of the teachers, find it hard to be involved in our public elementary schools in meaningful ways (Epstein, 2001; Irvine, 1997; Lareau, 2000, 2003; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1990, 2003). Rather than make teachers the targets, what is important is understanding how deficit thinking permeates our society; schools and teachers simply mirror these beliefs. Researchers point out that successful school-family programs avoid focusing on teachers as the problem; rather they look critically at systemic factors that perpetuate deficit thinking and educational inequities (Fayden, 2005; García & Guerra, 2004). My research focuses on teachers as resources, not targets. Teachers work on the front line with families.

Communication as a barrier is grounded in the prevalent research fact that the first time most parents hear from school is when there is a problem. Large national and small local surveys report that schools contact families for behavior and attendance problems, academic problems, and monitoring children's progress, generally in that order (Epstein, 1995, 1996; Khan, 1996; Lawson, 2003; Leitch & Tangri, 1988; Lewis & Forman, 2002; Peña, 2000). How can schools understand their students if they are not in two-way communication with families? Dwyer and Hetch (1992) write:

> Regardless of the reason (or reasons) for low parental involvement, one point remains consistent and clear throughout the literature. The first step in any parent involvement program

[2] One-way communication is defined as poor communication because it (1) does not expect a *response*, (2) is *talking past* the receiver, and (3) does not *adjust or accommodate* to facilitate understanding. This is as opposed to "two-way communication: Communication designed to elicit dialogue between home and school" (Gestwicki, 2004, p. 641).

> includes the school reaching out to the parent. The exact ways and means of the involvement must vary according to the situation of the school and the parents, but all programs must begin with the simple act of communicating. Without the ability to talk with the parent, school programs cannot succeed (p. 63).

I am convinced that part of the answer lies in the nature of how schools communicate with families, as well as their general lack or use of intercultural communication. Defining intercultural communication as the interaction between people of different cultural backgrounds is the first step for schools (Martin & Nakayama, 2004). This acknowledges both the need for interaction and the reality of culture. To develop intercultural competency – the ability to behave effectively and appropriately in interacting across cultures – requires teachers to make a commitment to communication that moves in two directions, a dialogue. This in turn requires a commitment to working in collaboration with families around communication. When teachers do this, does it make a difference?

Teachers have direct access to families, yet it appears that few take action. Those who do are not often successful in connecting with immigrant families (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Having researched family involvement in schools since the early 1980s, Epstein (2001) states, "From my viewpoint, the main goal of partnerships is *to develop and conduct better communication with families across the grades to assist students to succeed in school*" (p. 42). My research looks at communication in its dual roles: barrier and tool. Classroom teachers play the key role here.

Conceptual Framework

> Ultimately, taking culture seriously means questioning the very base of one's own intellectual inquiry, and accepting the fact that knowledge itself is colored by the social and

> historical context in which it is acquired and disseminated (Kramsch, 1998, p.9).

Examining the larger sociocultural and sociopolitical systems in schools, where communication between immigrant families and teachers takes place, is critical work. Public schools are the first place where immigrant children and their families come into consistent contact with their new culture here in the U.S.A. The goal of this research is to look at communication, specifically intercultural communication, between classroom teachers and immigrant families within a cultural context. I think of communication as a double-edged sword: a metaphor for when something cuts two ways, or in this case, contains two definitions. Research often describes communication as a barrier in schools or as a tool to solve problems. It can be both.

Previous research has shown that the nature of poor communication is systemic in the organizational culture of schools and that schools' organizational structures do not lend themselves to sustained parent-teacher contact (Dwyer & Hetch, 1992; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Khan, 1996; Kischenbaum, 2001; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1990, 2003; Lawson, 2003; Lazar & Slostad, 1999; Moles, 1993; Peña, 2000; Swap, 1993). Part of the communication problem is dealing with the issues of power dynamics between teachers and families. Although teachers do not often believe in or sense the power they hold in their daily work, as representatives of schools, they are part of the group in power in this country. If they are members of the dominant group, they are in the cultural know. Teachers have not necessarily faced the issue, or seen the need to accommodate themselves to the "other" group.

Immigrant families come with their own cultures, and from their outsiders' position, they have to learn about this host culture to survive. Albert Memmi (1991), the

Tunisian philosopher and political theorist, explained power dynamics in this duel context in the 1960's. The master (those in power) need only function in their own world, while the slave (those with no power) must know how to function in two worlds: their own and the master's. It is from within this context of power dynamics that this study approaches intercultural communication. When teachers and families are from different cultures, they will not be on equal footing in the school setting, and power dynamics will be played out.

There are perhaps as many definitions of culture as there are areas of study or inquiry. I have not selected one explicit definition, but rather present three attributes that appear frequently in the literature: (1) culture is learned and transmitted through socialization; (2) culture is the way of life – assumptions, beliefs, values – of any group of people developed in response to external conditions; and (3) culture is not static; it is dynamic and evolves as people find new ways of solving problems.

In studying culture, we find that there are no specific standards for considering one group intrinsically superior or inferior to another. By applying cultural frameworks for cross-cultural understanding, the learner moves beyond initial assumptions about the different culture; one moves beyond ethnocentrism and deficit models, and learns to separate value judgments from explanations (Rogoff, 2003). Intercultural work articulates the need for a position of cultural relativism when studying differences in culture among groups:

> Cultural relativism does not imply normlessness for oneself, nor for one's society. It does call for suspending judgment when dealing with groups or societies different from one's own. One should think twice before applying the norms of one person, group or society to another. Information about the nature of the cultural differences between societies, their roots, and their

> consequences should precede judgment and action (Hofstede, 1997, p. 7).

During my professional experience in schools, I have observed that many teachers, who come from backgrounds different than those of their students, even ones with good intentions and caring attitudes, cannot suspend their judgments about immigrant students and families, nor do they have the tools with which to uncover the nature of the cultural differences that indeed exist: "We have found that the majority of teachers are well-intentioned, caring individuals but are unaware of the deeper, hidden, or invisible dimensions of culture, which have a significant influence on their own identity, educators' role definitions, and instructional practices" (García & Guerra, 2004, p. 154). By bringing culture to the center of the inquiry, this research challenges the lack of cross-cultural awareness and skills that seems to be deeply embedded in our educational system. The praxis of culture creates different types of educational communities. This research's focus on culture confronts an underlying assumption about knowledge:

> The assumption here is that in a world where reality is constructed, and individuals have different interpretations of the world, the work of the community necessarily begins and continues with the idea that no one holds 'true' understanding (Tierney, 1993, p. 143).

Any educational system is an organization, which operates within the norms of the dominant culture of the society. Through the socialization process of culture, every member of the society learns the languages, behaviors, values, attitudes, and skills needed to survive: each person learns what is needed to do to maintain and actually perpetuate their culture. I believe that this socialization prepares individuals to play roles – either dominant or subordinate – in systems of oppression. Numerous pedagogies of social justice education are guided by the work of Paulo Freire (1973) and his vision of a

transformed teaching and learning process. One basic idea concerns knowledge – how knowledge is defined, whose knowledge is valued, what knowledge is taught and, even more to the point, how knowledge is taught.

This research situates itself within a critical research paradigm, which concerns itself with issues of power and social justice. Critical research seeks to understand the particular in a way that connects it to a larger social and political context. From a critical theory perspective, oppression in education is a structural problem. Seeking to understand knowledge, particularly cultural knowledge, is positioning oneself to reduce oppression in society. At the foreground of my research is a belief that listening to the experiences of teachers of new immigrants is one authentic way to truly understand their struggles, beliefs, and perspectives. Documenting teacher dialogues, both internal and external, is a step to creating understanding across differences. Selecting teachers who work with new immigrant students allows a focus on the linguistical and cultural background diversity of this population.

Cultural theory explains that one reason why so many solutions do not work, or cannot be implemented, is that differences in thinking among the players have been ignored. Culture is learned, not inherited; it comes from one's social environment. Culture is always a collective phenomenon as it is shared with people who live, or lived, in the same social environment. Cultural theory distinguishes culture from human nature (inherited) and from an individual's personality (inherited and learned).[3] It assists us in

[3] Although cultural theory distinguishes these three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming, "exactly where the borders lie between human nature and culture, and between culture and personality, is a matter of discussion among social scientists" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 5).

dealing with the differences in thinking, feeling, and acting of people from around the world (Hofstede, 1997, 2001; Hollins, 1996; Lynch & Hanson, 1995; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001).

Through conceptual reasoning, reflection on fieldwork, and statistical studies, social scientists identify levels, or dimensions, of culture that appear across cultures. Anthropologist Hofstede (1997, 2001) articulated several cultural dimensions while analyzing data from a multi-site organizational study of nations (over 200). The original research results were used to identify national cultural commonalities and differences to promote cooperation among nations. Over the past three decades, research on how to measure culture has continued. There is general agreement upon the idea that dimensions of culture exist; yet not on how many there are.

Researchers do conceptually agree that cultural dimensions have consequences for the functioning levels of societies, groups within societies, and of individuals within the group. Articulation for these four are seen repeatedly in the interdisciplinary literature on culture: (1) The degree of inequality in society — the power distance index; (2) the individual and the collective in society; (3) the avoidance of uncertainty; and (4) the focus on task or relationship (gender roles). Keep in mind that cultural dimensions are less visible than the material or celebratory parts of culture. It is more difficult to capture the ideational aspects of culture: the ideas, beliefs, and knowledge of groups (Hofstede, 1997, 2001; Hollins, 1996; Inkeles & Levinson, 1969; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001).

I selected one cultural dimension — the relationship between the individual and the group, or the individualism/collectivism [I/C] continuum – to use as part of my focus

with the classroom teachers I interviewed. Why did I adopt this focus? Clearly, there are elements of both individualism and collectivism in any society. This focus was selected because research data ranks[4] the U.S.A. highest in individualistic beliefs and behavior in the world, while about seventy percent of the world's cultures can be described as collectivistic (Brislin, 1993; Hofstede, 1997, 2001; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). Again, whether migrants, refugees, or new immigrants, the cultural diversity of newcomer families is wide. More critical is the fact that many of our newest immigrants come from countries that rank highly as collectivists.

Therefore, concerning this particular cultural dimension, we have a potential for a meeting of extremes in our schools. "At a most basic level, the difference is one of emphasis on individual success versus successful relations with others in the group" (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001, p. 5). It is possible that these two orientations guide our teachers in one direction, and immigrant children in another. I aim in part to reveal the conflicts and miscommunications that may occur around this dimension in the everyday classroom life:

> The continuum of individualism/collectivism represents the degree to which a culture emphasizes individual fulfillment and choice verses interdependent relations, social responsibility, and the well-being of the group. Individualism makes the former a priority, collectivism the latter. Although the dominant U.S. culture is extremely individualistic, many immigrant cultures are strongly collectivistic, as are American Indian and Alaska Native cultures (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001, p. 4).

[4] This seminal research by Hofstede (2001) evaluated 50 countries & 3 territories (*n* = 53). The ranking on continuum (& scores) for this dimension is briefly shown here: Individualism/Collectivism ranking— U.S. as No. 1 (91) to Guatemala as No. 53 (6).

Engaging with teachers about this cultural theory, I can use it as a way to understand their thinking about intercultural communication. This framework allows for the possibility of the concepts of individualism and collectivism, which lie underneath specific cultural differences, to surface. I believe that in using this framework, I might generate new knowledge concerning communication between teachers and immigrant families. Returning to the conceptualization stated earlier, communication has a dual identity – a *problem* in one context, a *tool* in another. My hope in looking at the *problem* aspects of communication is that the *tool* aspects might be revealed.

The Purpose of My Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze classroom teachers' experiences in working with immigrant children and their families. I wanted to investigate their understanding of culture and cultural theory and how that might reflect on their communication with immigrant children and their families. By listening to what teachers say, I intend in part to test the usefulness of the theoretical framework of dimensions of culture, specifically the individualism / collectivism continuum. My study seeks to understand teachers' work with immigrant children and families. The teacher-participants knew their families and they were the ones to identify the children as new immigrants. There were no discussions about children's legal status, whether they were documented or undocumented, or whether they were born abroad or in a U.S. state or territory.

Some research is available to explain the currently poor levels of communication and interactions between families and schools; new research is needed to frame

intercultural communication. Many culturally different children being taught by Euro-American teachers are failing in school. Not all teachers are Euro-American, yet the majority in elementary schools falls into this demographic (Delpit, 1991; Fayden, 2005; Gay, 2000; González & Darling-Hammond, 1997; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). I wondered if student failure could be explained in part by intercultural communication, or actually the lack of it in our schools. Miscommunication happens between immigrant families and the schools their children attend. There is cultural conflict, even though each, family and teacher, is acting normally from within their own culture. This cultural conflict might contribute to the school's failure for immigrant children (Cummins, 1996/1986, 2001; Delpit, 1995; Irvine, 1997, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

What if the backgrounds between teachers and students were similar? Would this shift what happens? My research looked at culture-in-action in our public elementary schools, specifically at cultural differences and how they affect the processes of teaching and learning. Culture is the context in which life happens: the internationalization of our public schools' population requires more knowledge about cultural patterns and intercultural communication.

Research outlines some orienting concepts for understanding cultural processes from a sociocultural perspective (Brislin, 1993; Filindra, Blanding & Garcia Coll, 2011: Lynch & Hanson, 1995; Nieto, 1992; Rogoff, 2003; Spring, 2008). Culture is dynamic: "Humans develop through their changing participation in the sociocultural activities, which also change" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 11).

- Culture isn't just what other people do;

- Understanding one's own cultural heritage, as well as other cultural communities, requires taking the perspective of people of contrasting backgrounds;
- Cultural practices fit together and are connected;
- Cultural communities continue to change, as do individuals;
- There is not likely to be One Best Way;
- There is always more to learn. (Rogoff, 2003)

As the goal of this research is to gain in-depth understanding of the experience of classroom teachers working with immigrant families, a qualitative case study method is used. Broadly stated, case study research means conducting an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its natural context using multiple sources of evidence (Berg, 2001; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003a, 2003b). This inquiry is focused on real-life contexts of urban classrooms and the daily communication of teachers working with immigrant children and their families.

The final number of participants included in my data was three teachers. In doing this case study inquiry, I engaged with a total of seven teachers. I had to remove four teachers' data. The full details of the situation are included in Chapter Four, yet a quick summary here explains the lowered number: (1) two teachers' data were removed when I changed interview protocol; (2) one teacher relocated, which resulted in incomplete work; and (3) one teacher requested to withdraw from the study after her interviews were completed and transcribed.

The methods used in this case study include an initial questionnaire, interviews, a demographic data sheet, and review of some classroom documents. Studying the nuances of culture through lived experiences, this research is anchored by the use of a

sociocultural lens. This works to create the context for communication between teachers and families. Much prior research places a deficit model onto the classroom teachers: change the teachers, and the problem will disappear. In regards to describing the individualism/collectivism dimension in cultural theory, classroom scenarios were given to the teachers and described in interviews.

As said before, I feel classroom teachers are key; yet rather than blame teachers, I want to hear from them. This case study seeks to understand teachers' experiences of their work with immigrant children and their families. When teachers have time to reflect on their work, how do they see it? Particularly, what are their perceptions and experiences of engagement concerning culture? How do they define it? How might cultural theory support their work? Can it be a tool for avoiding miscommunication? What is working for them in their classrooms with over 50% immigrant children? These questions are at the front of my thinking and work.

The Research Questions

I am interested in teachers' stories that represent the concerns, struggles, and negotiations they have in their day-to-day classroom work with immigrant children and their families. I want to hear their own words about how they understand culture, cross-cultural communication, and cultural theory. I want to document how their understanding of culture reflects on their communication with new immigrant children, to understand how dimensions of culture may arise in their work. As someone whose lived experience as a classroom teacher began in New York City's Chinatown in the mid-1970's, I have a strong connection to the issues this study examines. I have worked as a

teacher educator for the past seventeen years and have developed a deep sense of commitment to the process. Simultaneously, I have lived and taught in large urban areas: New York, Boston, and Cambridge. As a result, I have a strong desire to understand the experiences of the teachers who work in our nation's large urban elementary schools with the continual influx of new immigrants, and to support their teaching in this intensely multicultural context. How do they think about culture? I want to understand more about what this experience means to them and to make sense of it through a sociocultural lens. Using their words and voices, I wanted to describe the variations, similarities and dissimilarities, of cultural processes in our contemporary public schools.

The purpose of this dissertation study, therefore, is to explore the experiences of elementary teachers working in classrooms with over 50% immigrant children. The teachers identified their immigrant families, yet did not share the families' information or status. School files were not shared, yet they would not be labeled "new immigrant" per se in the public system. In listening to these experienced teachers' narratives, we hear stories, anecdotes, and reflections of the intellectual and emotional complexities of cross-cultural teaching. In light of this context, as I conducted the in-depth phenomenological interview study, I was guided by the following questions:

1. How do teachers think about culture, in their own lives and in the lives of their classrooms? How does their theoretical conceptualization of culture in this framework relate to their understanding of immigrant families?
2. What intercultural communication skills, or tools do teachers have in their repertoires? How do they use their knowledge to inform their inclusion of immigrant children and their families?

3. What range of knowledge, or basic perceptions, of cultural theory do teachers work with in the classroom? Particularly, what knowledge do they have concerning the cultural dimension of individualism/collectivism?
4. As teachers communicate with immigrant students and families, how do they understand any miscommunications?
5. Specifically with regards to intercultural communication, what levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills do teachers express?

In this dissertation study, I seek to explore and understand what teachers think and then to describe accurately what was revealed. A descriptive case study such as this one attempts to present a complete description of a phenomenon within its context, which is the purpose in exploring cultural theory in the context of intercultural communication. This is distinct from explanatory case study design, which seek to understand or to establish a cause-and-effect relationship. However tempting this prospect might be in the final analysis, cause and effect are beyond the scope of this present study.

Significance of This Study

This research is significant to several educational arenas with current pressing needs: (1) immigrant students and their families, (2) parent involvement in public schools, and (3) teacher support and professional development. Any research that takes on a sociocultural and sociopolitical lens for viewing issues will indeed be work that will present a multi-facetted perspective. At the heart of this research is the goal to support *both* classroom teachers and immigrant families. A brief synopsis of the significance to each area will be discussed.

> With more than 130 million migrants worldwide and a total foreign-born population of nearly 30 million people in the United States alone, immigration is rapidly transforming the postindustrial scene. In New York City schools, 48 percent of all students come from immigrant-headed households speaking more than one hundred different languages. In California, nearly 1.5 million children are classified as Limited English Proficient. This is not only an urban or southwestern phenomenon – schools across the country are encountering growing numbers of children from immigrant families. Even in places like Dodge City, Kansas, more than 30 percent of the children enrolled in public school are the children of immigrants. To quote Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz,* we are not in Kansas anymore (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, p. 3).

One of the most important social developments of our time is the current large-scale immigration occurring in the U.S. It is a transformation process affecting not only newcomer families and their children, but also the culture(s) of public schools. "Immigrant-origin children are entering the U.S. in unprecedented numbers, making them the fastest growing segment of the youth population" (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008, p.1). When I began this research, statistics revealed that the children of immigrants currently made up 20% of all youth in the U.S. population (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). With over a million immigrants entering the Untied States each year, the foreign born constitute the fastest-growing segment of our population. In 1996, this number reached 24.5 million, roughly 10% of the population. This is the highest proportion since World War II (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997). By 2011, this number had risen even higher by five percent. Children of immigrants represent about 25 percent of all American children and are projected to make up one-third of the more than 100 million U.S. children by 2050 (Tienda & Haskins, 2011).

A new large wave of immigration is once again transforming the United States. What is more striking than the scale of immigration is its demographic make-up. The Census 2000 School District Tabulation[5] indicated that 40% of school-aged children in our nation are non-white. The IES National Center for Educational Statistics (2005) projects a steady increase of non-White youth with a gradual decline of White young people between 2000 and 2020. This data projected that by the year 2010, 1 of every 10 children will be foreign born; by 2025, the non-White student population will rise to 50% of the total (Franklin, 2001). Immigration has continued to expand, in terms of numbers and diversity. This large-scale current immigration is from Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean (Oh & Cooc, 2011).

During the 1990's, research data concluded that almost one-half of all public school children would come from culturally diverse backgrounds by the beginning of the twenty-first century (Irvine, 1997; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This has proven accurate. Many are students with Latino and/or African American heritage, as well as immigrants from places like India and Southeast Asia. Although many new immigrants do not self-identify as *"people of color"* because of the racial biases in this country, they are labeled as such by the government. The U.S. Census Bureau (2000) estimated that people of color made up 28% of the nation's population in 2000 and predicted that they would make up 38% of the nation's population in 2025 and 47% in 2050. More importantly, 40% of the students enrolled in the nation's schools in 2001 were students of color, and 16% of school-age youth lived in homes in which English was not the first language

[5] The Census 2000 School District Tabulation (STP2) is prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau's Population Division and sponsored by the National Center for Educational Statistics.

(Irvine, 2003). In fact, children of immigrants account for nearly the entire growth in the U.S. child population in the last two decades (Cervantes & Hernandez, 2011; Fortuny, Hernandez, & Chaundry, 2010).

The demographics of U.S. immigrants have radically changed in the past four decades. In response to the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, which eliminated national origin quotas, Asian and Latin Americans have replaced Europeans as the main newcomer groups. Of course, these groups are not homogeneous, but rather contain multiple subgroups with diverse languages, cultures, and experiences. For example, current Asian immigrants include people from more than 13 countries in South, Southeast, and East Asia, as well as the Pacific Islands (González & Darling-Hammond, 1997). They vary in their social, educational, and economic backgrounds, as well as personal and familial experiences. Although immigration affects all aspects of U.S. life, its impact on our schools is high because of the high proportion of children in immigrant populations. The 1990 U.S. Census counted 2.1 million foreign-born children in the U.S. If one adds the children born to immigrant parents in the U.S. to this base number, then the total is 5 million. "By 2010, if current trends continue, 9 million school-age children will be immigrants or children of immigrants, representing 22% of the school-age population" (Fix & Passel, 1994) in (González & Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. x). Immigration is central to the history and culture of the United states.

> Immigration is a story as old as the Pilgrims and Ellis Island and as new as the Vietnamese families that arrived last week on an airplane. What is really new in 2001 is the changing color of our nation. This century, whites will no longer be a majority. Kenneth Prewitt, director of the Census Bureau in 2000, said that the 2000 census documented a dramatic change and showed that 'America is on the way to becoming a microcosm of the entire world' (Pipher, 2002, p.55).

In contrast, the teachers of these diverse students are not likely to share their cultural attributes or their racial or ethnic identities. In 1993, Whites represented 90% of public schoolteachers in the U.S., a figure that will remain this high or possibly grow higher in the next few decades (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997). While more than one in seven students speaks a language other than English at home, the typical teacher is English monolingual (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1999). "Currently, teachers of color represent only 9% of the 3 million K-12 public school teachers. Forty-four percent of the nation's schools have no teachers of color on staff, and many students will complete their K-12 schooling without being taught by a single teacher of color" (Irvine, 2003, p. 52). Although the vast majority of teachers are currently White and monolingual English speakers, we cannot jump to conclude that people of color are not also monolingual. Race, ethnicity, and linguistic diversity cannot be equated as the same. The focus is on the contrast between teachers' life experiences and those of their diverse students.

> The demographic profiles of the K-12 teaching force and student body contrast dramatically in terms of race, social class, and language background. The racial/ethnic disparity is clearly evident in data for the 1995-96 school year, the most current data available on the racial/ethnic distribution of the teaching force (N.C.E.S., 1997). While students of color comprised over 35% of total elementary and secondary public school enrollments for that year, people of color constituted only about 9% of the teaching force (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p.16).

Therefore, this research into intercultural communication — awareness, knowledge, and skills — is critically needed to respond to the needs of the diversity of

cultures enrolled in public schools and the predominately monolingual culture of classroom teachers. In examining a large number of successful programs, it is clear that a common characteristic has been a shift in attitudes away from the old stereotypes of parents and families. There has been movement away from the constraints of the deficit model toward approaches that build on families' strengths and potential. Still, the tendency of educators to locate student failure as a problem within the student or family has been well documented (Banks & Banks, 2004; Delpit & Dowdy, 2008; Fayden, 2005; García & Guerra, 2004; Howard, 2010; Moles, 1993; Simon & Epstein, 2001; Valencia, 1997). It has dominated educational reform for the past thirty years:

> As a result, reform efforts are undermined by educators' deficit views and by their beliefs about children who become the targets of reform. They believe that the children and the families are at fault because, from their perspectives, 'these children' enter school without the necessary prerequisite knowledge and skills and that so-called uncaring parents neither value nor support their child's education. Because these educators do not view themselves as part of the problem, there is little willingness to look for solutions within the educational system itself (García & Guerra, 2004, p.151).

Deficit thinking permeates society; schools and teachers simply mirror these beliefs. Research confirms that successful programs avoid centering on teachers as the problem; rather they look critically at systemic factors that perpetuate deficit thinking and reproduce educational inequities (Fayden, 2005; García & Guerra, 2004; Pogrow, 2006; Rioux & Berla, 1993; Spring, 2008). Although this research worked with teachers, it holds the view that communication is a bi-directional process involving reciprocity. Reciprocity implies a mutual exchange, a give-and-take style of relating.

> Too often in discussions of schools we talk in the language of accountability, management, and training rather than in the

> 'language of relationships' (Payne, 1991). The idea that a school's success is at least partially dependent upon the existence of strong relationships among members of a school's community is not new. However, too little research has investigated just how these relationships take shape (Lewis & Forman, 2002, p. 60).

When respect and reciprocal communication are part of the school culture or climate, opportunities open up between families and teachers to form meaningful relationships. Although culture and class differences[6] impact communication styles, they do not predetermine what strength of relationship can be built (Duncan-Andrane, 2009; Gorski, 2012; Lewis & Forman, 2002; Peña, 2000). Scant attention has been paid to the importance of talk between families and teachers and of creating school environments that sustain communications between these two groups. This research addresses this gap in the educational knowledge base.

> We rarely recognize the extent in which our conscious estimates of what is worthwhile and what is not, are due to standards of which we are not conscious at all. But in general it may be said that the things which we take for granted without inquiry or reflection are just the things which determine our conscious thinking and decide our conclusions. And these habitudes which lie below the level of reflection are just those which have been formed in the constant give and take of relationships with others (Dewey, 1916, p. 22).

As we look for ways to develop viable and meaningful communication between schools and families, genuine dialogue [7] is essential: " Part of what is learned in dialogue

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[6] Although differences are not all determining, they do impact how parents and teachers understand each other and each other's roles and responsibilities. Differences in culture and class influence teachers' and parents' level of openness with one another, styles of engagement, and mutual expectations (Lewis & Forman, 2002).

[7] Note: Noddings' use of the term *dialogue* is similar to that of Paulo Freire (1970).

is interpersonal reasoning – the capacity to communicate, share decision making, arrive at compromises, and support each other in solving everyday problems" (Noddings, 1992, p. 53). As schools and parents develop skills for honest and reciprocal communication, these other capacities will develop, as well. These are sorely needed in our educational communities at present:

> Dialogue is open-ended; that is, in a genuine dialogue, neither party knows at the outset what the outcome or decision will be. As parents and teachers, we cannot enter into dialogue with children when we know that our decision is already made. It is maddening to young people (or any people) to engage in 'dialogue' with a sweetly reasonable adult who cannot be persuaded and who, in the end, will say. 'Here's how it's going to be. I tried to reason with you….' We do have to talk this way at times, but we should not pretend it is dialogue. Dialogue is a common search for understanding, empathy, or appreciation. It can be playful or serious, logical or imaginative, goal or process oriented, but it is always a genuine quest for something undetermined at the beginning (Noddings, 1992, p.23).

Much educational research simplifies what is complex, standardizes what is diverse. This method of reduction often is used when the complexity of the issues overwhelms the viewers. It is easier to focus on separate parts, instead of the whole (Chambers, 1999). This process of reductionism is not working for family involvement in schools. If communication between families and schools was a simple prospect, then the answers would already be with us. "In diverse, dynamic and uncontrollable conditions with continuous variance and multiple linkages, reductionist methods can be both costly and misleading" (Chambers, 1999, p. 42). We need to consider the complexity and messiness of the situation in schools. This case study workes towards that end.

> The responsibility of education excludes none; on the contrary it includes everyone. Knitting a sweater is a good metaphor to illustrate this notion. We can imagine the bulk of yarn in the hands of both parents and professionals who knit the sweater. The design of the ultimate result depends on the choices the two parties collectively make, which reflects the needs of those who will make use of it; namely, the students. The material not only reflects the needs of its users but also the values and climatic conditions of the total environment – the society. The yarn in this analogy represents the complex and interconnected relationships among the actors. If for any reason the yarn is cut in any part of the sweater, the whole process is unraveled, leading to total disintegration. Home, school, and community are interdependent in creating an enabling environment for education and in shaping or reshaping society. Parental involvement acts as the wool upon which depends the very existence of the fabric (Khan, 1996, p. 67).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE RELEVANT TO THE EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS WORKING ACROSS CULTURES EVERY DAY

The components of my research that are presented in this review of literature pertain to the orienting concepts for understanding the broader issues in a sociocultural, or cultural-historical perspective. This review focuses on the critical areas — barriers to parental involvement in schools, immigrant families, and school/classroom culture and communication, with the necessary specifics — the barriers that most pertain to understanding immigrant families' involvement in schools, the issues, situations and needs for new immigrant families, and the intersections between teachers' classroom cultures and immigrant children's cultures and communication, with an intentional look at the individualist/collectivist continuum. The review proceeds through for these three main areas, and concludes with how the current research will build on this prior research.

Understanding the Barriers to Family Involvement

To understand barriers in a system, first we need to understand how it is defined and then to put the topic into a broader context. During the 1990s, researchers had collected enough data in the field of parent involvement [PI] for common characteristics and themes to emerge and be acknowledged by the broader educational community. In 1994, Henderson and Berla produced a report, *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement,* that reviewed research reports, articles, and books covering parent involvement from 1969 until 1993: "To those who ask whether involving parents will really make a difference, we can safely say the case is closed" (p. *x*).

The theorists in early childhood education now used either an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Chavkin, 1993; Comer & Hayes, 1991; Epstein, 1994, 2001; Swap, 1993) or a cultural-ecological perspective (Delpit, 1991, 1995; Irvine, 1997, 2003; Ogbu, 1981, 1994). From this work where both institutions involved in engagement—family and school—were seen simultaneously, new insights were found. Prior to this time, families and schools were researched as separate entities. There were themes that pertained to all children—not just the "disadvantaged" children, which is what the majority of immigrant families are considered. Researchers began to untangle the barriers and obstacles to family involvement. Three models—family impact, school impact, and community impact—were tools for understanding the complex layers involved. This section of the literature review focuses on definitions and context to barriers to families being involved with their young children's education (Berger, 1991, 1995; Casanova, 1996; Chavkin, 1993; Comer & Hayes, 1991; Dwyer & Hecht, 1992; Epstein, 1985, 1988, 1995, 2001; Feuerstein, 2000; Floyd, 1998; Hoffman, 1991; Lareau, 2000, 2003; Moles, 1987, 1993; Peña, 2000; Powell, 1991; Sheldon, 2002; Swap, 1987, 1993). I will discuss research that pertains to the apparent (1) lack of parent involvement from immigrant families; theories regarding (2) parental involvement from a social capital perspective; as well as (3) the more nuanced individualized obstacles — language, culture, and communication.

Characteristics of Involvement and Participation: Empowerment and Deficit Models

There is a long legacy of deficit thinking in our educational system and public schools. From the 1960s until the 1990s, a deficit model of thinking pervaded the field of education regarding attitudes towards parents and families. Educational professionals

had often approached schools and the learning issues of children with a stance that the child and family had problems that needed to be fixed (Bierman, 1996; Chavkin, 1989, 1993; Cochran & Dean, 1991; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; García & Guerra, 2004; Lightfoot, 1978; Moles, 1993; Rioux & Berla, 1993; Swap, 1990). By the 1990s, educators in leadership positions in research and program development began to reject a deficit model, to raise different questions, and to take alternative approaches to PI. Researching successful programs, they found approaches that built on families' strengths and potentials. Researchers named two characteristics for removing barriers to PI: (1) the rejection of a deficit model and (2) the emergence of an empowerment process (Banks & Banks, 1995, 2004; Cochran & Dean, 1991; Delpit, 1995; Fayden, 2005; García & Guerra, 2004; Moles 1993, Simon & Epstein, 2001; Valencia, 1997).

Twenty-five years later, deficit thinking is still with us in our schools. In his current discussion on race, class, and cultural domains in public schools, Howard (2010) describes how individuals who subscribe to deficit thinking contend that low-income students and students of color are not "fit for academic success and social uplift" (p.29). The concern here is that this thinking continues to follow older research: there is lag time between theory and practice. Valencia (1997) describes deficit-based thinking as a "person-centered explanation of school failure among individuals as linked to group membership…. The deficit thinking framework holds that poor school performance is rooted in students' alleged cognitive and motivational deficits" (p.9). Therefore, as I interview teachers, it will be important to pay attention to uncovering their involvement in deficit-based thinking. Do they see culture, race, and class issues as imbedded in the children and their families? What is their awareness about these systemic issues?

Empowerment is a much over-used word in today's world: media has diluted its strength. The term now covers a vast landscape of meanings, interpretations, and definitions, ranging from psychology and philosophy to motivational sciences. In education, the teacher/philosopher Paulo Freire (1970) introduced the idea as a social methodology: empowerment is the process of obtaining basic opportunities for marginalized people. It is encouraging; it is developing skills. Sociological empowerment often addresses members of groups that societies' discrimination processes have excluded from decision-making based on race, disability, ethnicity, religion, or gender. Through empowerment—this structured cultural process—people gain the ability and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives, and the lives of others.

A Freirian approach to parent empowerment would include a pedagogy of thought, action, and reflection combined together to work toward proactive social change and empowerment of stigmatized or marginalized groups (López, 2008). In her work with recent immigrant families, DaSilva-Iddings (2009) utilized central parts of this Freirian approach for empowerment: the concept of dialogical relations and problem-posing education: "In the dialogical, problem solving methods of education, the student must find his or her own generative themes, and the task of the dialogic teacher is to represent these themes as problems" (p. 306). Dialogue themes related to issues of immigration were prevalent in DaSilva-Iddings' work both in the classroom and the larger extended school buildings and community. For example, in her work with immigrant parents in the Welcoming Center, one dialogical theme used was, "How do

individuals begin to reestablish themselves and their families in a different language and culture that they may not yet fully understand?" (DaSilva-Iddings, 2009, p. 306).

Freire's ideas and methodology have been implemented in many parts of the world. They seem to have special relevance to teaching and learning of minority populations, such as our new immigrant students, because emphasis is placed on the empowerment of the individuals through the recognition and preserving of their cultural history. When immigrant children first enter our elementary schools, these factors—language, unfamiliar educational contexts, and cultural differences—come into play (Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull & Garcia, 2009). The research work I present assumes that it is both possible and desirable to build on the cultural strengths of children's homes. It is this sense of empowerment that I refer to in my work.

Theories of Collaboration and Partnerships: Capital and Overlapping Spheres of Influence

Theoretically, very few perspectives can help us to understand the interactive relationship between schools and minority parents (Kim, 2009). Capital is a major theoretical perspective in the research literature; and capitals – financial, human, social, and cultural – all have been part of a tumultuous discussion in economics, sociology, and cultural studies for the past three decades or longer. On a national level, through the field of sociology of education, capital is an important discourse in the field, in which I will not engage in great depth. I pursue it briefly, as it pertains to parent involvement in education. The two capitals most pertinent to the issues surrounding immigrant families in public schools are social capital and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Burt, 2001; Coleman, 1987, 1988, 1994; Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Fagnano, 1994; Feuerstein, 2000;

Garbarino, 1995; Hurlbert, Beggs, & Haines, 2001; Lareau, 1987, 1996, 2000, 2003; Lin, 2001, Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001; Majoribanks, 2002; Marx, 1933/1849; Putnam, 1993; Rioux & Berla, 1993; Schneider, 2000; Schneider & Coleman, 1993).

Since the 1990s, the concept of cultural capital has emerged to help explain the relationship between social position and educational success: "Perhaps the most widely recognized theory that helps to explain differences in the level of parent involvement is in Bourdieu's (1977) theory of cultural capital" (Feuerstein, 2000, p. 31). Possessing key cultural resources provides social advantages that facilitate one's inclusion in or exclusion from favored positions or situations. Cultural capital explains why social class has such an important influence on family-school relationships: families draw on cultural resources linked to social class. Research suggests that key elements of class culture become forms of cultural capital because they give parents resources to activate (Lareau, 2000).

> According to the theory, schools represent and reproduce middle- or upper-class values and forms of communication. Schools embody those values because teachers come from predominantly middle-or upper-class backgrounds. The teachers are able to communicate effectively with middle-or upper-class parents who share similar beliefs, but have difficulty relating to parents who come from a different cultural frame of reference or habitus. That bias toward middle-or upper-class values puts working-class students and parents at a distinct disadvantage because they must adapt to the dominant culture of the school to meet teacher expectations. That process promotes the involvement of middle- or upper-class parents and limits the involvement of those with lower SES" (Feuerstein, 2000, p.31).

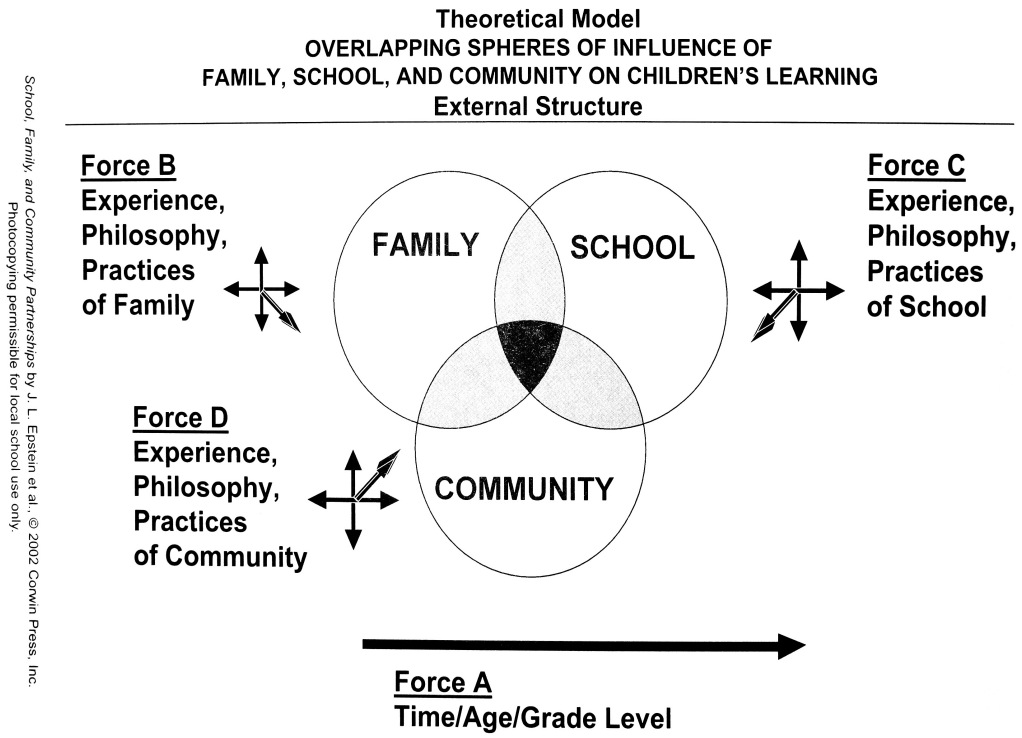
Bourdieu (1977) defines cultural capital as the knowledge, skills, education, experiences, and/or connections a person has had through the course of his or her life that enables or hinders success. His analysis is a useful place to start for understanding and

examining cultural capital, yet some (Yosso, 2005) have questioned its usefulness for communities of color or for working-class individuals. Their questions concern how his framework "assumes that people of color 'lack' the social and cultural capital required for social mobility" (p. 70). Yosso (2005) contends that if there is a particular type of capital that is required for social mobility, then "some communities are culturally wealthy, while others are culturally poor" (p. 76). If schools unwittingly support the involvement of the middle class and expect disadvantaged parents to gain similar social resources or capitals in order for their children to succeed in school (Kim, 2009), then what is the point of interventions? And yet, " In this context, the interventions meant to assist parents in gaining more social capital, such as skills in parenting, language, and communication patterns, have been successful for disadvantaged parents, resulting in more involvement in schools" (Kim, 2009, p. 92). Untangling the complexity of social reproduction theories is beyond the scope of this research; yet I am compelled to align my thinking with Kim and Yosso. They question whether a process of social change, not social reproduction, may be possible. Lareau and Horvat (1999) discuss how "the process of social reproduction is not a continual, deterministic one. Rather, it is shaped moment by moment by particular social fields" (p. 50). Perhaps schools are ready for a moment of social change.

For over three decades, sociologist Epstein (1985, 1988, 1990, 1994, 1995, 2001; Hidalgo, Siu, & Epstein, 2004) has researched parents, children, teachers, and their relationships in schools. The Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University, where Epstein works, has been at the forefront of research that appears thoughtful in approaching this complex issue. Their research has moved from

single models (parent involvement) to dyads and partners (home-school links) to collaborative partnerships (family-school-community). The current research represents the complexity of PI through a theoretical perspective of partnerships based on overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1995, 2001; Epstein, Coats, Salinas, Sanders & Simon, 1997; Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Hidalgo, Siu, & Epstein, 2004; Sanders & Epstein, 2000; Simon & Epstein, 2001). This work produced a theory, framework, and vocabulary that enable researchers and educators to communicate with, learn from, and assist each other. This theory of overlapping spheres of influence integrates and extends ecological, educational, psychological, and sociological perspectives on social organizations and relationships (Banks & Banks, 1995, 2004; Senge, 1994; Epstein, 2001; Harding, London & Safer, 2001; Simon & Epstein, 2001).

Figure 2.1 Overlapping Spheres of Influence



School, Family, and Community Partnerships by J. L. Epstein et al., © 2002 Corwin Press, Inc.
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Epstein, (2002). *School, family, and community partnerships,* p.163.

Current models of strengthening the educational environment for all children, most especially children living in poverty — where many new immigrant families find themselves living — shifts to a school-home-community partnership participation model. Many educational researchers understand that families and schools are embedded in their communities: businesses, health and human services, religious and cultural institutions can contribute vital support both to families and schools. Researchers clearly document the importance of extending home-school partnerships into collaborations that include the community as the third party (Coleman, 1987, 1994; Dimmock, O'Donaghue, & Robb, 1996; Fagnano, 1994; Hoffman, 1991; Lareau, 2000, 2003; Putnam, 1993, 2000; Rioux &

Berla, 1993; Ryan & Adams, 1995; Swap, 1990, 1993). The work done on partnerships at the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships is the most widely referenced model in the field. They present the complexity of parent involvement through a theoretic perspective on partnerships based on overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Hidalgo, Siu & Epstein, 2004; Kroeger & Lash, 2011; Sanders & Epstein, 2000; Simon & Epstein, 2001).

Epstein (2001) still describes the theory as a "skeletal structure" (p. 43) that needs to grow to a full body of knowledge. Partnerships refer to the overlapping influences and shared responsibilities of families, schools, and communities for the education and development of children. These three contexts are important influences in every child's life. Educational administrators are embracing this partnership model, and this is good news. What about classroom teachers? They are the ones on the front lines with families. What do they think?

Although Epstein's (1985, 1996) typology has gained prominence in the U.S. educational system and is seen as the one common model of home-school-community participation, there are those who critique it, citing that the tenets of communication, advocacy, volunteerism, homework, parenting, and collaboration are not neutral constructs (Kim, 2009; Kroeger & Lash, 2011). Some experts feel that the typology contains ideologies of dominant power relations reflecting the dominant society. I agree that nothing is neutral; yet I respect the work that Epstein has done and the results that she, and her teams, have pushed to uncover.

In a recent distinction, "Researchers have perceived parental involvement as having different domains, namely, parental involvement at home and parental

involvement at school…. Research on parental involvement has highlighted the visibility of the parents in the school as an important factor in children's academic achievement, and it viewed parental involvement in the school as more important that parental involvement at home " (Kim, 2009, p. 80). This is critical information to my research. Immigrant families are less physically present in the school building and classrooms. So even though both domains of PI—home and school—share the same goals and lead to similar positive results in children's developmental outcomes, minority parents are viewed as less involved in their children's schooling (Geenen, Powers & Lopez-Vasquez, 2001; Hughes, Gleason & Zhang, 2005). If teachers deem parental involvement at school, not at home, as the most valuable involvement, then how does this current model of home-school relationship practices support the growing demographic of diversity in the U.S.?

Individual Obstacles: Language, Culture, and Communication

Descriptions of barriers that have been investigated by researchers who have defined PI within a traditional, status quo perspective have been important. This section reviews research by these researchers as well as researchers who have looked deeper into organizational, cultural, and socio-economical structures in schools and families. Surveys, interviews, and observations by researchers with parents, children, teachers, and school administrators have collected an array of different information (Aronson, 1996; Epstein, 1985; Floyd, 1998; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Lareau, 1996; Moles, 1993, Peña, 2000). One cluster that emerged was language and culture and their impact on communication (Aronson, 1996; Chavkin, 1989; Cummins, 1996/1986, 2001; Davies, 1993; Delpit, 1991; Floyd, 1998; Khan, 1996; Leitch & Tangri, 1988, Moles, 1993; Nel,

1992; Peña, 2000). Differences in values and patterns in lived experiences between middle class teachers and minority families also present problems to be bridged.

There is abundant research on the nuances of these barriers—attitudes, perceptions, values, status, and biases – and their influence on parents' and teachers' efficacy (Constantino, 2003; Cummins, 2001; Dwyer & Hetch, 1992; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Harding, London & Safer, 2001; Khan, 1996; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1990, 2003; Lazar & Slostad, 1999; Nel, 1992; Payne, 1991; Rich, 1993; Zeichner, 1991). This section focuses on how these barriers reflect systemically in the overarching issue of communication between schools and families. Many have shown how the nature of poor communication is systemic in the organizational culture of the school (Dwyer & Hecht, 1992; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Khan, 1996; Kirschenbaum, 2001, Lawson, 2003; Lazar & Slostad, 1999; Peña, 2000, Swap, 1993). It is here I will begin.

Practical barriers to PI are often tangible real-world obstacles. Transportation, neighborhood safety, childcare issues, the times and locations of meetings are all issues contributing to low family attendance (Davies, 1993; DaSilva-Iddings, 2009; Epstein, 1985, 1994; Floyd, 1998; Kim, 2009; Moles 1993; Oh & Cooe, 2011). Researchers propose that families might be uncomfortable in schools because of their own negative school memories, or that they are intimidated by teachers' and administrators' educational jargon because of their own limited educational background (Davies, 1987, 1993; Dwyer & Hecht, 1992; Epstein, 1985, 1994; Kim, 2009; Moles, 1993; Peña, 2000). Researchers explain how low family involvement is due to poverty and relates to money, health, and time demands on families. Parents are so overwhelmed by meeting the demands of daily tasks for obtaining food, clothing, and shelter for their families, they

have no energy to put into their children's education (Dwyer & Hecht, 1992; Peña, 2000; Rich, 1993; Swap, 1987).

> How often have you overheard another teacher say something such as: 'If only we could get parents to care about their children's education'? Often, the parents being referred to are minority parents. The myth of indifferent minority parents gains acceptance by many when minority parents do not participate in traditional parent-school activities. Even though both research and programmatic evidence dispute this stereotype of the unconcerned minority parents, it becomes easy for educators to give up on trying to involve minority parents in their children's education when educators misunderstand minority parents' attitudes (Chavkin, 1989, p. 119).

Orienting concepts for understanding cultural processes stem from the sociocultural (or cultural-historic) perspective (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2004). This approach became prominent in the past decade in the study of how cultural practices relate to the development of ways of thinking, remembering, reasoning, and solving problems (Rogoff & Chavajay, 1995). Vygotsky (1978), a leader in this approach from the early twentieth century, points out that children in all communities are cultural participants, living in a particular community at a specific time in history (Moll, 1990). Further, Rogoff (2003) writes,

> A coherent understanding of the cultural historical nature of human development is emerging from an interdisciplinary approach involving psychology, anthropology, history, sociolinguistics, education, sociology, and other fields. It builds on a variety of traditions of research, including participant observation of everyday life from an anthropological perspective, psychological research in a naturalistic or constrained 'laboratory' situations, historical accounts, and fine-grained analyses of videotaped events. Together, the research and scholarly traditions across fields are speaking a new conception of human development as a cultural process (p. 10).

Meaningful outreach to and inclusion of families in our public schools is not strong (Coleman, 1994; de Carvalho, 2001; Epstein, 1985, 1995, 1996; Lareau, 2000; Lightfoot, 1978). Researchers find that many types of parents report minimal opportunities for involvement and indifferent attitudes on the part of the school personnel as factors influencing involvement (Aronson, 1996; Floyd, 1998; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1987; Moles, 1993; Peña, 2000; Rich, 1993).

School norms do not support collaboration: "Adult collaboration in any form is relatively rare in schools. Collaboration is not the dominant model for the management of schools or the practice of teaching. The traditional approach to managing schools emphasizes hierarchy, individualism, and technology rather than dialogue, relationship, and reciprocity (see Noddings, 1984)" (Swap, 1993, p.17). Schools rarely support team-teaching or team-problem solving among teachers, let alone among parents and teachers. As organizations, schools in general lack information about how to establish collaborative partnerships with families (Khan, 1996; Peña, 2000; Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull & Garcia, 2009; Swap, 1993). Schools also provide limited resources to support parent involvement programs or outreach to families (Chavkin, 1993; Decker & Decker, 2003; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Swap, 1993). Therefore, parental engagement with their children's school—a positive predictor of academic achievement, higher self-esteem, and even higher rates of high school completion and college enrollment (Hill & Taylor, 2004)—still is often a challenge for immigrant families (Hill & Torres, 2010). Authentic engagement with Puerto Rican families, who are U.S. citizens (Morales-Carrion, 1990) and therefore not technically immigrants, is also often a

challenge. Again, the issues of language, culture, and poverty can complicate this home-school-community dynamic.

In some cases, language is the significant barrier that prevents contact between immigrant families and schools (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Terahishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011): "Correspondence between families and schools by way of interpreters often challenges communication, and students themselves are often called on to play this role" (p. 458). Aside from language barriers, parents who are undocumented may feel fear and/or intimidation in their dealings with the school. This issue of being unauthorized—living in the states and sending their children to our schools—may become a huge shadow that falls over all family-school involvement situations.

To engage with the larger national discussion about ambiguously documented immigrants is beyond the scope of this report; therefore, I will remain focused on immigrants in general, regardless of status. There is much misinformation in circulation concerning many aspects of U.S. citizenship. For example, children born in the unincorporated territory of Puerto Rico have been declared native-born citizens of the United States since 1941 (Morales-Carrion, 1984), yet there has been confusion about the status of residence of Puerto Rico born between 1898-1917, as well as 1917-1941, because of different laws that have been in place. The legal status and options of Puerto Ricans was clarified in June 2011, through findings by the United Nations Special Commission of Decolonization (Puerto Rico Status Referendum, 2012). Even though public schools on the mainland may have treated families from Puerto Rico as if they were immigrants, in fact this has been erroneous. They have not been citizens of Spain since 1898.

Debate about the numbers of unauthorized adults and children is not easy to determine. Unauthorized immigrants are defined as those who live within the country without legal authority to do so. This could refer to non-U.S. citizens, visa over-stayers, or those who do not hold current permanent resident visas or work permits (Passel & Cohn, 2010). Passel & Taylor (2010) place the current estimate of the unauthorized population has declined to 11.2 million, with the overall number of unauthorized adult immigrants comprise approximately 4 percent of the total U.S. population (Suárez-Orozco et al, 2011). Estimating the numbers of school-aged children is complicated; yet among the estimated 5.5 million children growing up with unauthorized parents, approximately 1 million are themselves unauthorized. The rest, 4.5 million, are U.S. citizens, having been born here in the states or in its territories (Passel & Cohn, 2010). Patterns are continually in flux, yet what is important to this study is that having a mixed-status home (where at least one member of the family is not authorized) would impact the families' desire and/or ability to be involved with a state-run public school. Whether a well founded fear or not, undocumented immigrants might be hesitant to engage officially in schools or the surrounding community (Suárez-Orozco et al, 2011). Thus, communication is a barrier, as is the culture of the immigration debate in our nation.

Immigrant Families

For orientation, I will briefly recap demographic information concerning children and youth in immigrant families that I described in my introduction. Immigrant children and youth are the fastest growing component of the child and youth population in the United States. Much of this growth was right at the turn of the 21st century, when, between 1990 to 1997, the number of children in immigrant families grew by 47 percent,

compared to only 7 percent for those with native-born parents. By 2000, one of every five children and youth (20.1%, or 14.6 million) was the child of an immigrant (Hernandez, 2004). Further Hernandez (2004) explains, "Most expansion in the child and youth population during the next three decades will occur through immigration and through births to current immigrants and their descendants" (p. 404). Hernandez (2004) is quick to point out that current immigrant families warrant special attention because the children and youth of today are the parents, workers, and citizens of tomorrow. The immigrant children and youth growing up in 2014 will play an increasingly important role in the U.S.

We need to pay attention to immigrant families in our schools. Hernandez (2004) stresses that, "because life chances differ greatly by race and ethnicity in the United States, and because the representation of Hispanics and non-Whites among immigrants has increased markedly during recent decades" (Hernandez, 2004, p.405), we must pay attention to the non-White newcomers. The increasing diversity associated with a shift from primarily European origins to widely global origins are well documented, yet when schools study immigration, it is still often the Ellis Island experiences of 1880-1910 that ground the curriculum. The first massive government study on immigration by the U.S. Immigration Commission (popularly called the Dillingham Commission) was done in 1911. It drew sharp distinctions between the northern and western European immigrants (Germany, Scandinavia, Ireland, or the United Kingdom) and the new southern and eastern European immigrants (Russian, Hungary, Poland, Italy, or Austria (Hernandez & Darke, 1999): "Perceived differences in culture and race separating southern and eastern European immigrants from the native-

born population were viewed as enormous at the turn of the century…. Anthropologists, scientists, and policy makers shared the public sentiment that the new immigrants were likely to dilute the racial and cultural purity of Americans with a mainly northwestern European heritage (Ross, 1914; Stoddard, 1920/1971)" (Hernandez, 2004, p. 405). This documentation from nearly a hundred years ago dealing with attitudes towards immigrant families and their children is intriguing. However, it is not surprising that it belies systemic racial, ethnic, and cultural biases it. It provides a link between the past and the present.

> The United States of America—like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—is one of a handful of advanced democracies in the world that can claim immigration as both history and destiny. The quasi-sacred narrative of our nation's birth and growth—our own creation myth—has migration at its core and at every turn in the tale: the original settlement by Native Americans beginning some twenty thousand years ago; the arrival of the English, Spanish, and Dutch settlers five centuries ago; the involuntary migration of millions of Africans; the great transatlantic exodus between the end of the Napoleonic wars and the First World War. The current wave of new immigration from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia is but the latest chapter in our epic (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008, p. 377).

Myth of Minority Parents' Lack of Involvement

Parent apathy is a recurrent theme in schools to explain low parental involvement. From working with teachers and school administrators, researchers have found that many believe parents do not have the time, interest, or competence to be involved with their children's schools. Many educators feel that often families simply do not care about the schools or the value of education. These teacher beliefs appear to be strong, when families' SES or culture is different from those of the educators (Aronson, 1996; Chavkin, 1989; Davies, 1987, 1993; Dwyer & Hecht, 1992; Epstein, 1985; Peña, 2000;

Rich, 1993; Swap, 1987). A term emerged in schools to describe this dynamic — the *hard-to-reach-parents*. Educators agreed that most often the many parents labeled as *hard-to-reach* were poor, single parents, and/or from marginal groups (Aronson, 1996; Davies, 1987, 1993; Epstein 1985; Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Valencia, 1997). Again, this reflects deficit thinking by the teachers. Of the several theories that have been put forward to explain school failure among linguistically and ethnically diverse student populations, the deficit model has held on the longest — spanning well over a century. "The deficit thinking model, at its core, is an endogenous theory — posting that the student who fails in school does so because of internal deficits or deficiencies" (Valencia, 1997, p. 3). The model's perspective is that the deficiency lies within the student, their family and their culture of origin.

Researchers working with minority families have countered this viewpoint concerning minority parents' lack of involvement. When minority parents do not participate in traditional parent-school activities, teachers interpret the behavior as indifference. Many teachers do not understand the cultural differences between immigrant families and school staff (Chavkin, 1989; Comer & Hayes, 1991; Cummins, 1996/1986; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Delpit, 1991; Moles, 1993; Peña, 2000). Other researchers challenged this assumption by finding teachers who do successfully involve parents of the most disadvantaged children, in important ways (Comer, 1980, 1986; Dauber & Epstein, 1993, Epstein, 1990; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Leitch & Tangri, 1988; Scott-Jones, 1987). Immigrant parents may be unfamiliar with education in the U.S., specifically how it is carried out and what is expected of them and their children (Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull, & Garcia, 2009). Documented since the 1990 census,

children and youth in immigrant families have experienced a somewhat greater risk of living in poverty than those in native-born families (Hernandez & Darke, 1999). Teachers' beliefs about poverty and meritocracy need to be considered as we look at immigrant parents' involvement in schools. The perceptions and interpretations that teachers hold of immigrants guide their practices with them. Olneck (2004) has shown that expectations of poor performance and resistance to assimilation result in neglect and indifference to poor academic performance, while high expectations result in encouragement and individualized attention. Interpretation of immigrants' reticence as a lack of interest creates limitations all around.

Children of Immigration in School

Immigrant children arrive in U.S. elementary schools from a wide variety of backgrounds, which defy easy generalizations. The varied socio-economic and educational backgrounds of immigrant families affect children's opportunities and experiences in different ways. Given the fact that immigrant youth are the fastest growing sector in our student population, a basic weakness in the majority of schools is that they do not fully recognize the experiences and needs of immigrant children. Concurrently, the models of school reform efforts have as a common denominator the experiences of middle-class mainstream children (Dalton, 1998; Huerta, 1998; Nieto, 1996; Simon & Epstein, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 1998).

Because most immigrant children arrive at the classroom with very limited English skills, cognitive competencies may be masked. Perhaps the most challenging task for teachers working with immigrant children is facilitating the child's ability to

build on the cognitive skills that they bring to this new setting. Culture plays into learning (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Valdéz, 1998). In exploring the issue of culture in the classroom, researchers suggest three significant matters to which schools should attend: (1) culturally and linguistically meaningful materials; (2) the discontinuities that children experience as they move from classrooms in their countries of origin; and (3) classrooms in the U.S. are dominated by an ethos of egalitarianism, individualism, and democracy (Nieto, 1996; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Valdéz, 1998). The immigrant child may initially experience the new social setting and structure as disorienting. Thus, cultural miscommunication easily ensues.

School and Parent Relations

Immigrant parents arrive with very different cultural models and expectations for schooling than those found among mainstream parents who went to school in the states. In general, newly arrived immigrants tend to be positive about the educational opportunities for their children: they recognize and support the crucial role of school in their children's future (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). There are important cultural differences between different immigrant groups, yet there is a common denominator in the general attitudes and expectations among a broad range of immigrant parents. Many immigrant parents believe (1) it is not their business to micromanage the schooling of their children – teachers are responsible for what goes on in school; (2) these beliefs are compounded by the fact that as social outsiders, immigrants feel less secure in questioning the judgment of schools; and (3) social factors (literacy levels of parents, hours schools are open, undocumented parents etc.) constrain immigrant families' involvement (Suárez-Orozco

& Suárez-Orozco, 2001: Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). One aspect of schools about which many immigrants hold deep reservations is the lack of discipline and respect they see in their children's schools. American children are viewed as disrespectful of elders and authority figures by many newcomers. This is a cultural difference (C. Suárez-Orozco, personal communication, September 18, 2006). In part, this cultural difference falls into the I/C cultural dimension, pertaining to the relationship between the role of individual in the group.

The National Household Education Survey (NHES) has been used to assess important aspects of family and school support for educational success among children ages three to eight in immigrant families for Hispanics, Asians, and Whites and for the foreign-born and native-born (Nord & Griffin, 1999). This major study articulates three important ways that families can support the educational experiences of their children: (1) by engaging in various activities, including teaching them letters and numbers, reading to them, and working on projects together; (2) by taking them on a variety of educational outings; and (3) by being involved in their children's schools (Hernandez, 2004). Because parental involvement in the school is a result of the interactions between individual families and school staff, researchers should pay attention not only to the barriers for minority parents, but also the school barriers (Kim, 2009): "Minority parents are viewed as less involved in their children's school…. The truth is that minority parents are no different from their counter-parts regarding their interest in their children's education and their participation at home" (p. 80).

When minority parents are less visible in their children's school lives, there must be reasons for this lack of participation. Again, for orientation, I will review parental

variables from the introduction: language barriers; low self-esteem; low socio-economic status; differences in child-rearing practices; physically demanding jobs; lack of social networks; child-care and transportation needs; and uncomfortable feelings toward schools based on negative previous school experiences (Kim, 2009). But according to Kim (2009), "there is undeniable evidence that the lack of school capacities and resources is related to the lack of minority parents' participation in school" (p. 81). Again, it is perhaps more important to focus on school barriers in the discussion of school-parent relations. Schools have more capacity to initiate greater outreach and/or collaboration than do immigrant parents, in terms of money allocation and the ability to establish ways to educate and train staff. This current research attempts to look at this issue and bridge the gap to some degree.

Culture and Communication

Although culture and class differences impact communication styles, they do not predetermine what strength of relationship can be built. They do impact how parents and teachers understand each other and each others' roles and responsibilities or mutual expectations (Floyd, 1998; Lewis & Forman, 2002; Peña, 2000; Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull & Greenfield, 1999). Only recently have researchers begun to document the importance of mutual respect and social trust (Miretzky, 2004). If educators are serious about improving family involvement, then they must change their approaches, especially with minority families. Educators and families both suffer from limited skills and knowledge of effective communication and interactions. If schools begin with the assumption that families care for their children and are doing the best that they can, and

that same assumption is applied to teachers, communication might become more positive and effective.

As we look for ways to develop viable and meaningful communication between schools and families, genuine dialogue is essential (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Fine, 1993; Freire, 1970; Lawson, 2003; Merz & Furman, 1997; Miretzky, 2004; Noddings, 1992). Part of what is learned in dialogue is interpersonal reasoning – the capacity to communicate, share decision making, arrive at compromises, and support each other in solving everyday problems (Noddings, 1992). Part of what is needed, to have genuine dialogue with immigrant families, is intercultural communication, reasoning and skills (Brislin, 2000; Cushner & Brislin, 1997; Greenfield, 1994; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Irvine, 2003; Kischenbaum, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 2006; Rogoff, 2003; Saraswathi, 2003).

It is true that schools will need to do the outreach in building stronger relationships with families, yet there will be greater success if they approach this task with some understanding of the ways culture shapes a person's view of children and schooling (Greenfield, 1994; Rogoff, 2003; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield & Quiroz, 2001). There is a need for cultural knowledge. Comer and Hayes (1991) had a vision of improved relationships between the important adults in a child's life, which rested on mutual respect, understanding, and revised ideas about the range of what was considered normal. What is also needed is an understanding of how cultural practices relate to the development of ways of thinking, remembering, reasoning, and solving problems (Rogoff, 2002; Rogoff & Chavajay, 1995). To understand the variations and similarities of cultural processes of human development across internationalized

communities, such as our current public elementary schools (Pipher, 2002; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001), we need to understand how teachers think about culture and cultural process. Researchers question the prospect of improving immigrant family involvement in our schools when (1) teachers lack exposure to models for understanding how culture and schooling relate to each other and (2) teachers lack access to research based on these cultural models (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield & Quiroz, 2001). This study contributes to this knowledge base by conducting a case study to find out how teachers think about culture. In part, this study investigates the I/C dimension of cultural theory.

The Individualism/Collectivism Continuum

Many professionals, in this case teachers, administrators, and educational researchers, seem to continually simplify what is complex and to standardize what is diverse: family involvement is a complex issue, and the children in our elementary schools come from widely diverse backgrounds. To simplify and to standardize is a method of reduction often used to focus on parts instead of the whole (Chambers, 1999; Vincent, 1996). Sometimes reduction is done regarding educational issues to simply understand the dilemma; other times, educators may reduce intentionally, with a political, social or economical agenda in mind. At this point, we need to consider how this process of reductionism is damaging to family involvement in schools. Chambers (1999) states, "In diverse, dynamic and uncontrollable conditions with continuous variance and multiple linkages, reductionist methods can be both costly and misleading" (p. 42). We

need to consider the complexity of this situation in our schools and keep working together to understand any difficult conditions more fully.

In the first part of the last century, social anthropology developed the idea that all societies face the same basic problems, but different groups come up with different answers or solutions. This led researchers to identify just what problems were common to all. In 1954, an inter-disciplinary team (Inkeles & Levinson, 1969) published a broad survey of research literature on national culture. Within twenty years, a Dutch anthropologist Hofstede (1980) began empirical work on international data to understand national culture. The basic innovation of his work was classifying national cultures along a number of dimensions: or aspects of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures. In the study of culture, this represented a new paradigm, a radically new approach (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Several other researchers have studied national culture using the same paradigm, each suggesting their own classifications (Schwartz, 1994; Trompenaars, 1993; Trompenaars & Hempden-Turner, 2012). In the separate and distinct work of these theorists, the dimension of individualism/collectivism appears consistently. This cultural dimension deals with a basic issue of human social life: the context of the person in a group.

The vast majority of people in our world live in collectivist societies, in which the interest of the group prevails over the individual. The first group we join is the family into which we are born; yet family structures also differ among societies. In most collectivist societies, the family consists of a number of people living closely together as an extended family. As children grow up, they learn to think of themselves as part of the group in an interdependent relationship that is not voluntary, but given. A minority of

people around the world live in individualist societies, in which the interests of the individual prevail over the interest of the group. In these, most children are born into nuclear families consisting of one or two parents and sometimes siblings. Children from these families, as they grow up, soon learn to think of themselves as distinct from other people. Independence is the goal; the healthy adult in this type of society is not supposed to be dependent on a group (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

The relationship between the group and the individual has been established in a child's consciousness during his or her early years in the family. It is further developed and reinforced at school. This can be clearly seen in the classroom through the language and behavior of the children (Irvine, 2003; Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Rognoff, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield & Quiroz, 2001). The purpose of education is perceived differently between the individualist and the collectivist; as discussed earlier, the nature of child development is perceived differently in each type of society. In our U.S. schools, we aim to prepare the individual for a place in a society of other individuals. In the collectivist society, schools stress adaptation to the skills and virtues needed to be an accepted group member (Hofstede & Hofstede, 1997, 2005).

The deep roots of culture make it likely that I/C continuum differences will be around for a long time. Differences in values associated with this cultural dimension will continue to exist and play a big role in intercultural communication. As a dimension of national culture, I/C is responsible for many misunderstandings in intercultural encounters. This proposed study sees our public schools as sites of intercultural encounters between teachers and families, with the focus on the mainstream-teacher and

the minority-immigrant children. I want to understand how teachers think about culture, and about this cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism. A basic skill for surviving in our multicultural world is understanding, first, one's own cultural values, and next, the cultural values of others. The differences in how we think, feel, and act are deeply within us. Engaging with these differences to understand each other is critical work for each of us, as educators, as human beings, as global citizens: "An increased consciousness of the constraints of our mental programs verses those of others is essential for our common survival" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 365).

Building on Previous Research

My original review of literature for my comprehensive examination, *Culture-In-Action: (Re) Working Patterns in Intercultural Communication Between Teachers and Immigrant Families,* was completed in 2004. Following a discussion with my committee at that time, I pursued a second literature review: *Parent Involvement in Context: A Review of Literature.* This second review was completed in 2006. My topic was broad and complex, and it had two foci: (1) immigrant children and their families and (2) classroom teachers. With a concentration on communication, I was looking at both sides of the dialogue. My proposal, *Teachers Talk: Intercultural Communication Between Teachers and Immigrant Families,* turned my research focus to interviewing teachers. Within this context, there have been several research themes that have been most salient to me: culturally relevant pedagogy, poverty, intercultural communication, and the cultural I/C domain/dimension. How newcomer groups in schools are impacted from these themes is what interests me. As I move forward with this multicultural research in regards to the questions, my task will be to ask, listen, and learn, to the best of my ability.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN: DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

Overall Approach and Rational

As described in Chapter One, the purpose of this research was to investigate elementary classroom teachers' understandings of culture and cultural theory and how this reflects on their communication with immigrant children and their families. My research was guided by two broad questions: (1) How do teachers think about *culture*, in their own lives and in the lives of their classrooms, and how their theoretical conceptualizations of culture in this framework relate to their understandings of immigrant families? (2) What intercultural communication skills or tools do teachers have in their repertoires, and how do they use this knowledge to include immigrant families?

This research built on my prior work in staff development and pre-service teacher training in public elementary schools in urban, suburban, and rural environments. Using that knowledge as my foundation for this current examination, I interviewed teachers who currently work with immigrant families in large urban public schools. My work as a supervisor and a field placement co-coordinator for student teachers at a local university has given me exposure to and familiarity with over forty elementary schools. As stated, my goal was to document, analyze, and understand the ways that elementary teachers think about culture and to understand how dimensions of culture arise in their work. Teachers in elementary schools were selected for three primary reasons: (1) K-3 teachers are the educators who engage the most with families (Irvine, 2003); (2) parents with young children are more involved with their children's education (McGoldrick & Carter,

1982); and (3) children under tenyears of age express or show more home-culture than school-culture (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994). This research used a framework of cultural theory dimensions to understand how teachers see culture in the everyday communication. Specifically, I focused on the dimension of the individualism/collectivism [I/C] continuum with the classroom teachers.

As previously stated, the current literature on parent involvement often depicts communication as a double-edged sword: a barrier causing poor interactions and a tool for improving school dynamics. Cultural theory explains that one reason so many solutions do not work, or cannot be implemented, is that differences in culture among those involved have been ignored. Therefore, my interviews with the teachers, with the focus on intercultural communication, were designed to examine their work experiences with new immigrant children and families.

Given that the goal of this research was to gain in-depth understanding from the perspective of classroom teachers, the use of a qualitative investigation was most appropriate. The holistic approach of qualitative research, as applied research concerned with addressing an existing problem or issue, was best suited for this project (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 1998, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 1998, 2012). Culture is complex; culture is active. Qualitative research designs attempt to explore a host of factors that influence a situation: they look for trends, or patterns, in the research setting (Creswell, 2003: Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). This inquiry focused on the real-life contexts of urban classrooms and the daily lives of teachers who work with immigrant children and their families. Urban settings are home to the majority of our U.S. settled

immigrant families: also, schools in urban settings are where teachers are most needed (Irvine, 2003). Therefore, I worked in urban schools.

The researcher herself is the primary instrument for data collection in qualitative research. Personal and profession attributes also supported my use of a qualitative approach to this work: my predisposition as an observer and listener, my ability to engage with teachers, both in their classroom environments and in thoughtful conversation around hard topics, and my training and skill in interviewing. The goal of qualitative research is not necessarily to prove that a phenomenon exits. Rather, qualitative research helps us understand a situation and the particular context within which it unfolds. The understanding gained by the researcher is the goal, not the ability to generalize the findings to predict future behaviors (Berg, 2001; Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003a, 2003b). Qualitative research highlights "…what it means for the participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting" (Patton, 1990, p. *x*).

My decision to use a critical research paradigm was intimately connected to my personal concern for understanding obstacles to equity in education, as well as my political commitment to social change. To understand the currently lived situation for immigrant families in our public schools, one cannot separate it from the social and political context of living as *other* in our Euro-American dominated world in public schools. To take a critical stance must involve an analysis of the structure of oppression that supports and perpetuates racial and cultural discrimination.

> Inquiry that aspires to the name *critical* must be connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society or public sphere within the society…Whereas traditional researchers cling to the guard rail of neutrality, critical

> researchers frequently announce their partnership in the struggle for a better world…Critical researchers often regard their work as a first step toward forms of political actions that can redress the injustices found in the field sites or constructed in the very act of research itself (Kincheole & McLaren, 2000, p. 291).

Further, a critical research paradigm holds epistemological assumptions that differ from traditional or positivist paradigms. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) write,

> Research in the critical tradition takes the form of self-conscious criticism – self-conscious in the sense that researchers try to become aware of the ideological imperatives and epistemological presuppositions that inform their research as well as their own subjective, intersubjective, and normative reference claims. Thus critical researchers enter into an investigation with their assumptions on the table, so no one is confused concerning the epistemological and political baggage they bring with them to the research site (p. 292).

I make my design assumptions explicit. I draw upon literature from both feminist theory and standpoint theory to state these assumptions. First, I view knowledge as situated with the knower and particular, rather than universal. Stated another way, my research did not seek a universal truth, but rather strived to elicit meaning from the experiences of the knower, in this case the classroom teachers (Miller & Scholnick, 2000). Second, I view knowledge as being constructed from an emergent process – one that relies upon the inter-relationship between the researcher and the subject of the study. This is a different paradigm than research that situates itself within a positivist paradigm, where the researcher claims to remain objective and separated from the researched. Third, both the researched and the researcher are shaped by the social, historical, and political contexts in which they live. This will be particularly important later on in the

analysis. The context of the researcher is important to the analysis. Therefore, rather than being value-free, I see knowledge as value-laden.

> One's self can't be left behind, it can only be omitted from discussions and written accounts of the research process. But it *is* an omission, a failure to discuss something which has been present within the research itself. The researcher may be unwilling to admit this or unable to see its importance, but it nevertheless remains so. If nothing else, we would insist on the absolute reality of this: that being alive involves us in having emotions and involvements; and in doing research we cannot leave behind what it is to be a person alive in the world (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p. 161).

As a process, this research work allowed for the participants' and my own unique positions to co-construct knowledge to produce a more multi-faceted viewpoint than either perspective alone might have conveyed: "The process of knowing is a dialogic, interactive, culturally embedded, social activity and not an independently acquire private property of isolated individual minds" (Welch-Ross, 2000, p. 111).

Drawing from standpoint theory, a knower's particular social location provides him or her with a particular standpoint from which to view the world. At the same time, the knower's subjectivity is a product of the conditions and discourses of that social location. In other words, an individual has a particular standpoint from which to view the world *and* the knower is constructed by that location. Clearly, for this research, the cultural discourse was part of what I sought to uncover. Falmagne (2000) writes,

> Thus individuals/subjects are constructed and construct themselves and their meaning systems through experience: that is through active interchange with political, economic, social, cultural, and historical processes with which they come in contact…Individuals influence the world around them and they are actively involved in the creation, construction of their own ever changing subjectivities (p. 192).

Along with other standpoint theorists (Collins, 1989, 2000; Harding, 1993), I advocate for constructing knowledge by placing the primary responsibility for defining one's own reality on those who live that reality. The interviewed teachers work in classrooms that include immigrant families; their work is culture-in-action. This research aimed to support understanding this work, with the far-reaching goal that clear analysis from teachers' reflections would support immigrant families' involvement in their children's education.

Case Study Method Used

The case study approach has a long tradition in educational research (Bassey, 1999; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998). Case studies are often used as teaching tools in the preparation and professional development of teachers (Bassey, 1999; Rand & Shelton-Colangelo, 2003; Schulman & Mesa-Bains, 1993; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), which made this research style a familiar one for teachers. Using a case study method supported my research goals and also was not threatening to the teachers I interviewed. Yin (2003b) defines the case study method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. I drew upon case study research to create the questionnaires and interviews and design the data management and analysis. This design allowed me to document the diverse perspectives of the teachers in the study. In turn, their stories provided a glimpse into the cultural knowledge base of working teachers, as well as the process of communication for addressing the needs of immigrant families.

Sometimes, non-researchers use the term case study as a catchall category for research that is not a survey, an observational study, or an experiment and is not statistical in nature (Merriam, 1998). In fact, researchers from many disciplines and

many paradigms (qualitative and quantitative) call their work case studies. There is a shared general agreement on several important characteristics that define case study research (Berg, 2001; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998). These main characteristics are (1) case study research may focus on individual representatives of a group, yet it most often addresses a phenomenon: a particular event, situation, program, or activity, (2) the phenomenon being researched is studied in its natural context, bounded by time and space. Context is important in case study research, and its benefits are a strength for doing intensive investigations of individuals or groups, or the phenomenon of interest, and (3) case study research is richly descriptive, because it is grounded in deep and varied sources of information. Researchers use the case study method because, "It employs quotes of key participants, anecdotes, prose composed from interviews, and other literary techniques to create mental images that bring to life the complexity of the many variables inherent in the phenomenon being studied" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 16).

One overarching characteristic is that case study research is generally more exploratory than confirmatory: as a researcher, I sought to identify themes or categories of behavior and events, rather than to prove a relationship or test a hypothesis (Merriam 1998; Stake, 1995). This agreed upon definition of case study research guided my decision to select it for pursuing my research questions: the research I did with the teacher-participants worked well with this style of inquiry.

Table 3.1 Case Study Characteristics and Data Collection Questions

Characteristics	***Data Collection Questions***
A bound "case," such as a process, activity, event, or multiple individuals, is investigated.	What is studied? (Define the case)
A gatekeeper provides access to information and assistance in gaining confidence of participants.	What are any concerns related to access and rapport? (Establish access and rapport)
A "case" or "cases" is defined.	What sites or individuals are going to be studied? (Sample with purpose)
A collection of forms, such as documents & records, interviews, observations, or physical artifacts, is compiled.	What type(s) of information will be collected? (Delimit data)
A variety of approaches (e.g. field notes, interviews, and observations) are used to gather data.	How is information compiled? (Record information)
Concerns may emerge related to intensive data gathering.	Is data collection difficult? (Address field issues)
A large amount of data (e.g. field notes, transcriptions, computer databases) is typically collected.	How is information stored? (Store data for analysis)

Adapted from J. W. Creswell. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing from five traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

The selection of a case study research design was based on my understanding of how the design would serve my inquiry. Merriam (1998) suggests that case studies may be found in ethnographic, historical, psychological, or sociological orientations. Using these accepted disciplines for inspiration, I placed my research in a sociological orientation. My topic had its focus on public schools, as social institutions, and examines teachers' thinking on culture and communication. This fits into previous case study research in education, within a sociological perspective.

In addition to a discipline orientation, case study research designs also are classified as intrinsic, instrumental, or collective (Stake, 1995). This research became an instrumental case study, as its primary goal was to better understand a theoretical question or problem: How teachers' understandings of cultural theory influence their communication? The main types of case study research designs are exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive (Bassey, 1999; Yin, 2003b). This research design is a descriptive case study. Descriptive designs attempt to present a complete description of a phenomenon within its context. I sought what teachers think and described what was revealed. In contrast, explanatory designs of case studies seek to understand or establish a cause-and-effect relationship; this was beyond the scope of this research.

Relation Between Design and Methods

Different designs in case study research represent different general assumptions about methods and sources of data. Multiple methods are often used when doing case study research, yet the relationship between the design and method is the foundation for a successful investigation (Berg, 2001; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The design of this sociological approach was grounded in its structure, development, and display of interaction among the teachers. I used in-depth individual interviews as the primary research method, the primary mode of data collection. I used in-depth interviewing as a way to listen to the deep understandings the participants brought to this study. Through my exploration of the individuals' understandings of culture, the research aimed to reveal the subjective world of the interviewee and to capture both the challenges they face over time in their work with immigrant families, as well as their understandings of these challenges. Marecek, Fine, and Kidder (1997) emphasize that, "Language is the medium

of social negotiation about truth and reality and thus determines what we see and know" (p. 637). The goal of this type of interviewing was to obtain a "…thick description of a given social world" (Warren, 2002, p. *x*).

My inquiry was open-ended, flexible, and emergent. I explored specific topic areas, yet allowed the participants to frame and structure their responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, 2012). As patterns surfaced in the first interviews, the emergent design allowed me to pursue those themes in subsequent interviews. I also remained open to pursuing ideas I might not have considered prior to the interview (Charmarz, 2000, 2002). According to Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991), "The phenomena of life are often better distinguished by pattern than by quantity. Critical to case study analysis is a study of the patterned actions of related individuals" (p.275). The study allowed for a broad range of topic areas explored because of the flexibility of type: teachers' perceived cultures, experiences of cultures, cultural differences along the I/C continuum, and ideas for supporting immigrant families in the classroom and school environments. I prepared several guiding questions to begin each interview session, yet remained flexible to receive the emergent voices of the participants. My approach to interviewing was active; I sought to co-construct the session with my participants (Weis & Fine, 2000). The in-depth interviewing involved re-interviewing the same person three times in order to gain a deeper understanding of her perspectives and experiences. These sequenced interviews allowed me to go back to the data and explore categories and themes that emerged; I pursued themes in greater detail in later conversations (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This followup also fostered trust and had the potential to provide greater detail and depth of stories offered by the participants (Charmarz, 2000, 2002).

Along with my initial Teacher Questionnaire (Appendix B) and their Participant Demographic forms (Appendix E), I also made use of two secondary documents during this study: *The Ideal Child* survey (Appendix F) adapted from Jones' (1992) work regarding active learning approaches with adults; and four cultural *Scenarios* (Appendix H) adapted from cross-cultural staff development work done by Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull, and Greenfield (1999) in California, which had the Individualism/Collectivism cultural dimension as their focus. These were first selected and included in my proposal as concrete data collection tools. My idea was that these two items would provide more neutral or objective data to add ballast to the more open-ended process of the interviews. In fact, the use of these two focused tools proved to be a mismatch for my study. The original intent for their usage did not map on to the interview process as cleanly and solidly as I had hoped it would.

This reflects on my methodological development as a new researcher. A seasoned mixed methods researcher Creswell (2011) comprehensively reviewed the controversies in mixed methods research. Basic concerns with defining and describing mixed methods and with procedures for conducting a study were discussed. Internationally, researchers have been encouraged to use these new methodologies to address the complex problems in society, pulling on the strengths of respected quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of mixed methods has been mentioned specifically to case study researchers and anyone using data triangulation (Holmes, 2006), as I have done in this study. Again, the research literature interest was on the "interplay" (Bryman, 2006) of quantitative and qualitative data, yet they, "did not specifically discuss now they would integrate the two data sources, or the reasons for

integration" (Creswell, 2011, p. 274). Although I did have a purpose and rationale for mixing methods, I now believe that the place in the research process in which the mixing occurred needed more careful thought. The design of placing *The Ideal Child* survey and the four cultural *Scenarios* after the interview series was not effective. As critics of mixed methods literature state: "We see the potential of mixed methods claiming more designs that it deserves and having questionable outcomes" (Creswell, 2011, p 280). In hindsight, the process of choosing these two instruments to use, as well as their timed placement in the study should have been more intentional, or adapted to serve my purposes better.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

Issues of reliability, validity, and clarity are important for the soundness of any type of qualitative research. A postmodern perspective asks questions about the stability of truth and whose truths we are questioning (Rossman & Rallis, 1998): "If the study is to enhance meanings and broaden the conversations, while allowing participants to speak for themselves in their natural context with the outcomes of understanding a unified whole, then the strategies for validating analysis must incorporate perspectives beyond the individual researcher" (Ely et al., 1991, p. 4). Working from this stance, I used multiple strategies in this research to establish trustworthiness.

Descriptive validity is concerned with the accuracy of the narratives being presented by the research participants. One way I planned to address descriptive validity was through the process of member checking, which brings data back to participants to determine if the researcher's transcriptions of participants' words are accurate (Berg, 2001). For my member checks, participants were asked to read the typed transcriptions

of their audio taped interviews. Interviewees were asked to scan for overall accuracy and clarity of their ideas. Perhaps I had over estimated their concerns for my accuracy for, although each of the participants wanted and received a copy their transcriptions (CDR and paper), only one teacher actually reviewed and edited the materials.

Upon reflection, I think my asking them to volunteer to put this time and work into my research was more than I should have expected. I could assume it is a vote of confidence and trust in me that the teachers did not feel the need to do this. However, I think, rather, it is a reflection of their time already being over-committed. I was sorry the teachers themselves were not involved in this process. I did have critical readers check my transcriptions, yet to avoid misinterpretations of the data, having the interviewees conduct member check would have been preferable. My peer debriefing sessions were done collaboratively among four professionals who are experienced qualitative researchers: (1) Dr. Linda Driscoll, retired Superintendent of Erving Union #28 Schools, Erving, MA; (2) Dr. Sally Habana-Hafner, director of CIRCLE (Center for Immigration and Refugee Community, Leadership, and Empowerment), Amherst, MA; (3) Dr. Kay Klausewitz, at Salem State College, MA; and (4) Dr. Mayra Almodovar, at Universidad del Este (UNE) in Carolina, Puerto Rico. In *Chapter Four: Methodology*, I will elaborate and explain how and when each of these individuals was involved in my research work.

Marecek and her colleagues (1997) assert that, "What researchers bring to the study is as important as what they discover as they live with the study" (p. 637). Including my assumptions as part of the analysis is also important to the trustworthiness of the study. These will be elaborated upon in the methods section. During data

collection and analysis, I documented my own thinking and reflection processes through memo writing in order to keep an audit trail (Gillham, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I conducted internal analysis through triangulation of the data by cross-checking codes, themes, and patterns within data sets and across research participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The layering of interview transcripts, with filled questionnaires (Appendix B), and my field notes allowed for emergent concerns to become visible. In all cases, I invited participants to add, delete, or clarify their comments. As a researcher, I recognize that there was a power imbalance between the participants and myself. I was the one who asked the questions, set the agenda, analyzed the data, and wrote up the results (Frankenberg, 1993). By inviting the teachers to engage with any part or stage of the research process, part of my goal was to address this artificial imbalance of control. At each and every meeting, I offered the teachers the opportunity to share any questions they had, or to add questions or topics of their own to the interview process. No one took me up on these offers in any extensive way, yet they all appreciated being asked.

About once a month, I engaged in peer-debriefing sessions with one of the four previously mentioned persons. These educational colleagues, who have had experience with educational both qualitative and quantitative research methods, worked with me over this three-year process. Colleagues rotated as critical readers and debriefers based on availability. I believe this process prevented me from manipulating the data to see only what I wanted to see, or in placing myself as the single, outside expert. All my efforts for validation had the central goal of maintaining the authenticity of the participants' voices, which was critical for creating a trustworthy document. Throughout data collection and analysis, I explored my own assumptions, experiences, and

worldview. This process lent credibility to the study (Piantanida & Garman, 1999). This thinking process will be made more explicit in the following discussion in the methodology section through memoing and/or reflections.

Limitations

From the proposal stage, this research had several limitations, including the small number of participants, data collection in one school district, and my subjective position as a researcher with my own preconceived notions about culturally responsive teachers and the needs of immigrant families. I address each of these here.

First, let me say that every research design and methodology inherently has some particular form of limitation. There were limitations in my use of descriptive case study methodology: most importantly, that the findings were not expected to be generalizable. This case study is a representative example of some of what currently can be found in schools. Nieto (2004) states about this research methodology: "The case studies are meant to challenge you to ask questions rather than to make assumptions" (p.7). I chose this methodology for its strength of design and the match with my topic, yet acknowledge what it cannot do. Through this research design, I strove to look at the teachers' work holistically and to convey the complexity of the issues and the teachers' thinking about the research questions. Gillham (2000) write, "The meticulous description of a case can have an impact greater than almost any other form of research report" (p. 101). Using this in-depth research process limited the number of participants, yet allowed for a look at issues often avoided because of their complexity (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991). This is the power of the case study.

Although I interviewed seven teachers, this dissertation reports data from only three. The small number of teachers is a limiting factor and does not represent the broad spectrum of classroom teachers working with immigrant families today. It was not my intention to provide findings that can be generalized to all teachers, but rather to document the experiences of these particular participants. Both Yin (1994, 2003a) and Merriam (1988, 1998) argue that case studies are a special kind of qualitative work, which investigates a contextualized contemporary phenomena within specific boundaries. "Defining the boundaries, or specifying the *unit of analysis* is the key decision point in case study designs" (Hatch, 2002, p. 30 – *author's italics*). These case study narratives may be useful for future research on this topic, as well as pre-service teacher training or reflection and professional development. I am aware of some of the criticisms regarding this type of research, including its susceptibility to personal bias and selectivity involved in recalling experiences (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003b). However, this research study has been designed with these possible shortcomings in mind.

The study may be limited by the fact that all of the teacher participants work in one extended urban area. Although Springfield, Massachusetts, is characteristic of many other urban districts, it has its own cultural idiosyncrasies that make it unique. Perhaps this nuanced the shape, direction, and outcome of my research. I cast my invitational net to schools in the greater Springfield area, including Holyoke and Agawam. All of these school areas had seen an influx of immigrant families to their schools during this time. Again, the word immigrant might reference students born abroad or in U.S. territories, first generation born here yet of immigrant, refugee, or migrant families. The greater Springfield area was selected because of its urban demographics, immigrant situation,

and location: our U.S. urban schools have the greatest need for teachers (AACTE, 1999). My work with seasoned classroom teachers in this urban area gave me access to recruit teachers who were unknown to me. However, my sampling was not as random as I had predicted and sought out. I will elaborate on this situation in the methodology chapter.

Researcher bias and subjectivity are an inherent part of research. Despite my intention to be open to the worlds and attitudes of the teacher participants, I carried to this research my own set of values and ideas about teaching and learning. I also brought my own experiences as a supervisor of student teachers in different urban areas of the Northeast. While these experiences brought bias, they also brought advantages: understanding, empathy, and valuable personal experience. Throughout my doctoral coursework and comprehensive examinations, I have been investigating family involvement and culturally responsive teaching. I have developed some descrete notions about what this looks like in practice in various settings: elementary schools, settlement houses, and community centers. I approached this research from many different perspectives – as a former urban public school teacher, as a former staff developer in private schools, as a white, middle-class woman from a Judeo-Christian background, and as the parent of three bicultural children, one of whom is also biracial. All of these perspectives and experiences influenced my work. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) point out that a researcher comes to the field with an intellectual framework, which is usually the result of "review of the relevant literature, prior experience in similar settings, and a general knowledge of the field of inquiry" (p. 185). I saw these aspects in myself as I delved into my research: I worked to keep an alert and open mind to allow for different interpretations and manifestations to arise, as they did.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methods of the study for the dissertation. The relationship between the selection of a qualitative case study methodology and the theoretical frameworks developed earlier is also explained. I introduce the design of my methodology with information about participants, their settings and recruitment. The sources and processes for data collection are reviewed. This research explored the nature of experiences of elementary classroom teachers working with immigrant children and families, using in-depth interviews from a phenomenological perspective (Seidman, 2006, 2012).

Culture is complex; culture is active. This inquiry focused on the real-life contexts of urban classrooms and the daily lives of teachers who work with immigrant children and their families. Urban settings are home to the majority of settled immigrant families. Qualitative research designs and methods attempt to explore a host of factors that influence a situation: I looked for trends or patterns in this research setting (Creswell, 2003; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

As a research strategy, case studies are the preferred method when three conditions are present: (1) when "how" or "why" questions are being posed; (2) when the investigator has little control over events; and (3) when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 2003b). My study met all three of these conditions. Over fourteen months, from June 2007 until July 2008, I recruited and interviewed elementary school teachers with classrooms in which more than half of the

children were immigrants. Each teacher-participant verbally identified the number of immigrant students in their classrooms: whether they were migrant, refugee, born abroad, or first generation born in a state or U.S. territory were not specified. The relevant issue was the wide range of linguistical and ethnic diversity of the student population. I invited these teachers to think about culture and to explain how they see cultural differences in their classrooms. I also wanted to understand if miscommunication happens more with immigrant families, and how intercultural communication skills might influence the family-school dynamic. My framework used cultural theory to explore these issues, in search of ways to support teachers and immigrant families and children.

The most commonly used case study methods are interviews and observations (Gillham, 2000; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Stake, 1995); yet case studies can be based on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence (Yin, 2003b). My primary data collection method was the interviews. This study also used participant questionnaires [Appendix B] and a demographic form [Appendix E]. Originally, I attempted a review of teacher, classroom, and/or school documents, as well, hoping for a more mixed methodology. Procurement of these documents proved too inconsistent to be of value to this research, so they will not be included as resources. As preciously referenced in *Chapter Three,* two other forms were used in this research to provide a specific focus on culture with the participants: *The Ideal Child* survey [Appendix F] and four classroom *Scenarios* [Appendix G].

In alignment with case study research, I selected an interview protocol as the core of my methodology; I then selected these two surveys to include mixed method research as a balance to the qualitative interview process. I was aware that these other forms were

epistemologically different from the interview series I chose the two surveys I used contingently: "Intended for use in circumstances not completely foreseen" (Geelan, 2013, p. 76). They were instruments I had been exposed to in my graduate course work at the Center for International Education (C.I.E.) and I was comfortable with them. I felt they were both effective in clarifying internalized cultural attitudes of adults. My goal in utilizing these surveys was to (1) create a different relationship with the teacher to mediate potential biases – written answers verse dialogue – and (2) to access a more subtle nature of cultural understanding concerning values and the I / C cultural dimension.

As discussed in *Chapter Three,* the goal was to use multiple methods to allow for triangulation with the results. "Triangulation is the use of multiple data sources and/or multiple methodologies in order to develop a stronger and richer understanding of complex phenomena. A naïve conception of triangulation might consider that such techniques lead to improved 'accuracy' or validity of the research findings in a positivist sense" (Geelan, 2013, p. 11). I was naïve in this research protocol. I thought if I used them, I would have solid data. The two surveys are fine instruments, yet my timing and placement of their use was structurally off. In my reflective memos, I thought about shifting the timing in this manner: (1) give *The Ideal Child* survey at the end of Interview #1, when participants have shared about their family of origin; and (2) give out the four classroom *Scenarios* at the end of Interview #2, when participants have shared about their current classroom. This feels much more organic in location and timing. Perhaps it would render usable data. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) note "…the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the

phenomenon in question. Objective reality can never be captured. Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation" (p. 2). As a new researcher, I may have been naïve and this data collection part not successful, yet it should be clear that the attempt was honestly made.

Interviewing Technique

This study used two variations of the interview instrument: (1) the interview as a guided conversation and (2) the interview as open-ended responses, or in-depth interviewing. The data analysis will only include the results from the in-depth interviewing sessions. To recap, my approved proposal design called for my work with interviewees to be in a semi-guided or guided conversation format: 4 interviews; 1.5 hours each; which were done sequentially once a month over a prescribed period of time. I started my study with this format. After completing the full range of interviews with two teachers [Appendix H, Teacher Participants, T-1 & T-2], I reflected and assessed that this format was too guided for my research questions: the answers I received were too pat and did not create or allow for in-depth dialogue.

Table 4.1 Variations in interview instrumentation

Type of Interview	*Characteristics*	*Strengths*	*Weaknesses*
Interview as guided conversation	Information to be addressed is specified in advance, but the interviewer defines the sequence and wording of questions during the course of the interview.	The plan increases the completeness of the data & makes data collection more systematic for each participant, potential gaps in process can be anticipated and addressed, and interviews remain conversational and situational.	Critical topics may be inadvertently missed. Flexibility in sequencing and wording questions may result in different responses from different participants and may reduce the comparability of responses.
Interview as open-ended responses	Specific wording and sequence of questions are predetermined, all participants are asked basic questions, and all questions require open-ended responses.	Comparability of responses may be strengthened, completeness of data for each person is enhanced, effects of interviewer biases are minimized, and analysis and organization are facilitated.	Flexibility is limited for relating the interview to specific individuals and circumstances. The standardized wording of the questions may limit variation in answers.

Adapted from M.Q. Patton. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

I pored over the transcriptions from the interviews, reflecting on my own interview skills and process. I felt I was prompting the teachers too much and that their answers seemed too closely connected to my guided questions. I wondered how to move teachers to delve more naturally and deeply into their own experiences. I wanted to hear less of my voice and more of theirs. During an informal conversation with Dr. Irv Seidman, Professor Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts, I discussed my concerns with my proposed semi-guided interview process. Dr. Seidman shared his insights with me on the interview as a qualitative research. He was preparing to return to campus to

teach a graduate seminar[8] on this topic and suggested that I might find it a useful process. In consultation with my committee chair, I enrolled in Dr. Seidman's course and proceeded to renegotiate the interview method with my committee. Committee members had urged me to be aware of the limitations of guided and semi-guided interview instrumentation for the task at hand in my research questions. Their experience and wisdom supported this interview process adjustment. Through new reading and training concerning one type of phenomenological-based, in-depth interview process, I came to experience and respect the co-constructed process that can be shared by the interviewer and the participants.

I shifted the interview method to encourage more open-ended responses. Van Manen (1990) states, "…the deeper goal, which is always the thrust of phenomenological research, remains oriented to asking the question of what is the nature of this phenomenon as an essentially human experience" (p. 62). In-depth interviewing allowed me to listen carefully to the experiences of my teacher-participants, while simultaneously allowing them to "step back" from their everyday realities in teaching and to reflect, talk about, and make meaning of those experiences. I believe that this shift in the interview process better suited my research questions and my working style, and ultimately has provided stronger data.

The contact time spent with each teacher for each interview process was the same: six hours. The new interview process followed a slight shift in format: 3 interviews, 2 hours each, done sequentially, within 1-2 weeks of each other, whenever possible. It was clear to me that use of this open-ended phenomenological-based process, with specific

[8] I took Dr. Irv Seidman's "In-Depth Interviewing and Issues in Qualitative Research" course, EDUC 789, in Fall 2007, at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

selection criteria[9], rendered a more honest and holistic picture from the teacher-participants about their work, issues, and communications with new immigrant children and families. I proceeded to use this style of open-ended interviewing with the next five recruited teacher-participants.

Phenomenological In-Depth Interviewing

> Why then should one adopt one research approach over another? The choice should reflect more than mere whim, preference, taste, or fashion. Rather, the method one chooses ought to maintain a certain harmony with the deep interest that makes one an educator (a parent or teacher) in the first place. (van Manen, 1990, p.2)

I used in-depth interviewing from a phenomenological perspective as my methodology for this research study (Seidman, 2006, 2012). In-depth interviewing allowed me to hear my participants' words and stories and to better understand "…the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2006, p. 4). This phenomenological approach to in-depth interviewing allowed me to be a listener, while the teacher explored her own lived experience in the current classroom, with a majority of immigrant children, and the meaning she made of that experience.

Phenomenological research began in the early twentieth century as a philosophical movement, yet later gained recognition as a powerful empirical methodology. German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1913) was credited as the movement's founder, though he was influenced by others' ideas. Husserl called his style

[9] Note: This style of in-depth interview criteria states that you need 50% or more of what-ever-you-are-interviewing-about to be present in the environment for it to emerge. The topic explored in your inquiry must be important to the participants' lives and present on a daily basis. Therefore, the criteria shift here pertains to moving from teachers with "experience with immigrant children" (Lundberg, 2007, p.44), to classrooms with 50% immigrant children currently enrolled. Their experience was very much present, not past.

of inquiry *transcendental phenomenology*. The general underlying principle for this methodology was that researchers should do all they can to transcend, or remove, all personal notions and/or experiences of the phenomenon being studied. This better ensures credibility to the process. This ideal is virtually a human impossibility, yet at the time its influence was extensive. Martin Heidegger (1927), a student of Husserl, presented a methodology named *hermeneutic phenomenology*. This perspective presupposed some prior understanding of the phenomenon by the researcher/ interpreter: it acknowledged the inevitability that we bring our experiences to the inquiry process. Heidegger believed that the way to deal with this inevitability was for the researchers' biases to be acknowledged, accounted for, and to inform the process (van Manen, 1990). From this perspective, I appreciated the balance that I had to maintain in my study, regarding my prejudices, for the integrity of the research process.

A primary method of inquiry in phenomenological research is interviewing. As stated before, I used the research protocol of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing [Appendix J]. This strategy features a three-interview structure designed by Dolbeare and Schuman (Schuman, 1982) and then further developed by Seidman (1998, 2006, 2012). In-depth interviewing is a combination of life history interviewing (Bertaux, 1981) with a focused, open-ended response interview format. The strength of in-depth interviewing comes from this double focus. In-depth phenomenological interviewing … "is a powerful way to gain insight into educational and other important social issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues" (Seidman, 2006, p. 14). This technique allowed me the opportunity to delve deeper into the realities of those teaching immigrant children and working with their families.

Working with the sequenced interviewing structure (Seidman, 2006, 2012), designed so that each of the three interviews has its distinct areas of focus, I began the data collect process again. In this three sequenced structure, the first interview is a life history, the teacher's own *Historical/Biographical* context. Some questions were: "How did you become an elementary teacher? Tell me about your life up until you became a classroom teacher this year." The second interview situates the participant in their present context, their *Present Work* – teaching and the classroom. Questions included: "What is it like to be a teacher with so many immigrant children? What are your days like? What are the details of your life in this classroom?" The third interview is the one in which the participant, having reconstructed her life history and experiences as a teacher, now works to make meaning of her experience. In my participants' situations, they had to describe their lives as elementary classroom teachers of new immigrants, describe the *meaning* that they make from their work experiences. I asked: "Given what you have said in the first two interviews, what does it mean to be a teacher of new immigrant children?" In this three-interview structure, this third interview was often the most difficult for participants. Rarely in their day-to-day lives are people asked to make meaning of their experiences.

Participants: Working with Classroom Teachers

We have had a net loss of teachers in the U.S. since 1963. Researchers have found that nearly half of all new teachers in urban public schools quit within five years (Education Commission of the States, 2000). As I prepared for my research, I was clear that I wanted to talk with those who have stayed. Over this past decade, I have worked both placing and supervising pre-service teachers in multiple school districts in Western

Massachusetts. This has given me the opportunity to see an extremely broad range of public elementary schools. Despite the many challenges faced by teachers, students, and families in urban areas, I have been impressed that many have chosen to stay and work. My hope was that I could find some who would be willing to give time to my research work.

Making Contact

My dissertation proposal was accepted in late May 2007, with revisions submitted to my committee and the School of Education by mid-June. Unfortunately, this timetable coincided with many area schools finishing up their academic years in June. I could not make direct contact with teachers until my IRB—Institutional Review Board—approval was in place. To begin recruiting and gain access to participants, I contacted schools' principals, using a blanket mailing to each of the 32 elementary schools in the greater Springfield, Massachusetts area. I made follow-up phone calls to all principals within a week of their having received this informational letter. The summer schedules at the schools were fairly relaxed, so often I was able to talk to principals and gather statistics on new immigrant populations in their schools. To increase effectiveness in recruiting, I relied upon professional connections I had established with school principals, counselors, and area superintendents. Originally, I called upon the contacts only to have an introduction and access to the schools. In conversations, I was sometimes able to ask individuals about their perspectives for leads on specific teachers to contact for interviews.

As stated in my introduction in *Chapter One*, my recruitment was of teacher-participants in elementary schools for three primary reasons: (1) K-3 teachers are the

educators who engage the most with families (Irvine, 2003); (2) parents with young children are more involved with their children's educations (McGoldrick & Carter, 1982); and (3) children under ten years of age express more home-culture than school-culture (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994).

My original goal was to be able to speak to all the teachers from a particular site at their regular staff meeting so that I could introduce myself, explain the study, hand out the questionnaire (Appendix B), and be available to answer any questions. In the end, I only had access to speak and recruit in meetings at two schools. Two teachers did become participants from these staff meeting recruitment efforts, but only after follow-up conversations with administrators. Ideally, I wanted to have teachers *choose* to join me in this research work, to be intrigued by the issues. Yet to increase effectiveness in recruiting, I relied upon professional recommendations and the discernment of the principals to give me names of possible teachers who might become teacher-participants.

Within the elementary schools, my sampling selection was based on three criteria: (1) the grade level taught, kindergarten through third grade (K-3); (2) the length of time they had been teaching (5 + years); and (3) having at least 50% of their current classroom be comprised of either new immigrants, or the children of new immigrants. Teachers working in early elementary—kindergarten to 3rd grade classrooms—usually work very closely with families. Family-life-cycle researches find PI—parental involvement—levels are higher in elementary and primary schools than older grade levels. Teachers who have worked in schools five years or longer are accustomed to the demands of the profession; thus the criterion was in place to support my finding teachers who would be inclined to engage with families.

The recruiting happened much more slowly than I had anticipated. I found I was often dependent on "inside contacts" at school sites. This recruiting process, done through teachers who knew me, gave me the start I needed to connect with participants. My "inside contacts" spoke about my research study at internal staff or departmental meetings; they passed out flyers [Appendix A] and hung them up in staff rooms and had conservations on my behalf. My task became keeping in close contact with these past students or colleagues. Once I had a potential teacher's name and contact information and permission to call them, I could speed up the logistics of the process through e-mail. I set up all initial interviews by telephone, however. The site of the interview was negotiated with participants, yet I always wanted to accommodate their schedules and comfort levels. For the most part, we met initially either in their classrooms after school or in a public café, park, or library. I wanted to meet with them in comfortable, secure, and neutral sites. To accommodate their working schedules, I did all the traveling. Five out of the seven teachers invited me to meet in their homes after the first sessions. In one case, one teacher-participant recommended a fellow teacher to me. Although I was delighted with this at the time, there was a later cost to this study: the fact that these two participants lost their anonymity with each other created a sense of vulnerability for them concerning participation in the research study.

I needed to be careful when making contact with strangers. In the end, principals, teachers who knew us both, and one parent-colleague referred all of my teacher-participants to me. Therefore, I needed to respect this in- between person, while establishing myself with the teacher. I took care to invite them to participate on their own terms. I spoke about the tenets of voluntary consent both in the first phone

conversation and before we started the first interview, when they signed their voluntary consent forms [Appendix D]. I needed to take care to make them feel comfortable talking to a stranger about their life histories and teaching experiences.

Settings

The city of Springfield and the surrounding area, south to Agawam and north to Holyoke, is a diverse urban community located in western Massachusetts about 90 miles southwest of Boston and 25 miles north of Hartford, Connecticut. The city proper currently has approximately 153,060 residents, making it the third largest city in the state (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010). According to the 2010 Census, 46% of the residents identify as White, 38% as Hispanic, and 22% as Black or African American. The numbers are eschewed: they add up to more than 100% because of the new design of the 2000 Census and how it asked questions about one's race/ethnicity; that census was the first time respondents could check more than one race box on the form. In the 2010 Census, over 5% of Springfield's citizens checked more than one race.

Like many other post-industrial areas, the larger metropolitan area is currently facing hard economic times. The unemployment rate is higher than state and national levels: those employed make less money that other families nationwide. In 2003, the median household income in Springfield was $30,417. This is more than $11,000 less than the national median for that year, which was $41,994. As these figures suggest, approximately 35% of all children 18 years old or younger in the city live below the poverty line (Bureau of Census, 2010). Almost three-fourths of the city's students are eligible for the free or reduced-fee lunch program. Approximately one in every five students speaks a language other than English as their primary language.

The Metropolitan Springfield area, the second largest in the state after Boston, is estimated at 698,903 (Springfield City Data, 2009). This larger Springfield area also experienced the social ills that plague many economically hurting communities. Springfield's unemployment is rated at 11.8%, while statewide unemployment is 7.2% (Springfield City Data, 2013). In 2004, Springfield was rated the 17th most dangerous city in the U.S. This ranking was lowered to the 12th most dangerous U.S. city in 2011 (Springfield City Data, 2011). Added to this socioeconomic mix, we have the influx of many immigrant families. Springfield Public School's website is bi-lingual in English and Spanish, with translation links for over forty languages. Current newcomer groups are from Somalia, Jamaica, Russia, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, and the Ivory Coast. This urban area is also home to many Puerto Rican families, who may or may not sojourn between the Caribbean U.S. Territory and Massachusetts. School uniforms are used pre-K through high school to diminish affiliation with gangs. This U.S. city ranks number 52, out of 100, for older buildings and houses and a young population.

Participant Selection

Given the current demographics of public school teachers, I assumed that most of my participants would be white, middle-class women with a Judeo-Christian background. Though I set out to identify a participant sample that would reflect a diverse range of teachers, I became frustrated in my search simply to find participants who met the initial criteria and who also were willing to commit the time that this study required. I used Patton's (1990) strategy of "maximum variation sampling" as my guideline in selecting my teachers. The logic supporting this is that "any common patterns that emerge from greater variation are of particular interest and value in capturing core experiences and

central, shared aspects or impacts" (Patton, 1990, p. 172) on the phenomenon under study.

Maximum variation sampling aims to gather a wide variety of participants within the scope of the study. I was always on the outlook to recruit men and women from a variety of cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. However, in the final outcome, the three teacher-participants I report on were all middle-class Hispanic women from Christian backgrounds. Patton (1990) explains that selecting a small sample of great diversity will be useful for showing uniqueness and important shared patterns that may cut across cases. This seemed congruent to me with a phenomenological study because, in analysis, I will describe each individual's experiences of teaching immigrant children, yet I will be looking for connections that bridge teacher experiences, as well.

During my year of interviewing, June 2007 to July 2008, as I worked with one current teacher participant, I was always on the lookout for making contact with new potential participants. I followed up leads whenever they presented themselves. I had set out to find a solid half-dozen teachers to work with. During my process of reviewing the interview notes and tapes, I concluded that the original seven teachers represented a broad enough sample for my study. Patton (1990) states that "sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with time and resources" (p. 184). I felt that I could always do more interviews, and indeed I may once I am past my dissertation work; yet I was beginning to notice some redundancies in the participants' experiences, concerns, and stories. This led me to believe that I had a broad and deep enough sample to examine and that it was time to close my interview process. Interview to interview, I

had asked participants for clarifications and their interpretations of their words. This brought my participants into the analysis throughout the process. It was critically important that there be an open rapport between us; therefore engaging the participants at this level was vital to my study (Seidman, 2006).

Participants Included in Data

After I had completed the interview process during the fall of 2008, there were significant changes in my interview data, which I will describe in detail here. As previously stated, I engaged in interviews with seven teacher-participants between June 2007 and July 2008. I began my interview work using the approved format in my proposal (June 2007) with my first two teachers. During reflection, discussion, and consultation with my Dissertation Committee Chair in early fall 2007, I revised the interview format. This came about because my original interview process felt too guided: I was talking too much, guiding too much. I was receiving answers without a full depth of dialogue with the teacher-participants, and I wanted to improve the results. It was clear to me that using the new open-ended style of a phenomenological based process, with specific selection criteria, would render a more honest and holistic picture from the teachers I interviewed. Also, stylistically, this shift in format facilitated a co-constructed dialogue within the interview process, which each member of my committee had advised me to move toward during the proposal approval process. My Dissertation Committee members consented to this format shift (10/22/07) and the School of Education and Institutional Review Board granted its approval via Dr. Linda Griffin (11/29/07). Because of this official shift in my interview format, I agreed that the first two interviewees (T-1 and T-2) should not be included in the data. Rather, I would treat their

contributions as if they had been a part of a pilot study, guiding my thinking and the design of the research work at hand.

I interviewed five more teacher-participants during the rest of that interview year, from October 2007 to July 2008: T-A, T-B, T-C, T-D, and T-E. My research was approved for three to six teachers to be participants, so moving forward with five teachers doing the new interview format fell within that range. It felt manageable, given the intensity of the work. [Appendix H]

Then I lost one teacher participant (T-D). She was not able to complete interview #3 as scheduled in May 2008, and then rescheduled twice in June and July. This teacher-participant ended up relocating out of state and although I offered to drive to her new location, she did not want to complete the process. In August 2008, I began to pull out her data from my records. This left me with only four teacher-participants' data to be integrated into my analysis.

Then in October 2008, one other teacher (T-C) contacted me asking to withdraw from the study. This teacher-participant did not specifically state why she wanted to pull out, yet during the interview process, she had been highly concerned about being identified by the school principal. Of course, I could not *guarantee* total anonymity within the confidentiality of the study. It was a huge disappointment to have to pull out the data pertaining to another teacher-participant. I was concerned that this action also brought my data number down to three: the minimum number of teacher-participants[10]

[10] To summarize the interview data and the pertinent attrition: total teachers interviewed were seven; reportable data is from three. Two teacher-participants (T-1 & T-2) were lost through the change in format process with the interviews; two (T-D & T-C) were lost through their withdrawal from the study.

stated in the approved proposal (Lundberg, 2007, p. 44 & 60). In November 2008, my sense of vulnerability in proceeding forward with analysis was extremely high.

Through the valuable guidance and support of my Committee Chair, in November 2008 I did a major recapping reflection on this situation and a cursory look at the impact to the findings of my research. Although it was a fairly simple, yet tedious, process to remove the specific teachers' data from the analysis process and to file their transcription binders and tapes away, I could not as easily erase the thinking and processing that I had already done. Each interview completed had informed the next. When I returned to the cleaned up data, after removing all of the information from the two teachers who withdrew (T-D & T-C), I did not find remarkable holes or gaps. I had become attached to several of their words or phrases, yet nowhere did a category disappear or become depleted without their input. Clearly, there was a strength of consistency across the five teacher-participants selected and interviewed since October 2007. In December 2008, each of my committee members confirmed with me the vulnerability of the lowered number of teacher-participants, yet agreed I should move forward with the data from the three remaining sets of in-depth interviews.

Data Collection and Management

The Three-Interview Structure

The in-depth phenomenological interviewing procedure requires that three interviews be conducted with each teacher-participant, each being 90 to120 minutes in length and guided by three specific types of questions. Data collection started with this interview process. It is true that recruitment and selection are perhaps the very first steps in official data collection, yet the interviews are at the heart of the matter. The first

interview was aimed at collecting the historical, biographical antecedents and context of the life experiences of the teacher-participants being interviewed. It posed the question: *Tell me as much about yourself as possible up to now, before this time as a teacher.* The purpose of this first interview was to contextualize the participant's experience by asking her to share as much as possible about herself in relation to the topic. This was an important point of entry for the participants to share with me. By eliciting a focused life history, the data stream began.

The purpose of the second interview was to have the teacher-participant reconstruct the details of the lived classroom experience that is at the center of my study. It explored the question: *What is the participant's experience like being a teacher in a classroom with a majority of students who are recent immigrants?* The goal of this interview was for them to share concrete details of their daily work experiences. From the shared elements from each of their teaching experiences, I gained a deeper understanding of their opinions and reflections, as well as what their work came to mean to them.

The third and final interview was designed to have the participant reflect on her work and derive meaning from that experience. To provide an understanding or connection between her work and life, it examined the question: *What does the experience of being a teacher mean to the participant? How does the necessity of working across culture(s) with immigrant children and families impact her?* This opportunity to reflect upon their daily work and its relationship to her role in society and personal goals progressed from exploring the generalized question into a complex web of responses.

To be sure that this three-part interview structure yielded meaningful material, I needed to make some logistical decisions. The length of time for each session, combined with the depth of the process, needed to balance the time between each interview session. The time between interviews gave participants room for reflection, to mull things over. According to Seidman (2006), it was important to allow my teacher-participants enough time to reflect on the previous interview, yet not for too much time to pass so that momentum of thought is lost. This interview approach works best when the three interview sessions are spaced from between three to fourteen days apart. He advises that "this allows time for the participant to mull over the proceeding interview but not enough time to lose the connection between the two" (p. 14). For the most part, my interview sessions were spaced between seven to fourteen days apart from each other. This rhythm worked well in that it allowed me time to listen once or twice to the taped session and make written notes for clarification and follow-up items with each teacher. A couple of time constraints with participants' schedules required that there were twenty-one days between two sets of interviews (#1 & #2 with T-C; #1 & #2 with T-E). Other than these two exceptions, I did not need to shorten or lengthen the time between interview sessions, to combine interviews, or make any other accommodations.

I had shifted to this three-interview structure because in reflection on my memoing during my start-up interviews, I had come to the conclusion that a meaningful exploration of my topic required an open-ended style of interviewing that would draw more details from my participants. For example, at the beginning of this study, before I switched to this three-interview structure, I struggled to establish a balance in my interview approach with the first two teacher-participants. I did not want the interview to

be guided totally by the participant, straying into topics tangential to my research, yet I did not want to probe too much for fear of leading them to specific answers. I strove to balance these sessions both through the shift of structure and with a focus on honing specific interviewing skills [Lecture notes, Seidman, 2007]: listen more, talk less; ask to hear more about the subject; follow up, but don't interrupt; explore, but don't probe; avoid leading questions; seek concrete details; follow up on vague language; tolerate silence; ask participants to *reconstruct* and not to *remember what it is like.*

I took steps to increase the meaningfulness of the process in relation to the topic by (1) maintaining the interview structure; (2) exploring with them what they brought up concerning the influence of immigrant children in their classrooms and teaching; and (3) posing open-ended questions to elicit views related to the influence of multiple cultures on their work. The three-interview structure progressed from each open-ended question, allowing the participants to talk about their experiences. When necessary, I asked for explanations and/or elaborations, and I sometimes pressed them to expand on a point to get to clearer details or evidence for the data record. I was cognizant of the dangers of compromising the integrity of the study by leading my participants; I therefore accepted their first responses and avoided pressing them with follow-up questions on any single issue. I respected the interview process in allowing participants to tell their stories. If the participant neither brought up nor suggested a connection that felt pertinent to the study, I then posed direct questions to them. This project was directed at intercultural contexts; therefore it was critical to hear about the issues embedded even if I needed to voice a particular word: culture, poverty, race, and/or language, for example.

All interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. In total, there were twenty-two[11] interviews completed, of which nine will be included in the data analysis: T-A (1, 2, & 3); T-B (1, 2, & 3); and T-E (1, 2, & 3). The interviews and transcriptions proceeded in numerical order, with each teacher-participant being finished before the series of interviews for the next participant was begun. The advice I received from mentors, research classes, and texts about doing the transcriptions proved true: it was a valuable process. Initially, it united me with the participants' voices and stories. Second, transcription became my first mode of analysis: as I was transcribing the interview tapes, I started to hear interesting passages or themes developing across participants' experiences. Lastly, transcription connected me with my own interviewing strengths and weaknesses. It allowed me to reflect upon my questions, reactions, words, and even voice tone as an interviewer. Each of these points was important to my research process, as the transcription process allowed me to be immersed in the data soon after the interviews were completed.

Handling the Interview Material

Managing and making sense of the interview data was the most challenging part of this research process because of the large amount of data material that the three-interview structure yielded. The critical decision was always to determine how much of the text would be included in the final report and in what form. Seidman (2006) recommends three options for sharing the data: (1) a profile of the participant's story; (2) vignettes of salient issues from the interviews; or (3) a thematic analysis of the material.

[11] Although completely transcribed, the eight interviews done from the first two participants will not be used: T-1 (1, 2, 3, & 4); and T-2 (1, 2, 3, & 4); nor will the five interviews from the two teachers who withdrew from the study: T-C (1, 2, & 3); and T-D (1 & 2).

I pursued a thematic analysis of my findings, as this was the most meaningful method to represent the multifaceted experiences of the participants, while creating a text that would be useful to others in the educational community. Based on my teacher-participants' narratives of their experiences and my interpretations of how to organize the material in line with the study's focus, the findings are represented according to major topics and themes. In my discussion and analysis, however, I focused on the themes that I determined connected most cogently to the theoretical frame of the study. This was done in two parts: (1) the data that pertained to my original research questions; and (2) emergent themes.

Using a system of coding or labeling, I sorted and categorized the interview data to identify themes and topics germane to my study. I found that reading and rereading each interview and assigning labels proved to be a useful initial approach. Common labels, or topics that moved across participants, could be thematically organized to give meaning to the teacher-participants' collective experience. The process of organizing and analyzing the data developed along these stages: (1) labeling excerpts from the interview data; (2) developing themes and categories by identifying connecting patterns among the excerpts; and (3) presenting and commenting on the categories and themes in relation to the focus of the study.

The process of reading, labeling, and organizing the material from the nine separate 90 to 120 minute interviews was a grueling experience. I had used Microsoft Word-processing software to store/record the interview transcripts. The following steps further explain the process I followed to manage the data, while sorting and making sense of the material. After creating and saving separate files for all interviews for each

participant, I made a hardcopy of each document (interview transcript). To manage and sort the data, and to make sense of the material, I progressed through the following process:

1. Read each transcript (master document: 1) and mark/underline passages that I considered salient to the research topic;
2. Separate (cut & paste) the marked portions from this master document and placed into a second Microsoft Word file (marked document: 2);
3. Reread second document as a hard copy and again mark/underline portions that were connected to the research topic(s) and label passages according to main idea;
4. Create a hardcopy of the excerpts according to the labels (excerpt document: 3) and examine for common ideas, within and across participants to formulate meaningful themes;
5. Examine the themes carefully and organize them into broad categories.
6. Memo note: I worked with two sets of Complete Interview binders: (1) Set One contained the completed three sequenced interviews of each teacher (1, 2, & 3); while (2) Set Two contained complete sets of each interview number, sorted by context and not person so that all #1 interviews were placed together in one binder, as were all #2, and all #3.

The above process set the stage for sharing and analyzing my findings. I present these thematically in the next two data chapters in relation to the research focus. Although this report developed cohesion and structure through my organization, I have tried to be faithful to my teacher-participants' words by reporting their voices in the first person. I did remove idiosyncratic oral speech (i.e. umm, ah, yah, etc.) and confusing

grammatical errors to make the text more readable. I made my final decisions about the selected material based on presenting excerpts that accurately reflect the interviews in context, reflecting the whole or a "total experience" (Patton, 1990, p. 410).

Research Memos and Critical Readers

Research memoing (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Rossman & Rollis, 1998) is a data gathering strategy that I used throughout this study. Through the use of memos, I documented my thoughts, reactions, and observations in the course of collecting the interview data, as well as during the reflection process. The interviewing process tended to be very absorbing; therefore reflection through memoing became a balancing strategy for me, as well. Memoing proved particularly useful in providing information that I followed up on in subsequent interviews, as well as during the data analysis.

Merriam (1998) recommends the use of peer debriefing through the consultation of what he calls critical readers, or critical-friend readers, who provide feedback through their comments, opinions, and insights on issues faced during the research process. I understood that my closeness to the research study could inhibit my ability to view my findings with the necessary detachment at times. I felt it was vital to draw on the skills of critical readers who were familiar with the research methods, case study, and in-depth interviewing techniques that I have been engaged with during these past three years. My debriefing took place in two different formats: with critical readers who were fellow doctoral students and with mentor-teachers from community organizations.

Since beginning my comprehensive examination papers, I have worked with two fellow doctoral candidates: Dr. Kay Klausewitz, now retired faculty from Salem State College in eastern Massachusetts, and Dr. Mayra Almodovar, now on faculty at

Universidad del Este (UNE) in Carolina, Puerto Rico. Both of these women completed their Ed.D. degree in the past few years. They both were available to me as critical readers during this time, primarily in regards to the interviewing process. Consultations took place by e-mail, phone calls, and meetings or extended working sessions. My education mentors[12], two professors not on my committee, challenged some of my initial assumptions, which caused me to refine my skills and methods alike. Their role as critical friends took place via conversations with feedback focused on my theoretical frameworks, methodology and engagement with the analytical work. Both were extremely familiar with qualitative methods, the current situations in schools and dilemmas pertaining to new immigrants, and the need to support teachers working cross-culturally in public schools. Their guidance strengthened my research process and provided clarity in the presentation of data as well as some interpretations forthcoming in the analysis.

I also had intended to use member checks (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), as described in my proposal, during this research study. In the end, only one teacher-participant out of the seven was interested in this level of engagement with this study. Although I did send complete copies of the transcriptions, both paper and on CD-R to all the participants, I did not receive any feedback or corrections from any other participants. I made numerous efforts to do so. I still feel that my act of taking the data back to the teacher-participants, and asking them to check it for accuracy and readability, was important. I

[12] Dr. Linda Driscoll, retired Superintendent of Erving Union #28, in rural western Massachusetts, and Dr. Sally Habana-Hafner, retired faculty from CIE: Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Director of CIRCLE: Center for Immigration & Refugee Community, Leadership, and Empowerment, in western Massachusetts.

could not *require* them to do a member check, yet I felt it would have been a valuable service they could have provided to this research process and study.

Processing the Interviews

Upon completing the transcriptions, I had concluded the first stage of the heuristic process of phenomenological inquiry, immersion (Moustakas, 1990). Until I had completed the task of transcribing, the majority of my time was directed at studying the tapes in preparation for the sequential interview. This allowed a beginning immersion with regards to the "texture, tone, mood, range, and content" of the teacher-participants' experiences (Patton, 1990, p. 409). After transcribing, I was much more deeply involved in their worlds and their experiences of teaching immigrant children: I was, "questioning, meditating, dialoguing, daydreaming, and indwelling" (Patton, 1990, p. 409). Not counting the time spent listening to tapes in preparation and review for sequential interviews, I had spent about forty-four hours in actual interview time with my seven teacher-participants. *I was immersed*. Please note again, for clarity, only eighteen hours[13] of tapes can be used in the two data analysis chapters that follow this section.

According to Moustakas (1990), following immersion, as one reviews transcripts, bracketing interesting passages, and recognizing emergent themes, there may be two stages of the meaning making process for the researcher. He refers to these steps as incubation and illumination. During the incubation process, the researcher withdraws and contemplates, allowing time for awareness, insights, and understandings to emerge (Patton, 1990). During this phase of the research process, I closely reread the transcripts using open coding protocols to note passages that seemed salient to me. In my memoing,

[13] Three interviews, at two hours each, is around six hours per teacher. There are three teachers included in this dissertation.

I wrote a short profile for each teacher-participant, jotting down my initial thoughts from the interviews and supplementing them with any new information from the transcribed interviews. Over time, as I began to synthesize the research data, these pieces gained sharper critical focus.

Illumination is the next stage of the meaning making process, and at this point, the teaching experiences of my participants began to take on vividness for me (Moustakas, 1990). While I was still immersed in the transcripts, I gained a new level of understanding of the meanings of their experiences. As I identified themes in the participants' stories, they formed "clusters and parallels" (Patton, 1990, p. 410). I came to trust myself more as a reader of transcripts. The process of working with the data became routine and my judgment as an educational researcher became more solid.

The final stages of the heuristic process of phenomenological inquiry are explication and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). To explicate is to develop, to make plain or clear, to explain, to interpret. During my process of explication, I wrote several researcher memos to make sense of what I had found significant from the interviews. I connected the themes I had culled with the primary themes of intercultural communication that already existed in the research literature. Again, in this stage, I closely reread and examined the files I had created for each category, looking for which participants' excerpts seemed most salient and relevant to each category. It was also during this stage that I lost the two teachers (first T-C in August, 2008 and then T-D in October, 2008) from my study. As a result, I needed to remove their excerpts from my data. This was time consuming and cumbersome; my records were strong, and the

physical removal of their evidence would not be hard to do, yet their words were in my memory and thinking, and this proved harder to extract.

At this point, I met with my committee chair, Dr. Claire Hamilton, for advice and guidance. She suggested a method for regrouping, which I followed. In December 2008, I wrote a long re-capping memo, which I submitted to my entire committee, asking for their permission and support to move forward with the remaining data. This was granted in January 2009, and I began the arduous processes of extracting the words of the lost teachers from my electronic files, charts, and excerpt lists. As already clarified in this chapter, what will be presented is eighteen hours of interview transcriptions.

Now it was time for the final stage of analysis, creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). During this stage, I worked to bring together all the pieces that emerged from this study into a "total experience" (Patton, 1990, p. 410). I used my electronic filing system of interview excerpts to combine categories as it made sense to do so. I am a visual learner, so I found making large wall charts most helpful at this point in the process. As a result of this final stage, new categories were created, and I was faced with the need to figure out a logical way to work. I now needed to devise the analytic framework to be used with my findings. As I moved forward into crafting the analysis chapters of this study, my goal was to stay true to the aim of phenomenological research, which is to come to understand the nature or essence of an essentially human experience (van Manen, 1990). Through my analysis, I intended to show the patterns and relationships among my teacher-participants' experiences as teachers of immigrant children in public schools. Patton (1990) describes this culmination of the heuristic research process as creating "a new vision of the experience" (p. 410). My representation of the dimensions

of work with immigrant children and families, as told through my participants' excerpts, now follows.

I think it most effective to present the analysis in two chapters, with my findings in separate formats. This seems prudent in that the main task of this project is to show how the three teacher-participants have answered my original research questions. This analysis is *Chapter Five: What I Sought—Moving into an Eddy of a Stream.* There were many salient themes that I have also analyzed, which emerged from the data, yet did not directly map on to my original intent. These are presented in *Chapter Six: What Emerged: An Effluent—A Stream Flowing out of a Larger Stream.*

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS: WHAT I SOUGHT MOVING INTO AN EDDY OF A STREAM

In Chapters 5 and 6, I will examine three seasoned teachers' experiences with classrooms filled with new immigrant children, focusing my analysis in two specific manners: (1) what I sought and (2) what emerged. This descriptive case study intends to generate knowledge through crafting portrayals or creating a picture for the reader of the phenomenon and context under study. In each of the ways data is presented for analysis in this study, the teacher participants experienced some level of awareness of culture and intercultural skills needed to succeed in their classroom work.

First, as I will discuss in this chapter, the teachers I interviewed grappled with explaining how they think about culture in their own lives and in the lives of their classrooms; how their awareness of culture and cultural theory are related to their understanding of immigrant children and families; and how they view their skill levels in intercultural communication. These were the core elements that this research study sought to describe and to understand at the outset. The following data section in *Chapter Six* will focus on their descriptions of elements of culture that emerged from the interviews. This emergent data was analyzed around persistent themes in the text that clustered around cultural knowledge in the participants' self-described contexts.

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate elementary classroom teachers' understanding of culture and cultural theory and how these reflect on their work and communication or miscommunication with immigrant children and their families. The

study was guided by two broad questions: (1) How do teachers think about culture in their own lives and in the life of their classrooms, and how does their theoretical conceptualization of culture relate to their understanding of immigrant families? (2) What intercultural communication skills or tools do teachers have in their repertoires, and do how they use this knowledge to inform their inclusion of immigrant family involvement? As I engaged with the data, my analysis was guided by Wolcott's work with qualitative writing (1990a, 1990b) and my own grappling with these basic data questions: *What is going on here? What do the people in this setting have to know, individually and/or collectively, in order to do what they are doing?*

As I began this process, I reflected on a metaphor (Seidman, 2007) used to describe this approach to phenomenological interviewing: *Life is a fast flowing stream. We can't make meaning of it in the middle of the rapids, so we reconstruct constitutive elements of life experience* and *as we reflect upon those elements – they become phenomena* [Class notes]. I find myself in a data eddy: a current at variance with the main current in a stream, one having a rotary or whirling motion. I collected data in the stream, and now I have moved out into an eddy, the small whirlpool, to look carefully at just what lies within. What are the essential constituent, elements that show how my teacher-participants think about culture? I will begin with their voices on culture.

It is useful to provide a brief orientation on just who these three women are. There are detailed portraits of each teacher-participant [Appendix I] for use as reference while reading this chapter. The three names given—Anita, Symone, and Jackie—are substitutes for their real names, yet will make the texts easier to connect with for the reader (Seidman, 2007, 2012). As previously explained, I used random sampling in

recruiting, yet of the three teachers who participated, two immigrated to the U.S. and one is a child of immigrants, while two are bilingual with English and Spanish, and one is trilingual, with English, Spanish, and Portuguese. All of them grew up in households where Spanish was the primary spoken language. All three are mature women ranging in age from 29 - 45 years of age. All three are light-skinned women of color who could pass as Caucasian. The immigrant children and families they currently work with come from a wide range of continents, countries, and territories: Cambodia, China, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Korea, Mexico, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Russia, Somalia, Taiwan, Turkey, and Venezuela.

Teachers' Descriptions of Culture

Looking at a situation, any researcher wants to know clearly *what* is going on and *how* to think about it. Description means making complicated things understandable by reducing them to their component parts. In the case of this study, "The issue is making a clear accounting of the phenomena at hand" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.90). Since this research was so heavily based on understanding culture, early during my process of data collection (interviews), I generated rough matrix formats for use with my coded information. These were developed directly from my conceptual framework, to support the ongoing information from the interviews. Formatting matrices was a critical piece of my research process. These were revised over time, so that they would not limit or "bully" the data. I realize that "formatting is a decisive operation: it determines which variables will be analyzed in which ways. If a variable isn't in the format, it won't get compared to another variable. Displays can help you summarize and compare findings within (and across) cases, but they can also be straightjackets" (Miles & Huberman,

1994, p. 98). This condensed overview of data was created through the text-voices of my participants. Again, short portraits of the three teacher participants are included the Appendices [Appendix I] to orient the reader to specific details, both personal and their current classroom settings.

Speaking of Culture as Categories.

As the teachers spoke of culture, their thoughts fell into several different categories. The matrix was formatted using the components from these categories: (1) self, (2) their family of origin (F.O.O.), (3) their current classroom and students, (4) their students' immigrant families, and (5) school climate. In *Chapter One* and *Chapter Two*, I wrote about the difficulty of defining culture within the academic world. I also presented three attributes that appeared frequently in the literature: (1) culture is learned, and transmitted through socialization; (2) culture is a way of life—assumptions, beliefs, values; and (3) culture is not static, but dynamic, evolving, and changing. Although these attributes orient me to my own processing and understanding of culture, they were not necessarily the same frame that the teachers used to describe culture. Each of the teachers started their description/definition of culture at a very concrete level. Culture was described primarily by cluster of words surrounding the immigrants' language, race, ethnicity, values, behavior, body language and style of communication. Social class, religion, and gender were also used by the teachers' to describe their notions of culture.

> Culture matters because it shapes all aspects of daily living and activities. Unfortunately, the manner in which culture manifests itself for students is frequently not understood in schools and is not used effectively to enhance teaching and learning for all students. This is unsettling because all facts of human conduct are mediated by culture. Culture is a complex constellation of values, mores, norms, customs, ways of being, ways of knowing, and traditions that provides a general design for living, is passed from generation to generation, and serves as a pattern for interpreting reality. (Howard, 2010, p. 51)

In reviewing the text-based words, or voices, of the three teacher-participants, their language also included "spirit, movement, feelings, emotions, independence, belonging, work ethic, trust, respect, truthfulness, honesty, pride, identity, and style of communication." All three teachers repeatedly returned to the word "language" when they would begin to address the idea of culture, or how they see it in their students, immigrant and non-immigrant alike. Symone spoke about her classroom, with children from vastly different cultures and using multiple languages, giving the word—language—a sense of focus in her working definition of culture:

> Those are the children who, who are bilingual, who they say are bilingual but it's not really bilingual. The children are dominant in Spanish. Spanish dominates. Or Cambodian. I have children who are from Cambodia. I have children who are from the Ivory Coast…in my groups, so they were not just Spanish speakers…so you're not… Looking at language in a bigger picture, in a bigger way. But you know, I know, I think as you get to be, like, how can I, how can I say like an experienced teacher. It doesn't make any difference if they're Cambodian, if they are Spanish speakers. When I teach a lesson, I'm teaching in English and we try to…okay, and sometimes I use Spanish, but you can believe that the Ivory kids, they learn some Spanish. I mean they are so…I mean kids are very fast learners. (Symone, #2)

For Symone, the children's languages are an asset. Language does not get in the way of their learning; rather it seems to expand into learning new words in a third language for some.

When Anita spoke of culture, she also repeatedly placed the word language in her working definition. As a child, Anita had started learning English as a three-year-old in a playgroup with other children in her home in Central America: "I remember my siblings and myself. I was the one who was more adaptable to being bicultural, bilingual…as we grew I was the one to read more in English than anybody else. Like both my siblings

were here [in the U.S.] before I ever made it here. But they did what they needed to do and went back" (Anita, #1). When I asked, "And do they consider themselves bilingual now?" Anita responded, "Yeah, but not as much as I embrace the culture… I mean, I'm very comfortable in both languages and in both cultures" (Anita, #1). Her language and thought seem to imagine culture and language as intertwined. It is from this personal experience that she assesses her work with immigrant children in her third grade classroom:

> But I think I have been able to reach my children in a very different way. They know I'm a presence in the room. They know that. Whether they listen to me or not, they will respond. Without raising my voice a whole lot. [*I: And you are the only one of the four teachers who is bilingual? Bicultural?*] Yeah…. so I'm the one who has the most experience and the most. I'm the one who, you know…but that's the way it is. And I think that's where experience and age and maturity and having done all different jobs and having had, you know, that background in education that I've had so far, is a help, whether I realize it or not. I mean I get stressed. I get stressed you know. In the moment, I get stressed I'm going to react like anybody else would react, but I don't. I've been trying to just kind of see. Let's take this perspective and see. Let's focus on these children. And if José doesn't know how to read and he doesn't know how to write. Okay, well I'll be his eyes and his hands right now, until he gets it. Until he understands and he can trust me. (Anita, #2)

Anita seems to see culture and language as one single unit, as she works to lower stress in herself and the classroom, or to build trust with a child whose spoken language abilities hinder his learning in English in her classroom. Again, the tone of this teacher's words does not pose a different culture and/or language as a problem; rather her assessment is that the child needs time and a relationship with his teacher.

The third teacher, Jackie, has an inclusive first grade classroom in a primary level school with immigrant families from many countries: China, India, Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, Mexico, Turkey, and Russia. There were also two families from ethnically

"mixed" Hispanic backgrounds in her class. This teacher also defines culture in part by the wide range of languages in this active classroom: " One of us, one of the adults, would greet them [the entering children] at the door and would say 'Good morning.' And they needed to say 'Good morning' back. Depending upon the time of year, we would say it in different languages. We taught Spanish in our class, so we would, you know, say it in Spanish a lot. 'Good morning! How are you?' But some kids would choose to say it in different languages. We had a bunch of languages, we had a bunch of languages hanging out" (Jackie, #2). Here, Jackie seems at ease with multiple languages, as a teacher who integrates culture and language fully into the curriculum.

Crafting their Cultural Concepts.

In different ways, each of the three teachers struggled to articulate a clear or specific definition of culture. Even when asked a direct question—How do you define culture? —Their answers were vaguer than I expected. Perhaps my expectations were unrealistic. As I worked to present this section of data, I found that the teachers' words did not seem explicit. Although each teacher used the word "culture" often, they all had difficulty making a clear statement. For example, an excerpt from Symone shows the importance of culture in her work: "And I really feel an important part, when you work with children from another culture, is like, to emphasize, like the importance of culture. Work first, start with things they know, their background, and understand them" (Symone, #1). This teacher went on to speak of very material items: food, crafts, stories, music, theater, and religion. This reflects Howard's (2010) discussion about culture as a construct: "In spite of its centrality to the study of numerous areas—including society, human development, social interaction, and student learning—culture is a misunderstood

and misinterpreted construct" (p. 51). My goal has been to understand how teachers think about culture, yet is looking at their definitions the way to proceed? My memo-ing sent me back to their text-based words and the matrices constructed. I present them here. The teachers' exact words are placed within the working matrix. I organized their component (five) words/responses into the categories (four) that the teachers repeatedly replied upon when stating their definitions: culture, language, values, and behavior.

Table 5.1 Conceptually Clustered Matrix: Research Question
What do these teachers think about culture? How do they define it?

Components **Teacher▼**	**Self**	**F.O.O.**	**Classroom/ Children**	**Immigrant Families**	**School Climate**
Anita ***Culture***	embraces & comfortable with it	valued, stayed in a 2nd culture	Values it, feels a connection to it, race, ethnicity, class, religions	From local neighborhood, hungry, not fed, poor	Community/ neighborhood school, under-resourced
Language	Bicultural/ Bilingual	Bicultural/ bilingual	Bicultural/ bilingual	Bicultural/ bilingual	Bicultural/ not bilingual
Values	Freedom & autonomy		To be successful	Church is a support/bridge	Freedom & autonomy
	Trust, respect, success	Trust, respect	Trusting, yet disrespectful	Compliance	
Behavior	Listening		Can't handle free Choice/ freedom	Styling it up	Teachers are overwhelmed
Behavior continued	Overworked		Body language, not listening	Won't take responsibility for children	No community, over worked
	Isolated		Isolation, Violence	Violence, Given up	Isolated, violence
	Stress		Stressed	Stressed	Stressed
			Out of control	Not used to being involved with schools	Trying to prove something

Components Teacher▼	Self	F.O.O.	Classroom/ Children	Immigrant Families	School Climate
Symone ***Culture***	Race, spirit, language, values, middle-class	Valued, stayed in a 2nd culture, race	Values it, Connected to it, start here w/ kids for success	Different values, languages & ways of seeing	Part of community, families are connected
	Travel, interesting, caring	Sense of private-public life	Race, ethnicity, language, kids are richer for 2 worlds	Strength for families	Administration is isolated
Language	Tricultural/ Trilingual	Tricultural/ Trilingual	Bicultural/ bilingual	Bicultural/ bilingual	Bicultural/ bilingual
Values	Cares about others/ understanding	Reading, to belong	Hard work, emotions/feelings	Respect, hard work	Culture first: food, music, stories & art
	Books, life skills, reading, traveling	Life skills, thinking, confidence	Life skills, independence, truthful, trust	Challenge them to trust the school	Teaches life skills
Behavior	Listening, positive, open minded	Observe	Movement	Support kids, share family life	Teamwork, support each other
	Engage others		Share family life	Want kids happy, safe	Bridge to home life
	To feel welcomed		Need to feel accepted, belong	Violence in daily life	
			Stressed/poverty	Stressed	Lack resources
	Open-minded	Flexible	Flexible		Responsive

Components Teacher▼	Self	F.O.O.	Classroom/ Children	Immigrant Families	School Climate
Jackie ***Culture***	Street smart, language, socio-economic level	Urban, lower-working class	Urban, socio-economic, ethnic identity & pride	Urban, wide range from local neighborhood	Urban, community/ neighborhood school.
	Diverse back-ground		Diverse population	Diverse population	Diverse population
Language	Bicultural/ Bilingual	Bicultural/ bilingual	Bicultural/ bilingual	Bicultural/ bilingual	Not bilingual
	Keys in voice tone & body language		Body language, tone of voice	Body language, tone of voice	Communication
Values	Honesty, difference		Equity	Their children	Support all parties
	Respect, equity, diversity	Trust, respect, caring		Children happy/ engaged with school	District-wide communication
	Professional growth	Personal growth	Learning	Learning	Learning life skills
Behavior	Reflection, self knowledge	Reflection	Raise their awareness	Problem solving	Provides translators
	Be conscious of culture, strive to learn	Problem solving	Lenses-learn to use different ones	Being part of the group/ school	Culturally responsive teaching
	Outreach to families, get to know families	Stressed	Stressed	Stressed, hard working, few resources	Resources stressed, out-reach in place

Culture as Language, Race, and Ethnicity.

Making use of a matrix as an organizational tool shows the complexity of the issue of culture for these three teacher-participants. Although each of the three women used some of the same words to define culture—race, ethnicity, class, and language—one cannot assume that the meanings each one gives to these words are the same. The

equating of culture with language and/or ethnicity is a common first position used by many for defining culture (Gay, 2000; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Shore, 2002). Equating language with culture has deep roots in the field of cultural anthropology: "An enduring analogy between language and culture has been central in various incarnations in the shaping of American cultural anthropology throughout much of the 20th century. Although the analogy is presently somewhat submerged, I think it continues to underlie much contemporary theory in some fairly quirky ways. What is important is that the recurrently implied close union of language and culture has been a very fruitful one, but it also has had real consequences for our notices of culture, flexibility, variation, and change" (Brenneis, 2002, p. 265). Even the children in Anita's third grade classroom created the same equation: language = culture = ethnic identity. She described one conversation where a child equated the Spanish language to being from Puerto Rico:

> Maria is Puerto Rican and Mexican. Jose is Puerto Rican. He calls himself Taino. (Laughs) He asks me, "Are you Puerto Rican?" "No, I'm from Honduras." "But you speak Puerto Rican!" "No, I don't speak Puerto Rican; I speak Spanish." Jose answers, "Well, that's Puerto Rican!" (Anita, #2)

This classroom contained immigrant children from at least five different Latino groups: Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Guatemala, and Puerto Rico. As this teacher spoke of the different Spanish-speaking children, she clearly saw different cultural nuances among these groups; yet language was one of the first categories she gave to define culture. Anita did not see the Spanish-speaking children in her classroom as a homogenous culture. Brenneis (2002) explains that central to the notion of culture is that it is shared among people; "and sharedness often seemed necessarily to imply both a high degree of homogeneity and a sense of boundedness" (p. 265). Taking Anita's story

as an example, it seems to me that the teachers were defining culture in much narrower ways than they actually experienced it.

In studying cultural practices in urban learning communities (Gutiérrez, 2002), the discussion has included a shift from using an anthropological construct of culture to historical and sociocultural constructions of culture. Culture anthropology is relevant for human development, yet this shift to a differently based context for culture has proven valuable for educators. Teachers, who seek ways to improve outcomes for students who have perennially underperformed in our schools, find this new frame more workable (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003):

> While the anthropological construct is an important starting point for understanding and examining culture, it often falls short for educators because it fails to make explicit the manner in which culture is manifested in school settings in general, and in the learning processes of individuals from culturally different backgrounds in particular. In light of current academic disparities between students from culturally diverse backgrounds and their peers, there is a need to thoroughly examine culture in new ways—ways that typically have not been part of the dominant education discourse about human behavior, learning, and classroom settings. (Howard, 2010, p. 52)

My work to analyze, or to make explicit, how these three teachers defined culture during our interviews first started from this anthropologically oriented examination. Yet the matrix boxes were not working to give the clarity of definition that I was seeking. I found some explanation, grounding, and direction in the current research work done in schools by Gutiérrez, Asato, Santos, & Gotanda (2002) around "…the consequences of conflating culture with social categories, i.e., race/ethnicity and its proxies, language and ability" (p. 318). Gutiérrez and her colleagues recommend moving away from analytical approaches that isolate culture into categorical variables, which is where I started with my analysis in this report. Instead, they take an activity-based, problem-oriented

approach to understanding the role of culture; Gutiérrez et al (2002) writes, "For me, then, studying culture becomes an analysis of the cultural practices of learning environments" (p. 313). I realize that I cannot go back and re-interview my teacher-participants to glean this new information, yet I believe that this focus on activity as the unit would be a more fruitful approach to analysis. To me, this orientation moves culture from being a static noun into a verb and on to a more active and dynamic interpretation of culture.

Culture as Practice and Action

Brenneis (2002) notes that, "Language and culture are not just 'about' the world but are phenomena, practices, and framework for action in themselves" (p. 266). When I reviewed the data for definitions of culture, I was aware that it seemed the teachers spoke of culture in their practice and as a framework for their actions. The sections of the teachers' words within the matrix, articulated in Table 5.1 and grouped into categories of culture, language, values, and behavior are described more with verbs and action. My analysis needed to reflect this shift about culture, or words and categories for defining culture. Gutiérrez (2002) refers to this as the conundrum of stepping out of the "box."

> Culture is fluid, overlapping, and has multiple dimensions. However, conceiving of culture as a category inevitably makes it the property of many categories. A methodological problem arises: In which category do the various dimensions of culture fit? What if there are overlapping categories? Recent educational policies that targeted English language learners—a vastly heterogeneous group—in one sweeping reform illustrate this problem. However, it seems to me that there is another problem that complicates the use of discrete categories. Avoiding the use of social categories to describe cultural processes and practices is not always an easy move. As a researcher, educator, and person of color, I am routinely confronted with the ways these categories are used by practitioners, policy makers, and the general public to make sense of policy, practice, and daily social interaction. (Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 319)

The idea of moving away from the notion of treating the teachers' definitions of culture as static categories—such as language, race, ethnicity—provided a different lens through which to view this data. This provided insight into the teachers' frameworks for culture, which gave me access to some of the complexity of the data. From this analytical work, I found myself agreeing with the researchers working with culture from a cultural-historical theoretical model: "Equating culture with race, ethnicity, language preference, or national origin results in overly deterministic, static, weak, and uncomplicated understandings of both individuals and the community practices in which they participate (Gutiérrez, Asato, Santos, & Gotanda, 2002)" in (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 21).

Being open to listening to children sounds easy, and many experienced teachers might describe themselves as good listeners; yet to be able to listen to the whole child—-words, voice, body, eyes, and emotional tenor—is a critical part of a teacher's classroom work, particularly when the majority of students in a class come from a range of cultural backgrounds. When trying to describe culture to me, all three of the teacher-participants spoke about "listening" as a critical skill when working with immigrant children and their families.

Here, Symone explains her view of working with a child who was a poor reader and resistant to language tasks:

> So, they were reading the biography and then he…the rule is like to make a summary with the main idea in three details. Okay, so the child put the main idea of that biography and then the three ideas, not in order. And I say, 'Well, you know, you need to put the details in order.' And he's like, 'Nope! The teacher…the other teacher didn't say that.' Well, I was like, 'Well now you're working with me. And I want you to be organized.' And so, I saw his face. He was not too happy. But then I say, 'You finish quickly and then we're going to keep working on the ven diagram. And I got on, from, the internet something [for

> you].' And I highlighted some ideas. Well, immediately his face changes, you know? So that's for me the most rewarding. Or sometimes they see a task that is hard but then, it's like when you're an experienced teacher, you know. You know these faces. You know. Then you change what you are doing. Or you make it a little different…yeah. Because you don't want anybody…I always say, 'Well, I want children happy, because if they aren't happy, they are not learning.' (Symone, #2)

This anecdote reveals Symone's ability to listen, observe, and respond to the student-learner. It also depicts a high level of confidence in her ongoing work in a classroom that contains other adults, as well. Her behavior allows her to engage with even this resistant child.

Anita had this dialogue with one of her third grade girls after the child's mother had a new baby. Again, the level of listening, observing, and responding is high:

> Well, I mean you…she was looking forward to her little sister being born. And I met her mom on Parent's Night, and she's adorable. Jessica and her mom and her older sister…Jessica tells me, 'and you know…they cry, cry, cry.' That's what Jessica says. So she's needy. I understand that. You know, so I'm there. 'Can I hold you hand?' she asks. 'Yes, you can.' You know a lot of things like that. So I've got to make it so…you know, they can be successful at whatever is that they're doing. So it's very, it really is differentiating for every single one of them. Trying to pull them together in small groups, but really focusing on, listening to, exactly what it is going on [for each one]. (Anita, #2)

Anita described to me how this student knew that she needed to be helpful and compliant at home with the new baby; yet when she showed her sadness, frustration, and need to connect to her teacher, Anita was listening and watching and able to respond.

Although all three teachers described the need to be a good listener and observer as they spoke about the cultural differences in their classrooms, Jackie was the one teacher who could articulate how listening, both as a skill for herself and for the children,

was given time and place in her curriculum. This description of her first grade classroom gives a clear picture of just how essential this skill is to her:

> So, I mean, on a daily basis, it's just really listening to the kids and giving them that voice in the classroom, I feel like…I do a lot, like I said, of social problem solving and things like that, so I try to have a Share Circle everyday. It doesn't always happen in the reality of the classroom. But we try to fit it in everyday. And like I said, snack time is social time. Like some teachers make them work, while they eat snack. I give it to them as their social time. And you know, you can overhear kids talking to other kids and that gives you a lot of information, when you hear them saying to their friends about what they did at home and over the weekend. Because they sometimes don't want to share with the adult. But giving them that time to interact with their peers, you learn a lot about them too, and what they do and what they like to play. Because if you ask them, they'll say one word answers sometimes. But if they're talking with their friends, they say a lot more and you can hear a lot more….you know a little bit more to keep a close eye and a watchful eye. You know. Keep your ears open about what's going on…But you just have to be a good listener, I feel like. And you really read the sign on your kids because…if you know your kids, and you've given them the opportunity to share with you and stuff. You can immediately tell when something is wrong. (Jackie, #2)

This excerpt from Jackie highlights the complexity of being a listener or observer in one's own classroom. Jackie also described how she used classroom space and centers to allow herself time to simply "watch and listen to the classroom or to one child." Creating a classroom environment that is stable enough to allow the teacher time to simply observe the learning, while being in the middle of the activities, is a highly developed skill. A teacher must value this ability to so mindfully develop it in the shared learning environment, as Jackie does.

Although each of the three teachers mentioned listening and observing as something they value in regards to understanding culture, Jackie was the only one who had fully integrated this value into her daily work in the classroom. In reviewing the data matrix, I was reminded that she also was the only teacher who felt fully supported by the

school administration and the district. It is beyond the scope of this case study to make causal links, yet this alignment stands out. Each of the teachers could see that many of the immigrant children and families they worked with were "overwhelmed or stressed." Anita also described herself, as a teacher feeling isolated and unsupported by her school administration, with these same words. All three schools had similar rates of poverty as monitored via the free lunch program rates, and each of these teachers described their schools as under-resourced. Therefore, when Jackie speaks about culture while working in this active inclusion first grade classroom, and she does not feel overworked, isolated, nor stressed, it seems like a remarkable difference.

Teachers' Conceptualization of Culture Concepts

As we have seen in the previous section, *Teachers' Descriptions of Culture*, these three teachers working in classrooms with immigrant students from numerous countries across our shared world, who interact across various cultures every day in their classrooms, have difficulty defining the actual word, idea, or concept of culture. As I culled through their data, I reflected on the fact that, outside of anthropology, social scientists have often been reluctant to include culture as a significant dimension in their research analyses. Many anthropologists feel this results not from researchers seeing the phenomenon as irrelevant, but rather from people having a hard time getting their minds around the very idea of culture (Shore, 2002): "The trouble with taking culture seriously has to do with the very importance of culture in human life: its global and pervasive effects. Culture is a holistic notice that has proven very difficult to conceptualize as a workable unit of analysis. This makes it hard, as Rogoff suggests, to effectively model cultural effects as independent variables in research designs" (p. 227).

Perhaps I was too naïve or ambitious in persevering along this route. I am not an anthropologist, yet I do take culture seriously; I want others to do so, as well. I did not anticipate encountering such difficulty in this task, as presented in my interviews with working teachers. It makes sense to me now that many cultural anthropologists have generally resisted any sort of breaking down of culture into variables, as I have attempted here. They argue that culture is in its nature holistic and ubiquitous (Shore, 2002).

I think there would be disequilibrium in my analysis if I were to move forward without presenting clear definitions or explanations of culture from my interviews. Perhaps this simply reflects the complexity of studying culture. I have struggled to make sense of these three teachers' descriptions of culture. Gutiérrez (2002) has worked with culture in schools and classrooms and states "…how we define and make sense of culture has implications not only for our research; it also has moral and political implications…. Thus, to use culture as an analytical tool, we must recognize its dynamic nature and capture the ways in which it can serve both as an adaptive tool and a constraint" (p. 320). I think this disequilibrium results from an element of constraint.

As we will see in the next section, these working teachers have clearer ideas concerning culture's impact on communication and miscommunication with immigrant students and their families. Relating this data to cultural theories is important.

Teachers' Thinking about Cultural Theories

When I proposed this research study, I made the decision to interview experienced teachers working with large numbers of immigrant children and families in their classrooms. This decision stemmed primarily from my work in public elementary schools in urban areas over the past three decades. My teaching, supervision, and

mentoring experiences allowed me to witness teachers' development as they came into contact with the realities of schools, at a time when more and more new immigrants arrived at their classroom doors. As stated in *Chapter One* and *Chapter Two*, if we look at nation-wide demographics, more than 20% of elementary students are new immigrants, or the children of new immigrants. My own work with teachers in public schools followed the national demographics, where most of my colleagues have been White, middle-class, and heterosexual women from Judeo-Christian backgrounds. I had expected that my teacher-participants for this research would fall into this general population model. Perhaps I made this assumption because I have had the most experience working within and/or alongside this mono-cultural and monolingual group. As reported in *Chapter Four*, the three teacher-participants in this study were neither mono-cultural nor monolingual; rather two were bilingual and bi-cultural and one was trilingual and bi-cultural. These women came forward from their various schools and wanted to engage in this work about culture. Listening to them talk about their students and families, I became curious about how their personal experiences across cultures would interface with cultural theories. I proposed working with cultural dimensions (Brislin, 1993, 2000; Hofstede, 1997, 2001; Spring, 2008; Trompenaars, 1993), most particularly the individualistic/collectivist dimension.

Cultural-Historical Theory.

My desire to explore how teachers explain culture and understand it theoretically came from witnessing many teachers who seemed not to see culture, or to ignore or devalue it, or worse, to see it as a deficit in the lives of students. My desire for understanding and communication between schools and immigrant families is strong,

with the ultimate goal to increase student learning. All three teachers talked about ways in which teaching to the students' culture, or immigrant experience, afforded them opportunities to connect with and support their students. In these next three excerpts, Anita, Symone, and Jackie all discuss instances in their classroom whens they felt that certain assignments and activities struck a positive cord with their students.

> And there are many [immigrant students] in the classroom, there were like…I would say ten kids…but today I worked with these two that just came from Puerto Rico. So one child is nine and one child is, I say, eight. But their level is kindergarten….So at the beginning I did a unit on, and so I thought…feelings. I thought, well, they need to really deal with many feelings here. So I had a complete unit on feelings… and I brought poems and fiction, non-fiction. And tons of books on feelings and activities. So, and now I'm starting…I'm still doing like 'How do you finish this writing?' So I bring in books about the rain. And poems about the rain. So they are making little books of 'What I Like to do when it's Raining.' So they are hearing the vocabulary and they are making the connection. And it's the weather and everything will be different here than it was in Puerto Rico. For sure. (Symone, #2)

> As far as like their cultural backgrounds, every year I do an ancestry project. So it's a family project and they have to present like what country they come from. It can be America. If you were born here, you do your project on the U.S. You know, where your family grew up. Your grandparents. So, that's a piece where I get to know the cultural aspects of the families and the kids love it! Because I say they can dress in clothes from their country. They can bring in food. So every day is really different…yeah, they can write a book, or make a poster. Their presentation can take a lot of forms, so they really love that…Because sometimes you don't even realize where a lot of your families come from. And you think they've been here for so long. And a lot of times I've found out, no. That their parents came over two years ago. And they were just born…they just came over here before school started. So you learn a lot about your families that way. (Jackie, #2)

> I have a child [new] who is very frustrated because he doesn't know anything. He can't read [in third grade] and yet he loves baseball. So I go and find books of his level and print them and photo copy them and read with him. And he can't write. And we write everyday. So I give him a writing prompt and he said, 'I can't. I'm tired. I'm not going to do it.' And I said, 'you're going to come with me. We're going to sit together and you're going to dictate it to me and I will write for you.' So that was it. He dictated to me. So instead of him, you know, not doing his work…he's from New Jersey, tough as they come. The kid's don't like him, so I

> have to make them understand he's new. He doesn't know our routines. You know, somebody, let's buddy somebody up with him. (Anita, #2)

In these three passages, these working teachers describe ways in which activities allowed them to connect with students, to support their home cultures or their transitions to new classrooms or schools. Clearly, each of these teachers believes in the importance of connecting with children; without a connection between teacher and student, it is difficult to imagine learning taking place. Connecting through activities seems natural for them. The instruction described here seems to build on the learners' experiences and extend them, as well as introducing new and perhaps even unfamiliar ways of doing things. This practice corresponds with Gutiérrez's and Rogoff's (2003) theoretical work and applications of cultural-historical approaches where the focus "…is on the importance and benefit of knowing about the histories and valued practices of cultural groups rather than trying to teach prescriptively according to broad, unexamined generalities about groups" (p. 20). This cultural-historical theory resonated with the social-cultural and social-political context theories of Nieto (1999) that I have worked with for the past decade.

> In cultural-historical approaches, learning is conceived of as a process occurring within ongoing activity, and not divided into separate characteristics of individuals and contexts (Cole & Engestrom, 1993; Lave, 1996). Including consideration of the history of a person's or a groups' related engagements can account for 'dispositions' they may have in new circumstances. However, the crucial distinction we are making is between *understanding processes* and *locating characteristics*. (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 20)

I found value in this theoretical shift away from thinking about culture as only as specific categories, characteristics, traits, or attributes. This method of a category or dimensional approach I had first proposed to use in this research study is what I used to

analyze the teachers' words in the first section of my analysis; and as previously stated I found it lacking. I now believe that my own experience with research on culture was insufficient to prepare me for the challenging task I had set out to do. I needed to understand the historical roots of the use of cultural learning styles in educational research.

This newer research model first appeared in the U.S. at the end of the 1960s during President Johnson's "War on Poverty" and was guided by research efforts to understand cultural deprivation (Howard, 2010). At this time, there was a critical need to improve the deplorable schooling situations of poor and working-class students in U.S. public schools. Like the majority of our current immigrants, these students were mostly students of color and English-language learners. Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) explain,

> The cultural styles approach arose from efforts as researchers attempted to leave behind deficit-model thinking, in which cultural ways that differ from the practices of dominant groups are judged to be less adequate without examining them from the perspective of the community's participants….an alternative to the cultural styles approach is to deny cultural difference; however, ruling out discussions of cultural variation has often meant that the cultural practices of the dominant group are taken as the norm. Although deficit-model thinking is still with us, the cultural styles approach offered an alternative by characterizing cultural ways of different groups in terms that are respectful, attempting to describe them without making value judgments that suggest value hierarchies in cultural practices. (p. 19)

As I begin to have a deeper insights for where my own research knowledge base was situated, my efforts to move out of the deficit-thinking model, though well intended, limited my own thinking about culture. I was still thinking in terms of locating characteristics as a means to understanding culture. My work was overly categorical. By describing culture through an activity approach, these three teachers were forcing me to expand my theoretical knowledge base on culture.

Cultural Difference Theory.

To review, in the review of literature in *Chapter Two*, I presented various explanations that have been put forward to explain the differences in academic outcomes and performances of under achieving students, including immigrant children. One of the more troubling explanations for the disparity in the U.S. is the deficit-based view of culture regarding low-income students and students of color. Although the majority of students from the three schools where these teacher-participants worked came from low-income families of color, the teachers did not hold this deficit perspective at all: "These [deficit] explanations usually are centered on low-income students and students of color lacking or being devoid of culture, coming from a culture of poverty that is not suitable for academic success, possessing an oppositional culture, having disdain for academic achievement, or having parents who lack concern for their children's academic aspirations (McWhorter, 2000; Ogbu, 1987; Steele, 1990; Valencia, 1997)" in (Howard, 2010, p. 68).

As I reread the transcripts of my conversations with these three teachers, it seemed clear that they saw cultural difference, yet did not see culture as a deficit. As their thinking about culture fell into cultural difference theory, it made sense to locate my analysis there, as well: "A number of scholars respond to cultural deficit theory by stating that students from diverse backgrounds are not deficient in their ways of being, but different (Ford, 1996; Irvine, 2003; Lee, 2007, Moll, 2000)" in (Howard, 2010, p. 69). I present here a table that compares information about these two cultural theories.

Table 5.2 Deficit and Difference Viewpoints

Cultural Deficit Theory	***Cultural Difference Theory***
Culture is nonexistent or abnormal	Culture is rich, unique, and complex
Language is a deficit	Language is an asset
Home environment is pathological	Home environment has capital
Genetics matter	Environment matters
Solution: Transform the child	**Solution: Transform the school**

Howard, (2010). *Why race and culture matter in the classroom,* p.69.

The first strand outlined in the cultural difference theory is that *culture is rich, unique, and complex.* The second strand is that *language is an asset.* Symone was able to connect these two strands in one description from interview number three. In this last interview, the teachers were asked to make meaning of culture in their work with immigrant children:

> Well, I can say that, like in one sense they [her students] are richer. In the sense that they have two languages. They have two cultures. So because they always are bringing like, their Spanish in, or when I talk in Spanish they are happy to hear me. So they have that thing that some other kids don't have. So in a sense they are richer than other ones because they are always, they have their Puerto Rican background. Or some an Ecuadorian background. So in that sense they…I think they are more flexible, you know? And like, they can switch between two languages. And they can make connections. (Symone, #3)

In the following excerpt, Jackie reflects on the depth of complexity of culture and the need to be reflective about her own culture, so that she can be open to seeing the differences. Her first grade room was filled with children from at least ten different countries: "I'm like, I'm not expecting to know everything about every culture. It's not

humanly possible! But if you take the time and ask questions and you know, try to reach out…and really just take the time to listen to them and talk to them, you'll learn a lot more. It will make your job easier because you'll have an understanding of what's going on in your student's life" (#2). Jackie has been teaching this same grade level at the same school for seven years. Her awareness and understanding about differences in cultures was vividly displayed in each interview. Here she explains how to see the uniqueness of different cultures:

> You have to be aware of your own knowledge before you can understand where other people are coming from, and to get…their, you know, view on it. Well, if it's something like content area, you kind of know something and you reach out to those more knowledgeable. But even cultures, like, if I didn't know anything about the language or something, I've gone to other people in the school who I know. Parents who know the language, or even another student in the school, like, 'Can you help me? And make this child feel more comfortable?' Like, 'Can you introduce me as
> their teacher?' You just need to reach out. (Jackie, #3)

It is clear from the final sentence of this passage that Jackie realizes the importance of reaching out across cultural differences to students. I was struck by how each of the teachers expressed their ongoing delight and intrigue with immigrant children: "What…what interests me is, like, I think that people in different cultures are so interesting. You know? It's like we [with her husband] went to Eastern Europe and like, we didn't understand a word. Like in Hungary, but you still have the feelings that, they do things that are similar to what we do. And there's really a feeling that they do things differently. And that is very interesting, too!" (Symone, #1) As I listened to these women speak about culture, in their own lives and in the lives of their classrooms, I sensed openness in them and the responses they gave.

In the following passage, Anita expresses how the complexity of cultures at her community school was being hugely impacted by the poverty in which immigrants were living in the community. Even with this teacher's ability to see culture as unique and complex, the overriding sense was that families did not have the resources to mitigate poverty:

> [My school] was originally a magnet school. It's also a community school because it's a bridge between two of the main avenues in Springfield. So, anybody in those two communities can access it. To get from one end to the other. So it's a very open school in terms of the building and structure itself. So, it's called a community school….Yeah. The majority of the students were and are now Latino. They are, I think, 97% of them are Latino. Maybe a little lower, let's say 91%. And like, 3%, 4% are African-American. More so now because they are…the school's [students] now according to where you live. Now it's become a neighborhood school. So it's the people who live around it that attend….I pretty much built an interesting relationship with my children…from all their different backgrounds….But they listen and respect me and they trust me. Most of them, not all. But it's been a slow thing. And I think I really had to work with them individually. To really focus on each child. Every other day, when I can learn a little bit more about them, where they come from….To know the kids. Know where they are at and kind of… I can't force any learning on them. I can't. They're not eating, they're not going to pay attention at my circle. So I have to make sure they are fed. (Anita, #2)

This teacher brought the issues of the school's urban neighborhood—poverty, poor housing, violence, low employment, and alcohol and substance abuse—into each and every interview. I cannot discern why her awareness was high regarding these issues. She was new to this school, yet had been teaching in the same city for several years, in schools in similar neighborhoods. The school has new leadership and a new mission, moving the entire elementary school into a new curriculum and pedagogy. Perhaps this internal institutional situation put the outside issues into stronger relief: "It's like. How are [you] going to get this school to be normalized? I don't know. But I don't think I'll be here to see it. To move a culture of violence and fear and uncertainty and

domination…To a culture of choice, freedom, responsibilities, respect…is huge. And without…I don't know. Without a core group, or enough of a group to sustain something…it's almost like, it's like intercultural communication is going [away]" (Anita, #2).

Even with the struggles of many immigrants in this community, Anita still recognized the potential strength and assets within the families and their homes. This connects with the third and fourth strands from Cultural Difference Theory: *home environment has capital* and *environment matters.*

In is important to note that Anita is foreshadowing her comment to teaching values—freedom, choice, respect, and autonomy—while sharing anxiety about the immigrant families meeting basic needs. Anita describes her experience with families from her classroom since school started and the need to build trust: "For me the point is the kids. I always go back to the children. To their families" (Anita, #2). Seeing the everyday life struggles in the community and how these carry over to in the school, she has concerns about how to build trust with families, so that family and school resources can be jointly used to support the children.

> So, I don't know what their [families'] interactions with other schools have been. I have like a good number, I've had five or six children who are new to the school. The other ones, they're used to the old teachers, the school being a different way. There was nothing told to the parents about the changes. My understanding is that the parents were never told that the previous teachers had left and about the difference in school climate nowadays….Right now I think there is just way too much happening. We're trying to implement the program, with mostly first-year teachers. They're trying to do this in an inner city school, where…most, just about all the teachers who knew the families left. We are left now to form new bonds with these families. They don't know a thing about us. We were never introduced. Nothing [was explained]. No, not to my knowledge. (Anita, #3)

For Anita, it was important to develop trust and respect between the two communities: school staff and families from the neighborhood. Clearly, she is feeling the extra stress because of the huge administrative shifts in the school and the damage that has done to relationships with families. Anita feels she and the other teachers are doing this work without strong school support.

Here, Symone expresses her belief about families being critical resources to the classroom. She values their culture and lives as an addition both for the group's benefit, as well as a support for their own child:

> And working with the families. Knowing the families well. That can be an asset to your teaching…if you can bring the families to school. It's great for the kids to see their parents in the school, because they always have something to share, you know. Their experience of moving [here]. Leaving home. Even if they're not like professionals…we had one opportunity, we brought in parents, and more than one way. Like when we have community helpers. And people came in and they mainly were parents. And they made their job seem so important. To show how important it was, that the kids were like, 'Oh my goodness. Yes, this is important!' And that one from Bradley Airport, he was like, he cleaned the airport. And he got a lot of tags for the kids and he showed them how important it [tags] is. Or a mother was a nurse. And a father was a firefighter. So the more we involve the families, the families will trust the school more. And feel more welcomed. And the kids feel the same thing. Feel more welcomed and proud of their families. So I think that's the most important thing. Involve the families. And make them feel more comfortable. (Symone #3)

Symone goes on to give an example of how the emotional life of the families can support so much. She describes this *home environment capital* (Table 5.2, Howard, 2010), she sees within the Hispanic culture in general, and clearly values it.

> And, I'm not Puerto Rican, but I've been working for, with them for many years, so I know a lot about their culture. So that is very positive about them, that they [immigrant children] have two cultures. Another thing that is very good about working with these kids is that…I don't know how other people see it. The way I see is like they have very strong family. Attachments. Especially with abuela. It's not the mother, but it's with the abuela. The grandmother. So, they have a lot of cousins and so…emotionally, they have a lot of support. So, in that sense, it's

> very positive to work with them, you know? Perhaps they don't teach them to read. Perhaps some do, some don't. Emotionally they are always giving support. (Symone, #3)

She refines this example of a seeing and valuing her students' families' styles as she explains the critical role of trying not to have conflict between home and school life, at least on the social-emotional level: "Yeah, that's what I think our main job should be, apart from…their well-being. It's like, make them interested in things. You know? And when you were talking about culture and its values and action…the way you do things. What, what happens when you sense a…a conflict in a student, in a family? Between the culture of the family and the culture of the school…that might impact the kid's self-esteem. Not just their learning…but their emotional health" (Symone, #3). Symone thinks deeply about the potential of cultural conflict for the children in her care.

It seems to me that Symone works to avoid what Howard (2010) calls the cultural discontinuity that can exist between culturally diverse students and their teachers: "A growing number of scholars have posited that teacher beliefs and practices should recognize and respect the intricacies and complexities of culture, and the differences that come with it, and that pedagogical practices and ideological stances should be structured in ways that are culturally recognizable and socially meaningful" (Foster, 1989, 1993; Howard, 2001, 2003; Lee, 2007; Nasir, 2000) in (Howard, 2010, p. 69).

Jackie, the first grade teacher, also was aware of this idea of cultural discontinuity, although she did not name it as such. Jackie tried to do home visits for all incoming students each year. Her district supported this work, yet did not require it. As a pre-service teacher and during some summers, Jackie ran a K-3 day camp, which rotated its location in the families' backyards. She found being in the children's home

cultures gave her an enormously helpful grounding to start off her classroom work each year. She said:

> I was involved, prior to being a teacher in the district, so I had been in a lot of families' homes. I had known them prior to that and even after doing Backyard Friends camps, where it's in people's houses. And rotating through those houses you can learn so much more about the family, when you're in their house and environment. Like that's their domain. Their environment. You learn a lot about families and kids. You know, what they have. Do they watch TV at home? Do they not watch TV? Just different aspects of their lifestyles. So it [home visits] does give you insights. No, it gives you knowledge. It just gives you tons of knowledge about a family. Not to make judgments… positive or negative. It's just you get to see what they've done all day. (Jackie, #2)

Another excerpt demonstrates into just how much Jackie values knowing the home culture and environment of her students: "You have to be aware of what's going on with these kids. Because if you just try and cram in the content, you're missing a lot. And you're doing a disservice to these students, if you don't know where they're coming from and understand them. Because, yeah, you can teach the content all you want, and yes it will get through to a lot f them, but if you don't know them, and use their strengths and play off of those and really try to reach them. It's not, you know, they're not going to make as much growth as you want them to, just by shoving content down their throats" (Jackie, #2). Clearly, Jackie makes use of the cultural capital that each child brings to her classroom. Gutiérrez (2002) models to educators how to take an activity-based, problem-oriented approach to understanding the role of culture in our educational settings and context: "… studying culture becomes an analysis of the cultural practices of the learning environment" (Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 313). Jackie is astute in her assumption that to understand the cultural lives immigrant children bring into her classroom, she must observe and listen so that she can build upon their strengths. I believe Jackie has tuned into the dynamic and process notion of culture. Moll (2002) argues that the focus of our

analysis should be on people's everyday practices, or on how people live culturally. Not only does Jackie see and value the home culture and life, she also acknowledges that home and school are both places of learning. She wants her children to benefit from cooperation between people in both environments:

> …to me then that becomes, 'Okay, well, what can we do to support them at home, too? To get them to do these things [learning] and get them, these kids caught up. It's huge. It's a big chunk of our first grade and kindergarten population who is having this problem, and you know, everyone is like 'Well, we can only do what we can do in school.' And to me, I'm like, 'No,' (laughs) I'm like, 'No, no. We can reach out and we can get these families working at home, too, and get them support.' But it is work, and a lot of these kids are just being classified now, and I'm like, 'They don't have learning disabilities. It's not that. It's that they've got a gap. And we have to close that gap somehow and need to figure out exactly what we can do to get that to start to close. Because they're at a disadvantage right now. And we want them to be successful and we want them to catch up. So what are we going to put into place? Whether it's extra support in school. Whether extra support after school. What are we going to do to help them? Because we're seeing a trend right now, and we've seen this is what it is. We look at a list of our kids who are below grade level, and three-fourths of them are Hispanic, you know. What does that tell you? You know, we need to look into this more and figure out what we can do! (Jackie, #3)

Like the other participants, Symone echoes the critical importance of schools and teachers utilizing the home environment capital. There is strength in building a learning environment that spans these two parts of the children's life:

> The school is seen as part of the community. Sometimes it's…I think it…I mean. I think Puerto Rican families think very highly about teachers, and they believe that you're doing the best for their child. I think they are very positive and they have…it's like they say with the little ones, 'The teacher is your mother. Es tu mama…tu mama.' I mean that's my impression. But I think Puerto Rican families…are happy with the schools just in general. There are some people maybe who might not be happy, but from what I see, I have the idea they are happy. (Symone, #2)

This Spanish expression *Es tu mama,* gives a sense of extended community that moves easily from the home to the school environment. It speaks of a level of comfort, respect,

and mutual understanding. For Symone, the learning environment extends from the home and school to the larger community. Symone was the only one of the three teacher-participants who was also a parent. We did not discuss this specifically, yet from several comments, she made, I felt that her personal mothering experience enhanced her comfort in working with families. One response reveals how easily Symone moved into mentoring/guiding young immigrant families.

> They think I'm very strict. I ask the parents, 'Does your child have a library card? Well, take the child to the library, please, and get a card! Libraries are amazing.' And I tell the kids all the time, 'Have you gone to the library? Tell your parents, tomorrow is Saturday, we need to go to the library.' So, that, I'm really…[I] feel it's important. Once they go to the library, they pick books. I was like, 'Well, you know you look at the book, if you feel like it's too hard, there are people and they may help you. Just say…This is too hard for me or sometimes, this is too easy for me. And I feel like once they go. It's like they want to keep going… So, I like them to do homework, but I emphasize: Go to the library and get books! (Symone, #2)

These excerpts show how placing value on the culture and family's home environment is part of these three teachers-participant' work with their families, including immigrant families. In their research on teaching cross-culturally, Villegas and Lucas (2007) describe a framework for successful teaching of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds: "It demands a new way of looking at teaching that is grounded in an understanding of the role of culture and language in learning" (p. 29). From their work, six salient qualities have surfaced that can serve as a coherent framework: (1) understanding how learners construct knowledge; (2) learning about students' lives; (3) being socio-culturally conscious; (4) holding affirming views about diversity; (5) using appropriate instructional strategies; and (6) advocating for all students.

The second component —*learning about students' lives*— is the focus here. According to Villegas and Lucas (2007), "To teach subject matter in meaningful ways and engage students in learning, teachers need to know about their students' lives….teachers need to know something about their students' family makeup, immigration history, favorite activities, concerns, and strengths" (p. 30). These three teacher-participants have described numerous instances in which they have practiced this component. It reflects their understanding that environments, and the people and their activities within them, are critical as support for young children. Whether the cultural activities are housed in the home culture and environment, or the schools, each of these teachers values them and works to sustain them.

Dimensions of Culture

The power in talking with teachers is that they are the experts about what is happening in their classrooms. Unfortunately, rarely are teachers asked what they really think about their practice, what they do or need, or about the realities of their work with students (Soto & Kharem, 2010). In the 1990s, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) referred to teacher narratives as both a phenomenon and a method of inquiry. As I culled through the transcripts of the three teacher-participants, pulling out their thoughts on the dimensions of culture, I thought about how voice and values work together; "As a phenomenon, narratives are the stories themselves, which characterize the values and experiences of teachers" (Soto & Kharem, 2010, p.12). Each of the three teacher-participants thought about culture and spoke to it in nearly every interview session. I have already shared the difficulty they had defining culture and being explicit about

cultural theories. Here, Jackie gives an overview of how important the differences or dimensions of culture are to her:

> It's hard…it's hard to think about culture. It's hard to know everything that's out there and how to be. But I think awareness of it and you know, consciously thinking about, 'Okay, I do have…I'm going to go into the classroom and have, you know, twenty children, okay, they're six [years old] and they're not all going to be the same.' You just have to have that mentality that you're going to have a lot of difference and what you think is respectful, isn't always what another culture thinks is respectful. So this child maybe is trying to be respectful towards you and you're reading them wrong and snapping at them. So, you just have to kind of, I say, open your eyes and look with different lenses. Think about, okay, this is how I am and this is my culture and my family….so you have to understand culture because what you do and how you are is not going to be the same for each person in your classroom. (Jackie, #3)

During the third interview, when Symone was reflecting on culture and trying to tease out her thoughts, she made a comment on needing support for this process:

> Well, I think, and I am always saying in our meetings…when they say 'Do you want a special workshop offered?' And I always say, 'Yes, workshops on culture, workshops on multicultural education.' You know, because some people are not aware of how things are…or how culture works…even though most of the schools are very patient…They have these workshops on culture. You can have more learning strategies and when working with children from different backgrounds, I think, you can always do more with culture. My wish is to have *all* these courses on multicultural education. (Symone, #3)

It was striking to me that this veteran bi-cultural, tri-cultural teacher reflected on (1) wanting more information and support around cultural issues and (2) put culture at the front of her own professional development needs. Anita also reflected on when you have reached an impasse around a cultural aspect or dimension: "You just need to reach out. If you know you don't know something, or you've reached the, you now, you've reached your limits of knowledge on [the] subject matter or anything, you just need to find

resources that are out there….so that you can continue to succeed in your class" (Anita, #3).

Each of the three teacher-participants described talking about culture—issues, learning style, or dimensions—in group settings such as staff meetings or the teachers' lounge area. According to Soto & Kharem (2010), "Teachers provide the best learning tools for each other when they reflect and tell their stories among themselves" (p.16). Jackie eagerly offered this description of herself and her Puerto Rican family's communication style with other school staff in a discussion about cross-cultural communication:

> I gave them the example, I was like, 'I'm from a Puerto Rican family. When we all get together, we scream over each other. We're not being rude. We're not interrupting each other. That's just the way it is. I'm having a conversation over here, but while I'm having a conversation with you, I'm having a conversation over there and we're really loud and we're talking really fast! And you know, everybody is talking over each one and by the end of it, you've heard all the conversations.' I said, 'That's how we are, but in other cultures they would see that as very rude…that, I'm screaming and waving my hands and I'm all over the place!' (Jackie, #3)

Symone describes her experience in an after-school teacher discussion on culture:

> I know it's a process. And the more you learn, the more you feel like…the more you learn the more you get out of it. Yeah, and have more doubts. But another thing is like every teacher, I believe, it's like you have to think of each child as unique, has its strengths, its weaknesses. And you have to work with what you know. So you cannot make plans for everyone the same. You need to adapt your plans and your teaching styles. And pay attention to the needs of each child…Yes, it's true, but the cultural differences are…[we said] 'You need to pay more attention to the differences in learning, and the needs. When they're from similar [backgrounds] it's easy to teach.' We meant it's easier, but when you see differences, you need to pay more attention with differences. To work, with the child. (Symone, #3)

Gaining and using culturally relevant skills and knowledge helps teachers to develop their confidence with a broader range of students (Chen, Nimmo & Fraser, 2009). In part, this leads to being able to apply knowledge to everyday classroom practices. As the three teacher-participants in this study spoke about the different parts of culture they understand, they also expressed an imperative that teachers must do this work. They each expressed a responsibility they felt to understand their students' cultures. This aligns with Nieto's (1999) thinking about teachers who apply culture, from a socio-cultural perspective, in their classroom: these teachers are curious, patient, and eager to learn about their students, and see students as individuals, as well as a part of a cultural group. Anita actually expresses anger toward a mentor-peer about the lack of this in some of her colleagues:

> Well, I view myself as a constant learner, like constantly have to be reading things and learning things, observing it all. We were having this discussion, I guess before school ended, with one of my colleagues, who I really look up to. She's a huge mentor for me, and we were talking and I was like, 'I don't understand, you know we sit in these [staff] meetings and, you know, some of the teachers talk and talk and talk…And I'm like, when was the last time, you know, you researched anything? Or looked up or read a book about this topic [culture] or went to a professional development that wasn't like a fluff?' You know they say, 'I've taught the same thing for ten years.' And I'm like, 'Well, have you had the same group of children for ten years? Like, why do you think that is a good thing?' And, you know, I want to try and push their thinking. (Anita, #1)

I think this anger reveals passion this teacher has for her work in her third grade classroom. She wants all her co-teachers in this urban elementary school to be alert to culture.

Gutiérrez (2002) discusses the dilemmas and tensions in studying culture in education and addresses how particular notions of culture have had profound consequences on the schooling practices of particular groups of students. She suggests

that "culture cannot be studied directly, nor can it be examined apart from its context of development. Instead, as Moll (2000) argues, the focus of our analysis should be on people's everyday practices, on how people 'live culturally'. This more dynamic and processual notion of culture requires a focus on socioculturally organized practices that become the means of engaging in activity " (Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 314). Although I was seeking to understand a more specific notion of cultural dimensions from my interviews, the three teacher-participants possessed an understanding of the complexity of culture, yet they did not articulate the parts or dimensions as clearly as the research literature does; however, when I looked through the interviews for the parts of culture, as expressed in this notion of "everyday practices," there were many they described. Symone gives a clear example of cooperation as a cultural value:

> Yeah, I notice that for Puerto Rican children, cooperation is very important. And so they always try to help you. And sometimes you feel like all they are doing is working together. It's like, I come to the room, and they come with me to my room and they see the pencils… 'I'm going to sharpen pencils!' And they sharpen everybody's. They want to do things for everybody, you know! (Symone, #3)

Jackie mentions specific attributes or values that she saw expressed overall by the new immigrant children in her first grade classroom: "I see cooperation; [being] considerate to others; cooperative; determined; self-confident; and being sincere" (Jackie, #3). In the ensuing dialogue, she tried to tease out whether she saw these singular attributes because "they were there in the children, or because they're my values!" (Jackie, #3). Although her reflection process was genuine, it was impossible for Jackie to determine or tease them apart. She said, "Attitudes I don't like are easy: stubborn and negativistic. And faultfinding, I don't like" (Jackie, #3). Again, her reflection process was genuine and very thorough, as she said:

> Always focusing on the negative, you know. And I can't take stubborn. And yet, determined and stubborn, there is a fine line. But for me determined is, you're not just going to give up when something challenging comes along. You're going to fight through it and stick with it. You're not just going to give up at the first sign of a challenge. And I think that's really important. *I: [...and stubborn is?]* Stubborn is, wanting your own way and being a little bratty about it. Digging your heels in. Digging in your heels and not giving up and just being 'on' everything. (Jackie, #3)

When I was interviewing the teacher-participants, I thought of cultural dimensions in the more concrete ways they are presented in the anthropology literature and not in the more nebulous teachers' descriptions: cultural differences, attributes, values, characteristics, or attitudes. The teachers' voices do overlap with perspectives on culture from the growing research on culturally responsive pedagogy. Measured by the breadth of the literature now available, interest in the topic of culturally responsive pedagogy has been steadily growing since the mid-1990s (Rychly & Graves, 2012).

As defined by one of the prominent authors in this field, Geneva Gay (2002), culturally responsive pedagogy is "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). It appears that this term, cultural characteristics, also includes the more commonly thought of concepts surrounding culture: values, traditions, language, communication, and learning styles (Gay, 2002). Perhaps using cultural characteristics, rather than cultural dimensions, in my proposal writing would have provided a more fruitful array of answers from the teacher-participants. From my current vantage point engaged in this analysis, I believe that articulating one's understanding of culture is not an easy task.

I do feel this area of engagement with culture is a vital one to continue to investigate with classroom teachers. A greater understanding will benefit culturally

diverse students, including new immigrant children and their families (Rychly & Graves, 2012); "There are two groups of children to consider when discussing the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy for student achievement: students who are currently living in the United States and not achieving, and students whose arrival is anticipated" (p. 44). I will speak to this more directly in my final discussion and reflection in *Chapter Seven.*

The individualism/collectivism continuum

In my proposal, I selected one particular cultural dimension to be a partial focus for my research study: the individualist/collectivist continuum. This came from my working with the issues of individualism and collectivism in classrooms, prior to my knowledge base growing to include this continuum as a cultural dimension (Hofstede, 1997, 2001; Trompenaars, 1993; Trompenaars & Hempden-Turner, 2012). As a classroom teacher in the late-1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, working in New York City and the Boston/Cambridge area, what I came to know as the I/C continuum was perpetually an issue in the schools. Therefore, I was excited in my graduate studies to be given language, knowledge, and ways to understand these classroom dilemmas I had experienced. Further exposure to the work of the WestEd *Bridging Cultures Project* (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield & Quiroz, 2001; Zepeda, Rothstein-Fisch, Gonzalez-Mena & Trumbull, 2010) gave me access to some tools to use with the future teacher-participants that I would interview. Concretely, these were the scenarios listed in my proposal and in this report, as well [Appendix G]. There were very few references made by the three teacher-participants concerning this dimension of culture that arises in

education anthropology. I will review those that were produced; I will discuss most particularly the few I heard concerning the individualism/collectivism continuum.

Table 5.3 Individualist and Collectivist Traits

Basic Character Traits in Individualist and Collectivist Cultures[a]

INDIVIDUALIST	COLLECTIVIST
Hedonism, stimulation, self-direction	Tradition and conformity
Good opinion of self (self-enhancing)	Modest
Goals fit personal needs	Goals show concern with needs of others
Desires individual distinction	Desires to blend harmoniously with the group
Values success and achievement because it makes the individual look good	Values success and achievement because it reflects well on the group
More concerned with knowing one's own feelings	Attuned to feelings of others and strives for interpersonal harmony
Exhibits "social loafing" or "gold-bricking"—trying to minimize work in group efforts	No social loafing in group efforts
Less sensitive to social rejection	More sensitive to social rejection
Less modest in social situations	More modest in social situations
Less likely to feel embarrassed	More likely to feel embarrassed

[a] For a summary of character traits in individualist and collectivist societies see Harry C. Triandis, "Individualism and Collectivism: Past, Present, and Future" in *The Handbook of Culture and Psychology* edited by David Matsumoto (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 35-50.

Spring. (2008). *The intersection of cultures,* p.6.

The framing by Trumbull et al (2001) of the I/C cultural dimensions in their work with Latino newcomer families resonated strongly with me when I first read it: "We believe that a framework characterizing the features of individualism and collectivism is both *economical* and *generative*" (p. 2). Their research emphasized the dynamic nature of culture, their understanding of the risks involved in using a single model—the individualism/collectivism continuum—for understanding child development, as well as awareness of "…the risks of positing any sort of categories into which human beings or their cultures can be sorted. Categories can be used to stereotype" (Trumbull et. al.,

2001, p. 5). However, they felt organizing around a framework would support their work in public elementary schools in the greater Los Angeles area with voluntary and involuntary immigrants. Many of the families were members of cultural groups that could be described as more collectivist than the dominant culture. Again, "At the most basic level, the difference is one of emphasis on individual success versus successful relations with others in a group" (Trumbull et. al., 2001, p. 5).

In a situation in her first grade classroom, Jackie describes an attitude of understanding the value of group relationships and learning in a group:

> I've described my kids and trying to find that individual hook for them because they are an individual, but they are also part of a group. And if they're the older sibling or the younger, you know, all those things come into play. So you can't just say it's one thing. I know that…. So, well, I think to me, when I see that two people go off talking that either they're off task or they're trying to help each other. In my classroom, you can ask for help if you don't understand. Or someone can go get help if they think they're confused. So, I would go over and kind of listen to see what they're talking about. And see if they are on task and…understand what the activity was…just working together…being a group. Peer teaching is very powerful. So if that's happening, you should let it occur. (Jackie, #3)

I have previously presented, in the earlier part of this chapter, several reflections in which the three teacher-participants each shared their values or attitudes on children working cooperatively. I will not repeat them here in the collectivism section, yet feel that reflecting on children from Latino cultures as being more cooperative in their classroom behavior, and "thinking about everyone," resonates with the collectivism continuum, as well. Symone discussed an example of children working in her school, as if they were in their extended community or family, and how this could be misinterpreted:

> For example, we were talking before about how the [Puerto Rican] kids were working together…One of the things I learned, is how the idea of working together in a group, [is like their] extended community or family. That the kids just help each other. And it was great. And I hadn't seen that when I was, for example, in another school I was in which was, it was a middle-class white school. Where the kids were more competitive. Not in a negative way, but it was just more individualized. It was more individual. So [I] haven't seen the more collective in action. And yet some of the teachers I worked with thought that kids were cheating because they were working in a group and telling each other things. And I'm like, 'They're learning. They're sharing the learning!' You know, I saw it as a positive thing. But the culture of the school…there were people who saw it as a negative thing. So then the kids would be in a bind. The kid was like, 'I'm not cheating!' You know what I mean, because cheating is like stealing. They know it's negative. (Symone, #3)

Two of the teacher-participants described situations in which they knew students were missing school because they were helping with family obligations. Their reflections actually mirrored dilemmas Trumbull et. al. (2001) describe from their work with the individualism/collectivism continuum in schools. When the family asks a child to stay home and help with a family need, they are valuing the group's needs over the individual's need to go to school. Anita attested that students missing school because of family needs was always occuring; her response depended on if it was chronic to a particular family or a more random occurrence:

> I've actually had where the kid didn't finish their homework because they were helping clean because mom was sick. Oh, that's a hard one. I would kind of contact the parents and see if there's someone else who could take care of the little brother or clean or whatever because, well, I have third graders. Like usually that happens more in the older grades. Like when they need to take care of it [something for the family]. I would say to the child, 'I know you need to help your mom, but if you can, come to school. If someone else can take care of little brother, that would be good. I don't want you to miss what we're doing. But I would also, I would get in touch with the family and see if there's someone else….I think it also depends on the family, like is this constantly happening or is this a one time thing Because I think it's very supportive, like okay, you do have to help out. Mom is real. And it depends, does mom just have a cold? Or is mom really sick? You know. Yeah, to give her the [school] work so she doesn't

> fall behind would be a good idea. But I think you would need to know the background on the family. (Anita, #3)

In Jackie's first grade classroom, absenteeism also happened because of family childcare needs. She reports this perspective: "And there are some families where that is a huge value. You know, someone's hurt, that you just help. That's what you do and that's part of your family dynamic. But I don't think I would put [anything] on the child by saying, 'Your most important thing is school, you have to be in school.' Because her parents are asking her to stay home and watch the younger brother. You're [the child] going to respect your parents and listen to your parents' choice" (Jackie, #3). Although neither Jackie nor Anita labeled these situations as fitting within the individualism/ collectivism cultural continuum, they both seem to fall into this discussion. As Trumbull et al (2001) mention, "The continuum of individualism/collectivism represents the degree to which a culture emphasizes individual fulfillment and choice versus interdependent relations, social responsibility, and the well being of the group" (p. 45). In both these reflections, the two teachers view the families' interdependency without judgment. Many teachers would have different feelings, or understandings, about a six-year-old or an eight-year-old student being asked to take on family responsibilities and be absent from school.

As stated before, part of the proposal for this study was to invite each of the teacher-participants to partake of four scenarios designed by Trumbull et al (2001) to explore teachers' attitudes on the I/C continuum by their responses to the given two-part scenarios. This did not work as well as I had hoped when I included them in the proposal. In general, the formality of a question-response situation, after three lengthy

open-ended interview sessions, felt awkward to me. Although the scenarios are well designed, and each teacher-participant did engage with them, they were not as revealing as I had hoped they would be. I found they created a distance between each teacher-participant and myself. It felt like an artificial task to be done, whereas the interviews created a close space in the dialogue structure. In general, each of the three teacher-participants was consistent in giving thoughtful, genuine responses; yet there is nothing specific from the scenarios to add to the data. The impact was neither negative nor positive.

Teachers' Repertoires of Communication Skills

As I set out on this research process, one item listed in my proposal was to look for what type of skills teachers felt they needed to work effectively in the cross-cultural situations in their classrooms: what repertoire of skills would serve in teaching the children of new immigrants? In the literature on this topic, both theoretical and practical, Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2013) have presented research that focuses on repertoires of practice contrasted with an individual's traits. By repertoires they mean ways of "engaging in activities stemming from observing and otherwise participating in cultural practices" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 22). Their research proposes that repertoires encourage people to develop dexterity; teachers must determine which approach or skill from their repertoire to use, what will be more appropriate under which circumstance. I agree with this emphasis on flexibility or dexterity as an ability and found numerous examples in the reflections of the three teacher-participants' practices. Jackie expressed learning to listen with more than just your ears:

> I think you just need to be a good listener. You need to open your ears. More. You need to sometimes take that back, you know, take a step back in the

> conversation. Let the other person talk, you know. Kind of guide the conversation and try to get more information out of them. I just think you learn so much from that. It really gives you, as a teacher in the classroom and in the school setting, it just gives you so much more to work with….but if you get that other piece of their culture or their home life, too, it's just, it's valuable. You get so much more because I mean, I've said it before: kids are different at home than they are at school, and having that knowledge and that piece of it from the parents, and hearing it from the parents, and what they see at home, gives you a lot that you can do in [the] classroom and work with. (Jackie, #3)

Anita speaks to seeing with "distance" in both how she views the children and parts of the school that may be hidden from view:

> No, no, it's about seeing, and that's a different [level] of maturity. When I was a young teacher, I didn't have the distance. I didn't see the systemic things. I didn't see all the things…I've described that are necessary, and are lacking. And you can see that. So you know. You're in position, in that level or whatever. That's my word, I don't mean to put it in, the big pool…but still you go in, with a personal vision. You know. You're a person with these seventeen little people. You know. It's your thinking. It's your heart. It's your soul. It's your body. It's…you're there all the time, and it's demanding on all those [cultural] levels…and how to sort it all? There's not one way. (Anita, #3)

When describing her classroom with its wide range of students, Symone also spoke of listening and seeing differently to have accuracy, perhaps to have the skill to see more holistically. Symone explains that this skill level comes, in part, from having taught some Special Education classes, as well as having worked in a regular classroom for over seventeen years:

> I've learned a lot about different cultures. And I think my role as the teacher is to just stay open….You have to see them. I mean their intellect is different…so you have to…be aware of, like the physical wellness of the child; the intellectual level, emotional level. So it means you need to take care of… Take into account so many aspects. You know, when you work with children. (Symone, #3)

Jackie describes learning how to listen with your ears, and eyes, and more: to listen for what is spoken and what is unspoken, as well:

> Like I said, you can't know every culture and know how they're going to respond to situations, but you can watch and see, just the tone of their voice. Do they get quiet? Is there a huge change in their behavior all of the sudden? Because, then I've said something that either upset them, insulted them? Something to change their behavior. Your behavior is not going to drastically change unless something hurts your feelings or insults you, or made you upset or made you sad. So, I just try to read those signs; the body language signs, the tone of voice signs. (Jackie, #3)

It seems that these active listening skills act as a baseline for good communication, whether in a cross-cultural setting or not. Being a good listener, attending to non-verbal cues, body language, and voice tone, all seem basic to being a good teacher; yet, in general, classroom teachers are known for talking more than for listening. In my experience with teachers, learning how to be quiet and listen is not necessarily always equated with being a good teacher.

In this excerpt, Symone shares how being a sort of cultural interpreter for children or families is another skill in her repertoire. She explains that facial expressions and body language signals communicated in the U.S. mainstream culture are often sources of miscommunication for immigrants. She tries to be explicit with her immigrant students about items of non-verbal communication:

> It [culture] is so complex, that…values, and acts, and body language and…that's part of what we should do, you know. Sometimes I say, 'Well, when you're here, you have to look in the other person in the eyes.' I say, 'Well, I know that for some cultures it's disrespectful to do it. But here; we are here. So we need to do things the way things are done here.' And I don't think that's to disrespect their culture. It's something because we are here, that's the way we should act. We should look in the eyes of the person. And they [the children] understand. I mean because kids, they, if you tell them, 'You have to do this.' And you give them the reason why it's good for them to do this. They understand. I mean, I was like, 'This is why. Okay? This is why you should do it.' (Symone, #3)

Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull and Garcia's research (2009) discusses how important it is in cross-cultural communication to make explicit the implicit knowledge in the classroom. Immigrant families may be unfamiliar with educational expectations for themselves and their children. When various factors—language, unfamiliar educational contexts, and cultural differences—come into play, this skill is critical. The researchers discuss "how the development of explicit cultural knowledge is essential for both getting schools ready for children and children ready for school" (Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull & Garcia, 2009, p. 475). Jackie explained how for each new class, she communicates with her families and asks them to build her cultural knowledge in explicit ways. She needs to know the specifics and not simply generalizations about their culture(s):

> You can't know every culture, and you can't pretend to know every culture. So I think cultural knowledge is just like I've said, having those conversations and getting to know your families because even if a family is a part of a certain culture you know, just because you have an idea about what Chinese families are like, or you know [what] African families are like… or Russian families. All the families aren't going to fit into those categories anyways. So to me, I think having cultural knowledge is really just getting to know your individual families…A lot of them come over and have adopted cultural characteristics from here, from their home culture, so you want specifics on the families in your classroom. You have like 22, 21 families, or whatever. Just getting to know them, how they are in their family, what they do, what celebrations they have, and getting the information from them. Gives you more that just trying to be like, 'Okay, I know this about Chinese families.' But what you know may not apply to all your Chinese families. So you can have a general knowledge about things, but to me to have true cultural knowledge is getting to know your individual families in the classroom. It's not like you have 300 in your class! It's something that you can do. It's something you really can do, ask your families, get to know them and to understand how they live, and what they do in daily life. (Jackie, #3)

Jackie's perspective here is two-fold: it is about (1) gathering explicit information from her specific families, and it is about (2) seeing her specific families as just that, specific to this time, this place, this point in their life. In their research on teachers'

cultural perspectives, Rueda and Stillman (2012) echo this view: "A different view, one that we draw on here, is that culture is a reflection of the particular historical circumstances of specific groups….By this definition, culture is dynamic, contextually variable, and unevenly expressed" (p. 249).

Wilson (2009) also sees the benefit in using a focus on what he calls "cultural repertoires" (p. 15) or habits, skills, or ways of communicating that might provide a more comprehensive means to understanding and working with culture (in Howard, 2010). Each of the three teacher-participants spoke about cultural knowledge, skills, and repertoires in their daily work. As they gave examples of communication skills, it seemed as if these skills needed to be strengthened in them, for them to be able to communicate successfully across cultures with immigrant families. Symone spoke about how she felt communication was more important for immigrant families than for regular families:

> Communication…I think…well, I can see this point of view. My point of view because…I was a foreigner here, and I see my [students'] parents are foreigners. So I cannot say how other people feel, you know. But I think if you are new in a community, for anyone, I mean, you need to communicate… and try. If you learn more, you can feel more comfortable. And you can…if you want to get integrated in that community, the more you know about them, the more you can. You know how to do or how to act…But I think communication is important at all levels. (Symone, #3)

Of the three teacher-participants interviewed, Anita was clearly having the hardest year in her third grade classroom. As I analyzed this in terms of cultural skills or a repertoire, she mirrored and expressed many of the same skills sets as Symone and Jackie. It is beyond the limits of this report to analyze any cause and effect; yet I am reminded that this was the school in the midst of the major curricular transition, with

many new teaching personnel, and Anita was the one teacher-participant who did not feel supported by, nor connected with her administration. Yet, as expressed in this reflection, she has positive feelings about teaching and working with new immigrant children: "But, I think in the back of my mind, I always have the memories of teaching at [the school's name] and having an amazing experience. You know. Even running a dual English class, a dual language class, in a very different context" (Anita, #1).

In closing, I share one last teacher's voice, Jackie reflecting on how she builds her repertoire of cultural skills:

> So I'm like that awareness is a step in the right direction… In myself, actually, reading and research. I read an article…and it just got me thinking, you know, aware of it [cultural knowledge] and just reading about it and just living it. You know, you have diversity. You have diverse families in your class. You're kind of like, 'Okay, I don't know everything.' But I have to meet these needs and it's not just even culturally. It's like the special ed population's needs, the regular population, the enrichment. It's all these different aspects that play into a classroom. You just need to *have* the knowledge about it and *want* the knowledge about it, so you can be the best teacher you can be. (Jackie, #3)

CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS: WHAT EMERGED - AN EFFLUENT, A STREAM FLOWING OUT OF A LARGER STREAM

Introduction

As I stated at the beginning of *Chapter Five*, the first section of my data analysis, the purpose of this research was to investigate elementary classroom teachers' understanding of culture and cultural theory and how that affects their work and communication with immigrant children and their families. My study was guided by two broad questions concerning how the teachers interviewed thought about culture and how this thinking related to their understanding of immigrant families. I also sought to understand just what intercultural communication skills or tools teachers have in their repertoire and how they used this knowledge to involve immigrant families. My engagement with the data was guided in part by Wolcott's work with qualitative writing (1990a, 1990b) and my own application of a basic data question: *What do the people in this setting have to know, individually and collectively, in order to do what they are doing?*

Seidman's (2007) metaphor to describe an approach to phenomenological interviewing is very à propos. *Life is a fast flowing stream. We can't make meaning of it in the middle of the rapids, so we reconstruct constitutive elements of life experience* and *as we reflect upon those elements—they become phenomena.* In Chapter Five, I found myself in a data eddy: a current at variance with the main stream's current, one having a rotary or whirling motion. I collected data in the stream, and then I moved out into an eddy, a small whirlpool, to look carefully at just what I had found. In this chapter, I

continue my analysis, highlighting thematic issues that arose from the interviews. This emergent work was not what I had been looking for, yet it is salient and important. Doing this analytical work has felt like I was off track, that these unforeseen themes did not map onto my original quest. I felt like I had been moved into *an effluent*—a stream flowing out of a larger stream. These tangential streams lead out into new terrain, sometimes returning to the main stream, sometimes not; yet the richness of the information led me to include it herein.

Analyzing Chunks of Text

In this chapter, I will examine three K-3 teachers' experiences with intercultural issues surrounding their daily work with children, both immigrant and non-immigrant. Throughout the data collection process, I used the constant comparative method of data analysis as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the means of developing grounded theory. As the name implies, the basic strategy of the method is to constantly compare units of data. These comparisons led to tentative categories that were then compared to each other and to other instances. Although, my work is descriptive and not developing grounded theory, I found this method useful and reliable to apply here, " because the basic strategy of the constant comparative method is compatible with the inductive, concept-building orientation of all qualitative research, the constant comparative method of data analysis has been adopted by many researchers who are not seeking to build substantive theory" (Merriam, 1998, p.159).

Upon first review of analysis of my participants' narratives, I found there was considerable textual overlap in their answers, which pertains to the work of Epstein (1994,1995, 2001) in parent involvement discussed in Chapter Two. These *overlapping*

spheres of influence—family, school, and community—were used for the first cluster of data units in analysis [Figure 2.1]. I utilized these three spheres to separate out the various contexts of the narratives. I approached this process knowing there are no right or wrong answers, but rather decisions to be made. More experienced researchers might make different choices than I did, which could draw out additional feedback and perspectives.

From the publishing of the Nation at Risk Report (U.S. Department of Education, 1983) until the present time, with the President Bush's No Child Left Behind legislation (2001), there has been much national attention directed at education, teachers, and school reform. Of the school factors that bolster student achievement, the most critical are individual teacher characteristics and the quality of instruction. Even when home and environmental determinants fail, well-trained educators can make a positive difference in the lives of students (Carter, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Farley, 2005). Therefore, I focused on describing the themes that data promoted in regards to the teacher-participants.

> At the outset of a qualitative study, the investigator knows what the problem is and has selected a sample to collect data in order to address the problem. But the researcher does not know what will be discovered, what or whom to concentrate on, or what the final analysis will be like. The final product is shaped by the data that are collected and the analysis that accompanies the entire process. Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating. (Merriam, 1998, p. 162)

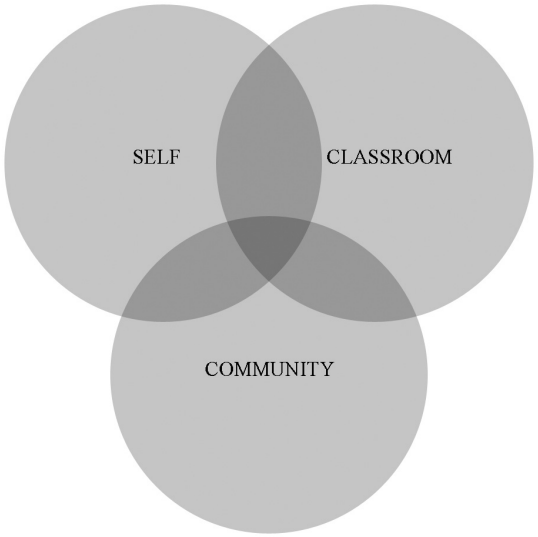
Cultural Knowledge: Spheres for Analysis

To understand the variations on and similarities among cultural processes of human development across internationalized communities, such as our current public

elementary schools, we need to understand how people think about culture and cultural processes (Pipher, 2002; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Culturally relevant practices are based, in part, on teachers' knowledge of themselves. Facing who we are involves acknowledging our own strengths and limitations. It requires awareness and the construction of a knowledgeable, confident identity as an individual and as a member of multiple cultural groups (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 1999). What does the data present in terms of these three teachers' understanding of their own cultural biases, identities, and beliefs?

In this analysis, I examined the experiences of my participants in relation to important contextual aspects of their work. Based on the educators' accounts, the salient areas fell into three specific contexts: the self, the classroom, and the community.

Figure 6.1 Self, Classroom and Community



I will proceed with the discussion by presenting excerpts from the participants as they talked about each of these areas in turn. Although data collection and analysis should be

a simultaneous process in qualitative research, I include this separate chapter on data analysis to show how a qualitative design is emergent. The work and timing of analysis and the integration of analysis with other tasks are, in part, what distinguishes a qualitative design from traditional, positivist research (Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam (1998), "The researcher usually does not know ahead of time every person who might be interviewed, all the questions that might be asked, or where to look next, unless data are analyzed as they are being collected" (p. 155). In this project, the process of data collection and analysis was recursive.

As I worked, read, thought, and reworked the units of data that were emerging from the interviews, while simultaneously keeping the research focus of cultural knowledge in place, my comparisons lead to categories within each of the three context areas: the self, classroom, and community. In talking about the "self," the first sphere of analysis, these teachers' words conveyed a high level of self-awareness, or knowledge of self. As the words formed clusters and parallels across the teachers' experiences, three themes surfaced within self-awareness, which are: (1) a multicultural world-view, (2) internally held and externally exhibited values, and (3) challenges to their teaching practices.

Self: Awareness and Knowledge of Self

Multicultural world view

As I analyzed interview transcripts from the four and a half to six hours I spent with each participant, I pieced together the component parts of their discussions of self. As the first context described for my teacher-participants is self-awareness and self-

knowledge, I want to emphasis that my process here is to provide a descriptive portrayal of the phenomenon under study, cultural knowledge and the teaching of immigrant children. With this focus, I started with the data that were the strongest and most apparent to me in their verity. Current work by educational counseling researchers advocating for a set of multicultural competences that emphasize not only knowledge and skills, but also knowing oneself through awareness of attitudes and beliefs uses a specific term: multicultural worldview (Thompson, 2009). This word resonated with what I saw.

In 2002, the American Psychological Association (APA) endorsed multicultural competencies for school counselors, validating the work of many working with culture in education, anthropology, and psychology. The strength of a person's multicultural worldview is discerned from answering a series of statements: for example (1)" I am not locked into one way of thinking. I can appreciate many views and perspectives"; or (2) "I am aware of my own personal strengths and weaknesses; I know myself well" (Thompson, 2009, p.97). Reflection is a skill for provoking greater self-awareness and knowledge on the part of teachers. "Reflection is a basic ingredient in culturally responsive teaching," write Trumbull and her colleagues (2001, p. 94).

How does a person learn about the self? How does a person discern who she is? This process of meaning making requires reflection or some form of introspection: a person needs to look at herself, or within herself. Each of these teacher-participants shared in their narratives scenes from their childhoods, in which the skills for processing-thinking-reflecting about internal issues were externalized in their families. At age seven, Jackie was in elementary school in the Bronx living in a neighborhood filled with extended family: two grandmothers, four great-grandmothers, one grandfather, aunts,

uncles, and cousins. Her first strong memory concerned her own awareness of reflection as a familial process:

> I started to always think back to things, "Why did I feel like that?" That's just me. I always think back on things, whether good or bad, and say, "Well, you know, what can I learn from it?" That's just kind of how I've always been, my personality of where I am…I just feel like we, I think my family always talked about everything. Like, and talked everything through… I think, maybe, it was modeled for me. It was never referred to as reflecting. But it was just, there was always talk going on. And, you know, it was with everyone…so, I think that's where it came from within me. (Jackie, #1)

Both Anita and Symone also had early childhood narratives about their families modeling reflection. "Narrative is closely linked to our understanding of ourselves. Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992) argue that personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned" (Clark, 2001, p. 87). These stories from the teachers' childhoods, which instilled awareness of reflection as a process in each of them, are seen later in the realms of self-knowledge and skills as adults.

Anita discussed reflection among her current teaching peers:

> So, do you think they [her peer teachers] just need to come together as a group and talk? And vent, yeah. Yeah, so if ten teachers are going to vent, who is going to be listening? That is not an effective way of doing it, in my way. You know, we all vent. We do it because we have to. But the bottom line is, okay, so what are we going to do about it? For me, the point is the kids. I always go back to the children: [venting] is not going to help me. It might relieve a lot of my stress and frustration, but I can do that myself, you know, in another way. But what I need is their thoughts, reflections, okay, so this is what you tried. This is what you've done. How can we approach this in a different way? We need this kind of shared conversation, dialogue. (Anita, #2)

Similarly, Symone talked about reflection in her own teaching experiences:

> I was first in a kindergarten classroom and then in a first grade classroom. So, that time the kids work in Spanish with a bilingual teacher. And then

> they had an ESL teacher, who worked with them in English. Ok, so that was in Holyoke many years ago. Then. Then I moved to Springfield and I worked in a school, where in the same classroom there were two teachers. And two teacher aids. One teacher was an English speaker and I was bilingual. And we had kids that were English speakers, kids that were Spanish speakers, and I liked that setting. I liked it because, everybody learned from each other. We thought about the kids together, we reflected ideas with each other. It was hard for us because we had twenty-eight kids in the same classroom, at some point even thirty. The classroom was large, and, I mean it was well equipped, but still twenty-eight kids in a room is a lot. Noise. Activity. (Symone, #2)

In the education arena of teaching, John Dewey (1916, 1933) and Donald Schön (1983, 1987) have shaped much of our current thinking about reflection. Reflection, as described by Dewey (1933), is a behavior that involves "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions [to] which it tends" (p.9). Dewey described three attitudes he felt needed to be present in a person for them to reflect: open-mindedness, responsibility, and whole-heartedness. I felt throughout the three-interview process that each of these three teachers displayed these three reflective characteristics, as I have experienced it over the shared time, process, and engagement through the interviews. Jackie described how she chose an Education major/minor, showing her knowledge and use of reflection:

> I didn't know [what to study in college]. I just didn't know what I wanted and I think I was like [Pause]… Business. There are so many things in the business world that I could be. And I think that's where my mind set went. And I did English as my minor when I first started because I just knew that I loved to read. And that was where I was comfortable. I knew that's what I wanted. And I was like; I don't want to be a writer. I don't want to be that, so why would I major in English? So I just chose business and then quickly realized that no, this is not the path I want to take. I mean, it was half-way[Pause]...by second semester. Like mid second semester of my freshman year, I was like…this is absolutely not what I want. I need to figure out what I want. And that's when I started to reflect on it and figure out what path do I

> want to take? What do I want to be when I grow up, kind of reflection. (Jackie, #1)

From a review memo that I made after this interview with Jackie, I know that I explored this further with her the next time we met: this idea of self-reflection as a tool.

> *[Interviewer] And again, I was struck in terms of thinking about this interview, about how you keep going back to the importance of knowing your kids, knowing your families, knowing yourself and…so in terms of this, is there anything you want to say about that or does that…and I'm not trying to lead you in any way. Again. It's just that a lot of people don't talk about self-reflection.*

Jackie responded:

> But I think you have to know yourself to be able to understand other people. You have to know what your vices are and what you're good at and what your strengths and what your weaknesses are, before you can go out and look at other people and make those judgments on them. Or look at a child and truly understand where they are coming from…you know you have to reflect on it. Because, I mean, even if you think about like prejudices that people have and like ideas they stereotype, have in their head. If you're not aware of those things in yourself, you know, you either don't realize when you're projecting them on a child who comes into your classroom. Like, 'Oh, she's just a shy little Asian girl.' If you don't realize that you think like that and that's your idea of what all the Asians who come into your classroom are. You are just going to make judgments before really understanding someone else and understanding another child or understanding a family. So you have to reflect on yourself. I feel like to understand that. Like, 'Do I say that all the time? Do I think about that all the time? Am I just stereotyping, instead of getting to really know?' But you have to *reflect in yourself* before you can do that. Before you can realize you're doing that. (Jackie, #3)

All of the teachers I interviewed spoke at length about travel experiences they had early in their lives and how travel impacted their sense of cultural difference, raising their self-awareness. Symone was raised in Uruguay near the border of Brazil, traveling by car with her family into the mountains of Argentina. She said:

> When I was little, we just traveled around [during vacations]. When I was nine, my parents and my sister and I went on a trip to the north of Argentina. And I

> really loved to travel, so I was like so happy. I think that people in different cultures…are so interesting. You know? Different, but you still have the feeling that they do things that are similar to what we do and that…that's really a feeling that they do things differently and that is very interesting, too. So, I think as you travel, you learn. You learn a lot and it's like…just walking in the streets, you are learning things…[I] learn more things as I travel. (Symone, #1)

As a young child, Jackie moved from a Puerto Rican neighborhood in New York City to an Italian neighborhood in the Bronx. This shift from an intensely urban to one that was moderately so shifted her awareness about how surroundings impact us:

> So, this was a different culture, just in terms of environment. You know, it was, I actually enjoyed the change. Although, I feel like I gained a certain kind of education, and a street smart, you know [from living in the city]; you don't let anyone put one over on you. You know you get that kind of tough skinned, very independent, can take care of yourself, kind of attitude…so, when I moved out, I was like, oh, this is very calm. (Jackie, #1)

When she was a young child, Anita's family left their home in Central America and went through relocations in various countries as her father was trained in the auto business: Guatemala, Honduras, Germany, and Venezuela. The family of five, with three children, went through major adjustments. She explained the experiences thus:

> I remember my siblings and myself. I was the one who was more adaptable to being bicultural, bilingual. I was the one who read more in English [they went to International American schools] than anybody else. Like, both my siblings were like, fine. They just [said] fine, okay, we're doing what we need to do. But we're going back…they consider themselves bilingual now, yeah. But not as much as I embrace the culture…I mean I'm very comfortable in both languages and both cultures…I remember just when I went into kindergarten, I was already speaking English and was just fascinated. I think of the three of us, I had more…I was the one who learned other things faster than the others. Even though they both speak it well. But they never had any interest in pursuing anything else beyond what they had to do. I loved it all. Just watching people be so different. (Anita, #1)

I can make no judgment about how the internal disequilibrium that happens when one travels to a new culture might have impacted these three teachers as children, or now as mature adults. What I was struck by was the openness and honesty in their separate narratives, when they each spoke of these experiences across differences. These three teachers experienced travel and/or relocation with curiosity and positive responses.

Values: Internally held and externally exhibited.

As each of the teachers spoke about their own travels, they made connections to the children they currently worked with, most especially their immigrant students. They were engaged and caring in the tone of their voices, their choice of words. Symone theorized:

> Well, I think, I'm not sure if what I'm going to tell you is the truth. Is the truth…that's what I'm thinking. The more you travel, the more you, you try to understand people and that goes for students, too…it's like, okay, you are from the Ivory Coast, okay. I've never been there, but I want to learn for you how life is there, so. And you, I think you, if you care about the other, other people, there is an understanding, you know? Even if it's not within the language. There is an understanding with a smile or…the way you look and they look at you. And I really feel an important part, when you work with children from other cultures, is like, emphasize, like, the importance of the culture work first. Start with the things they know, their background, and understand them. (Symone, #1)

Geneva Gay's (2000) theory and research on what she calls culturally responsive teaching speaks about caring and the power of caring: "This kind of caring is one of the major pillars of culturally responsive pedagogy for ethnically diverse students. It is manifested in the form of teacher attitudes, expectations, and behaviors about students' human value, intellectual capability, and performance responsibilities. Teachers demonstrate caring for children as *students* and as *people*" (p. 45). Anita demonstrated,

when a teacher can demonstrate caring even when they are tired, stressed, or pushed to their limits, then it seems that their caring is a basic or core part of them.

> One time we were just regrouping. I mean we had an atrocious day and, an atrocious day by all accounts. But I think I have been able to reach my children in a very different way. They know I'm a presence in the room. They know that. Whether they listen to me, or not, they will know, I care. Without raising my voice a whole lot. (Anita, #2)

Returning to Gay's (2000) concept of caring, we see that some teachers hold a worldview that demonstrates concern for the students' emotional, physical, economic, and interpersonal conditions, as well as academic learning, and the kids can feel it. Some teachers are thus able to create a consistently caring climate. Gay (2000) writes that "Caring interpersonal relationships are characterized by patience, persistence, facilitation, validation, and empowerment for the participants. Uncaring ones are distinguished by impatience, intolerance, dictations, and control" (p.47). This consistency in caring was apparent in each of these three teacher-participants.

The teacher-participants also described having experienced this caring from a teacher when they were each children in school. Jackie, as a young Puerto Rican girl in New York City, had all Anglo teachers, yet spoke of one teacher's caring like this:

> There were definitely some teachers who were…took an interest in you. And I think that's, that's key. You know. They paid attention. Knew who you were. Knew where you came from. They knew, you know, everything about me, so I felt a connection and especially, my…was she my sixth? Fifth grade teacher! She knew my family. She…knew me. You know! (Jackie, #1)

Similarly, Anita recounted a relationship with a teacher who took an active mentoring role with her, who impacted her personally and, as it turned out, professionally, as well. This when she was in a rebellious stage in middle school. The

teacher challenged her to work with younger kids and teach them English in an independent study situation that she created for Anita:

> So, I think, it was amazing insight from the nun who was my homeroom teacher. To see that… "I [her teacher] have to do something about this person." And she thought about…that she knew me and that, 'Maybe you can do this!?' She gave me responsibility and she gave me freedom. And she didn't say, 'Do it this way' or 'Don't do it this way.' She shared her materials and stuff, and that was it. And maybe that kind of connection was something I was looking for. I didn't want to do it in the first place, and just having a little bit of space to myself and reporting to just one person…was very different. So, she was very instrumental. I mean, but she always knew [me] and she said, 'No, never a doubt.' [about me succeeding] She just, you know, cared. She pushed. (Anita, #1)

Results in research from contemporary classroom settings, indicates that effective teachers, working across cultures in their classrooms, demonstrate an ethic of care (Gay, 2000, 2003; Howard, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). They concern themselves with caring about the complete development of the children and "model multidimensional caring in their personal behaviors and instructional practices" (Gay, 2000, p. 48). At some point, when they were young students themselves, my teacher-participants felt an important personal connection with a teacher. There is much more to interpersonal caring than teachers merely being kind, gentle, or showing concern. "Teachers must thoroughly understand their own and their students' perspectives and experiences (Noddings, 1992, 1996, 2005). Learning is contingent on their cultural inclusion and confirmation in the educational process" (Gay, 2000, p. 49). Long after leaving school, these teachers fondly recall their own teachers who cared. Again, Gay's theoretical work on the concept of caring develops the idea that caring is concern for the person and their performance.

As I listened to the teachers telling their stories, reconstructing their pasts, many parts and pieces, who they are as people came through. This study was not designed to elicit specifically personal values; yet, from the very first person interviewed, their values were presented or revealed. I do acknowledge that teachers' values emerged in the data, yet I am not prepared to analyze personal values per se. My memoing marks in the margins, where I highlighted and labeled themes I saw, showed consistent overlap for caring. Yet is caring a value? Is it an attitude? Is it in one's personality? Or part of one's disposition? Is caring a mode of behavior?

Values clarification, as related to teaching, has been around for decades. As teachers, either during our pre-service training or as beginning teachers, we learn that we ourselves actually are the teaching tool. In part, this is why we need to know ourselves, because when the person is the instrument/tool for instruction, then understanding one's biases, strengths, blind spots, and triggers becomes critical for success. Teachers must be self-aware. Research confirms that self-knowledge creates more effective teachers (Chen, Nimmo, & Fraser, 2009; Gay, 2000). Therefore, this picture would not be complete without the description of the most salient features: there is a link between the values one holds internally and how they are expressed externally in our actions.

In their work in cross-cultural and multicultural education, Gollnick and Chinn (2009) provide a definition that dessignates teachers' multicultural dispositions as "values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence teaching and interactions with students, families, colleagues, and communities" (p. 379). Although definitions for teachers' dispositions are varied and imprecise, there are commonalities of thought (Thompson, 2009). There is disagreement on whether dispositions can or should be

assessed and how this might be done. Even with these debates among experts, as well as the gaps in the literature, those who advocate for multicultural competencies[14] emphasize that not only skills and knowledge, but also attitudes and beliefs—values—are important (Thompson, 2009). It is in this light that I include these teachers' voices now.

Symone spoke of openness with immigrant students:

> I've learned… about a lot of different cultures. And I think…my role, as the teacher, is that… just to stay open. If you're open to learning. But usually the teachers are not open with them. They don't, are not open with any [immigrant] kids. You know? Like I think, if they are not open to them, they are not open to anyone. And you have American children with many needs. And many problems in their houses, and I think the teacher who doesn't pay attention to foreign children, I think they don't pay attention to kids with needs from here either. And the teacher who want(s) to be really caring, they learn. They learn. And I think it's good you learn [about the foreign culture] because then, you can get the most from the kid. So it makes your job easier and…the children learn more! I mean…the caring teacher, you know, has to care for everybody. Like foreign children or American children. Or any…any child. *[Interviewer] So what does it mean to be a caring teacher?* Be aware of the needs of the students…because those needs can be very different. I mean…it's like somebody can be, have…health issues that you need to take into account. I worked in the special ed classrooms and…you have to see them…I mean their intellectual [ability] is different. So you have to be aware of…like the physical wellness of the child. The intellectual level. Emotional level. So it means you need to take care of. Take into account so many aspects. You know, when you work with children. (Symone, #3)

We also see caring described as an attribute by Tarlow (1996) in her study of caring in schools, families, and voluntary agencies. Caring is described as an ongoing, action-driven process of "supportive, affective, and instrumental interchanges embedded

[14] As stated earlier, the American Psychological Association has endorsed multicultural competencies for those working in the field of school counseling education (APA, 2002). "If multicultural competencies make school counselors more effective, they might also have a similar impact on teachers, administrators, and researchers" (Thompson, 2009, p.95).

in reciprocal relationships" (p.81). The caring teacher-participants in the current study were attentive to the needs and interests of their students. They demonstrated emotional investment, as well. In fact, each of these three teachers were so emotionally involved with their immigrant students that they each physically cried during one of their interviews with me. This suggests their caring and involvement runs deep within them.

Throughout the time spent interviewing and then transcribing the tapes, I noted an underlying tone that indicated that these teachers valued the diversity of their students. Jackie spoke about this value clearly, in fact:

> Well, when I think about my teaching, I think the biggest thing is I've valued is working with a diverse population more so than anything else because when I was first looking for a new district to work in, that was one of the things I wanted. I didn't want an all upper-class classroom. I didn't want to go to an all low-income. I wanted to have that mix because I feel like…not that the other classrooms aren't rewarding, but I felt like… you know, being able to work with so many different levels in your classroom and so many kinds of families and cultures, just makes you a more well rounded teacher. I mean you're constantly having to think about, "Ok, how can I help in this situation?" Instead of just…not that in a classroom that's all upper-class is all exactly the same, but you do see a lot of trends that are exactly the same. But I feel like where I teach and what I've done in the past seven years in the classroom…it just opens your eyes to what's out there and so much more. Being able to be versatile and work with all those populations….having that diversity. I think it's been a real value to me and I think it has made me an even better teacher because you constantly have to think, "Ok, I can't just present this in one way. How else am I going to get this information to these kids? And to these parents?" You know, so that I am reaching the majority of my class…not just a few, not 10%. I'm reaching them all. (Jackie, #3)

Thompson (2009) reviewed literature and textbooks regarding multicultural characteristics that have a disposition-like quality in an attempt to fill a gap in our understanding on the relationship between dispositions and effective teaching. He writes, "The definition of dispositions are described by Carr and Claxton (2002) as habits of

mind and tendencies to respond to situations in certain ways" (p. 94). The literature discusses values, ethics, commitments, attitudes, and/or personal qualities pertaining to multicultural characteristics without labeling them as such. Thompson cites the work of Grant and Gomez (2001), who "emphasize valuing diversity through adopting non-traditional mindsets" (Thompson, 2009, p.95). This relates directly to comments made by Symone to explain her actions on her first trip to Puerto Rico a few years back:

> I told my cousin, "I'm going to take a camera just for me, because I want to show them [her class]. Yes, the kids. The things I saw. So, and video tape it, like the police. We asked the police to talk to the kids in Massachusetts. So two policemen were talking and we were videotaping them…every time I was thinking, I need to bring something for the kids from my trip. So, and they feel really, so happy to see that you are valuing their culture. And, yeah, so it was…It was good. I mean there's times, if I go to Africa, my husband is going…I want them [the kids] to start seeing living in Africa. (Symone, #1)

Even on vacation with her family, to a place in the world she had never been, this teacher was thinking about the children she taught, thinking about all of them, not just the kids from Puerto Rico. Our values are depicted in our actions. By making a videotape of the land, people, music, food, and language of Puerto Rico, she was showing the children and their families that she values their cultures, their diversity. Actions such as this are both caring and non-traditional. Ladson-Billings (2006) states that teachers must know how to draw on students' cultures as a basis for learning, to capitalize on their prior knowledge, and not to see their cultures as impediments to learning. Clearly, Symone's statement is a solid illustration of such a position. Each of these teacher-participants held these two values—caring and diversity—internally and in different styles exhibited them in their work. I had not expected these characteristics to be held by all three participants uniformly.

There were other values that surfaced to varying degrees across the teacher-participants' interviews: honesty, collaboration, self-confidence, communication, empathy, cooperation, determination, and sincerity, and interdependency. As I worked at winnowing my data and reflected on what would be the best placement for these descriptors, they seemed to fit better into the other two contexts yet to be analyzed: classroom and relationships. The patterns that I saw for these other common values related more strongly to these contexts, so I did not place them here in the values sub-section within self: awareness and knowledge.

There were different levels of negotiation, both internally and analytically, in deciding placement for my data. I believe this was part of the learning experience for a new researcher. There was a part of me that wanted to describe and display the data from these teacher-participants, so that you would know them as intimately as I do, within the contexts of this work. I realized that this was most likely an unrealistic expectation to hold.

As both Merriam (1998) and Wolcott (1994) describe in their work on transforming qualitative data, it is an arduous task for a neophyte qualitative researcher: "In the very act of constructing *data* out of *experience*, the qualitative researcher singles out some things as worthy of note and relegates others to the background" (Wolcott, 1994, p.13). It was difficult for me as a new researcher-as-author to judge what was the descriptive adequacy of an account. To balance or compensate for this, as I mentioned in Chapter Four, I asked critical readers to review my data along the way. Some of their feedback was integrated into my thinking; this question regarding analysis of values was one such occasion. I don't think there is a magic formula for the process of recognizing,

remembering, recording, and transforming the relevant data. I have tried to sufficiently present data without being redundant.

Challenging one's practice

As mentioned in the introduction, critical to case study analysis is a study of the patterned actions of related individuals. One strong pattern that arose in each teacher-participant interviewed was the need, desire, or compulsion to push themselves as teachers: to be challenged and engaged in their daily work. For instance, Jackie said:

> I mean I'm very driven in my career. I take education very seriously and I continually take professional development and try to better myself. I do. I have some colleagues that I really look up to and are very supportive in different areas. And I actually even have my college mentor from Rutgers, who I'm still … I'm still very close to her. So she's someone I turn to a lot and is very supportive in helping me grow as a teacher and as an educator. (Jackie, #2)

Anita also discussed challenging her own practice as a teacher:

> Like I said before, you know having these kids get you through the day, even when it's tough. But also just having that challenge being presented everyday. How are you going to work with each kid? How are you going to reach them every day? Gives you that push. Keeps you going. Instead of getting comfortable and bored. (Anita, #3)

Anita even described her self-assessment for choosing teacher training in terms of wanting to be challenged. At the time, she was in her twenties, still living in Central America:

> Well the thing is, I already worked as a secretary. And I just didn't want that. Nothing wrong with it; I just didn't want it. It was not something that was challenging or something like that. I had already had a taste of something different. So you know. I liked working at the American Embassy. I made good money, you know, and met great people, but that was not something I wanted for myself as a career. *[Interviewer] So what did a career mean to you?* Something that would be more fulfilling.

> Challenging, I think. Not something that was such a thing that you could do it with your eyes closed. (Anita, #1)

Self-study, self-assessment, is a strategy for developing greater self-awareness and reflectivity. The cycle of reflection seemed never-ending in these teachers; their introspection was continuously present: "At an individual level, it is an intentional and systemic inquiry into one's own practice, involving distancing oneself from the immediacy of the classroom, while seeking to understand the issues presented in that space. This process facilitates both reflections *on action* (self-evaluation of practice) and *for action* (planning for the future), enabling teachers to think more deeply about their teaching in relation to the children they teach (Dinkelman, 2003)" (Chen, Nimmo, & Fraser, 2009, p.102). Reflection provides opportunities for in-depth evaluation of programmatic strengths and weaknesses and for developing plans for improvements for children or the classroom space. Symone spoke at length about this kind of self-evaluation:

> Yeah, it takes a lot of, thoughtfulness, I think. Yes. And knowing the kids. What are the pieces [I like about teaching]? Well, I feel very rewarded when…when I see my groups, reading at a higher level…and like moving kids out of the program [bilingual]. And the most important things is like… they need to be happy doing what they are doing….So that's for me, what is most rewarding. It's challenging for them; they're challenging for you. Or sometimes they see a task is hard, but then it's like, when you're an experienced teacher, you know. You know these faces. You know. Then you change what you are doing. Or you make a little difference… yeah. Because you don't want anybody…I always say, 'Well, I want children happy because if they aren't happy, they are not learning.' (Symone, #2

This excerpt provides a window into the nuances that Symone saw and felt as she responded to the challenge this child and situation presented. The teachers all spoke of

times and ways that they engaged in reflection on their practice and assessment or evaluation of their work in the classroom. As experienced teachers, each was very familiar with both formal and informal assessments with young children. Interestingly enough, all three also had experience and training with children with disabilities, as well. Therefore, there was an internal dialogue that each spoke about in terms of teaching a particular topic or reaching a certain child. Gay (2000) writes,

> Academic demands were complemented with emotional support and facilitative instruction, a coaching or cajoling rather than a dictatorial style of teaching was used, and reciprocal responsibility for learning was developed. This emotionally warm, personally caring, and interpersonally supportive instructional style had a substantial positive effect on the intellectual performance of students, as indicated by increases in verbal participation in classroom discourse and improved levels of cognitive understanding. (p. 50)

As Copple (2003) suggested, truly culturally responsive teachers need to continually challenge themselves to reevaluate their practice. As I listened to each of these teachers, it seemed that each intrinsically needed or desired improvements in her practice:

> You have to constantly, have to learn. Things are constantly changing around you. You have to strive for that. And there are some people who just don't. It's like, 'Okay, I have my teaching certificate' or even in any career, it's not necessarily teaching. Like, 'Alright, I've gotten here. This is where I'm going to be. This is where I'm going to stay. I know what to do here. I'm going to stay here.' I'm like; I can't even be that person. I can't. I have to constantly be discussing with people, you know? Learning new things, trying new things, just to make myself a better person. A better person let alone a better teacher. I just don't see how people don't do it. (Jackie, #1)

Although none of the teachers described themselves as risk takers, I saw all three of them taking risks, and exhibiting a risk-taking attitude towards their work. I observed risk taking on many levels, with depth of reflection and everyday spontaneity. For

example, Anita, working in an urban third grade classroom, described a lively and fun repartee with a Puerto Rican child. Although the risk taking was on minor, it gave a glimpse of the everyday flexibility that this teacher has in her classroom:

> So, one of the girls. Her name is Jalina and she is Puerto Rican in terms of culture. I mean very. Long nails, sandals with high heels. We have a 'uniform;' that's how she comes to school. Large earrings. So she's the one who starts to ask me…you know how they do the (snaps her fingers to make a sound)? *[Interviewer] The body language?* Yes. And do the thing (snaps fingers again) and I try to do it and one whispers to another, 'Ah, she can't do it.' So you know, those are the little moments I think that kind of make it worth [it] for me being there. And I'm really committed to them and I am very committed to them learning and I'll see them through the year. (Anita, #2)

As shown by the transcribed interview excerpts, these teachers of immigrant students who are continually working across cultures, languages, and learning styles are drawn towards classrooms with challenges. In the last interview, Jackie described what she called being outside of one's comfort zone, … "being on the edge a little bit." I felt this related to risk taking, engagement, assessment, and challenging her practice:

> It gives you that strive to keep going. I feel like if you feel content and get so comfortable, where you don't push yourself to be more than that any more. You don't push yourself to grow more. I feel like sometimes you need that little challenge in front of you because if everything becomes easy, you just become content and you no longer push yourself to be more and do more. And I feel like I need that. You know, I need that little push and that little challenge and, yes, sometimes you're so frustrated by it and you're like, 'Why? Why am I doing this? This is so hard and this is so difficult. How am I going to get in touch with this family? How am I going to reach this other family? How am I going to get this kid to learn?' But it gives you that push, you know? How am I going to juggle that I have five different levels of kids in math right now! You know! How am I going to get to all of them? It just gives you that push to keep growing professionally, as well as helping those kids grow. So I think it's a real value. (Jackie, #3)

Evaluation of one's practice, perhaps even challenging it, as described by these teachers, has impact not only upon teaching practice and classroom, but also affects student achievement (Gay, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). Learning experiences and achievement outcomes for ethnically diverse students are strengthened when more than just cognitive performance in academic settings is included. Cultural, social, personal, and moral developments are also important (Gay, 2000). When teachers are evaluating their practice and cognizant of their own need to grow, change, adapt, and develop, then the possibility for teaching to the whole child becomes available. Gardner (1984) tells us that we can achieve excellence in education when there is a process of assessment and engagement in place for teachers:

> Perpetual self-discovery, perpetual reshaping to realize one's best self, to be the person one could be. It includes not only the intellect but the emotions, character, and personality…not only surface but deeper layers of thought and action…adaptability, creativeness, and vitality…[and] ethical and spiritual growth (p. 124).

As we have seen in this first context described, self—awareness and knowledge of self, these teachers working across cultures have done much work through reflection, caring, and challenging themselves. This in turn impacts their abilities to provide for the children, both immigrant and non-immigrant, in their classrooms. I believe that these teachers understand the depth of impact that culture has in life, that culture is at the heart of all we do in education, whether it is instruction, assessment, curriculum, or administration (Gay, 2003). In describing the context of self—their worldviews, values, and self-evaluation—I hope that the beginning of a picture of their understanding of culture has emerged. I once again refer here to *culture* as a living and dynamic system of

social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991) used by us all to give meaning and order to our lives.

Classroom: Physical Environment

When I proposed this study, I made the decision to interview experienced early childhood teachers working in urban areas. This decision stemmed primarily from my experience working with new immigrants, who often relocate and settle in larger urban areas. I located the teacher-participants in the metropolitan area of Springfield, Holyoke, and Agawam in Massachusetts. The specifics of this demographic area were presented in Chapter Three, and in this section I will be describing the experiences the teacher-participants shared, as they relate to the overarching questions regarding culture and the teachers' work within their schools and particular classrooms. The urban school environment also was selected because currently this is where there is the most need for and hiring of teachers. Irvine (2003) asserts,

> It does matter where one is teaching. Urban, suburban, and rural schools differ from each other. Large and small schools have different climates and teacher-student relationships. Private versus parochial, low-income versus privileged, elementary versus middle, charter versus noncharter, are not mere labels for schools. These distinctions matter. An all-African American school, for example, differs from a culturally diverse or all-White school. School policies, organizational structures, and personnel are relevant pieces of the context of teaching. (p. 48)

Early childhood classrooms have to contend with many different components, which made for a complex context of narrative data for the teachers interviewed. When a person says the word "classroom," many of us first conjure up a mental picture of the physical space, the actual room. Indeed, I was able to view the classrooms for all of the

teacher-participants, either during an interview session or in a follow-up time. Being in their physical workspaces was important for me, to be grounded in that concrete environment. When planning for the classroom's learning environment, experienced teachers manage a multifaceted and comprehensive environment, with physical space and materials being only two components. The learning environment includes management of temporal areas, as well; planning for beginning and ending the day, the flow of activities, recess, naps, and transitions is critical. One must plan, as well, for the relational components: setting the emotional tone, facilitating the group's behavior and that ofchildren as individuals, and dealing with the children's affective needs. It was this last part, the relational components, the dealing with people, that the majority of the teachers' narratives described. Jackie presented the need to deal with the emotional realities in these words:

> So you know, if you don't take time to learn those things, you don't understand what's going on. And you're trying to reach them, yes, but kids won't learn if there is too much emotional stuff going on and they're clouded by all that. If they're coming in and are upset or anxious or overly excited about something, everything you're saying is not processing because they are focused on that situation. (Jackie, #2)

Symone also referred to the emotional space of the classroom:

> How am I supposed to give report cards? If all I'm dealing with are behaviors? And now, I'm supposed to go into like a behavioral mod-plan. It's…I don't know. And that's something I refuse to do, but I have to do it because the child won't learn how to behave in a different way. When I'm not seeing any results. I see that they are children. (Symone, #3)

Anita, who is licensed K-3rd, was currently in the month of November during her first year with a third grade class in a new-to-her Springfield school. She described the

emotional tone, in her school and classroom, as "chaos" at each of the three interviews. She said,

> So, it was just something [chaotic behavior] that started from the very beginning. Yeah, I think that…once the term has ended and seeing where the children are at. I'd probably get a better sense of what I'm making of all this. Because right now, it's day to day and it changes every day. You know. You just finished off Monday and you hope to get to Friday, because it's a long week. (Anita, #3)

When I began this research, it was with a desire to understand culture and cross-cultural experiences of teachers working with immigrant children and their families. I was looking to understand their knowledge base of culture and the tools they used every day in their classrooms. Since teachers' experiences are significantly framed by the context of their environments, in this section I will examine the experiences of my participants in relation to this important contextual aspect of their work. Based on the teachers' accounts, salient factors in this regard brought forth new aspects of one intersection of teaching and culture.

In their narratives, as they responded to their experiences of these culturally mixed children's behaviors and needs, more often than not, when they spoke of culture, it was not at all what I expected. It was not a culture of place, nor of family origin; rather it was presented as broader and more over-arching influence on all that they do in the classroom. They mentioned a *culture of poverty*, a *culture of the street*, and a *culture of violence.* I will proceed with the discussion by presenting excerpts from the teacher-participants, as they talked about each of these cultures in turn.

Culture of poverty

Every teacher gave examples of needing to care for the physical needs of the children, helping to provide food, clothing, health care, housing, and referrals to social services as supports for the families. I was amazed by how clear they each were as they described how meeting basic needs were a part of their daily work. This was a simply a piece of their relationship with the kids in their rooms and schools. Each teacher could see how unmet basic needs impacted the behavior and learning of the children as a group,and more so for specific individuals. Each teacher strove to create a place where the kids felt cared for, respected, and safe—all this so that learning could happen. Anita described the culture of poverty:

> The sense of stress for them [the children]. And all the needs, levels of needs…and the emotional one-on-one is what I've been building on. And it needs to happen before any learning can take place. I mean, learning is happening, poco a poco [little by little]. Not in the way I would want it or not in the way that Springfield public schools are asking us. But you have to make a choice. *[Interviewer] And so your choice is to?* To know the kids. Know where they are at and kind of…I can't force any learning on them. I can't. They're not eating, they're not going to pay attention at circle, so I have to make sure they are fed. *[Interviewer] And you said they all come to school for breakfast?* Yeah, but sometimes too late and breakfast is over. So. You know, so. I can't force them to sit there and listen to me. You know, they are not ready…I'm going to end up in the poor house. (Anita, #2)

Jackie's story of working with social services reinforces Anita's emphasis:

> I mean, I've gone through the guidance counselor to get…It was a lot easier when we did have our Even Start program and our Even Start director in the building because she had a lot of connections because she was a social worker. But I've had my guidance counselors…like, I know this family. They have bed bugs and they can't get rid of them. The mom is trying. These kids are getting eaten alive. We've gotten them new beds. And just reaching out to services like that. I've reached out to the guidance counselor for a family, who they were an immigrant family and there were five living in one room. And like getting them services and

> things like that. We have…but you also have to do it gently because you don't want to insult the family. You don't want them to feel like… You want them to know you're trying to help them, not to look down on them. (Jackie, #2)

These snapshots gave clear pictures of each of the teacher-participants working to help meet daily needs for their students. The neighborhoods where many new immigrants live are overwhelmingly in urban areas; indeed, most immigrants settle in our largest urban centers: New York, Boston, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Houston. According to Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001), "Immigrants' choice of neighborhood in the United States will have important consequences for their interpersonal lives, experiences, and opportunities" (p. 130). The availability of affordable housing often is the biggest factor in where they settle. For poor immigrants, this is often in highly segregated areas, where poverty prevails (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Anita focused on one student living in poverty:

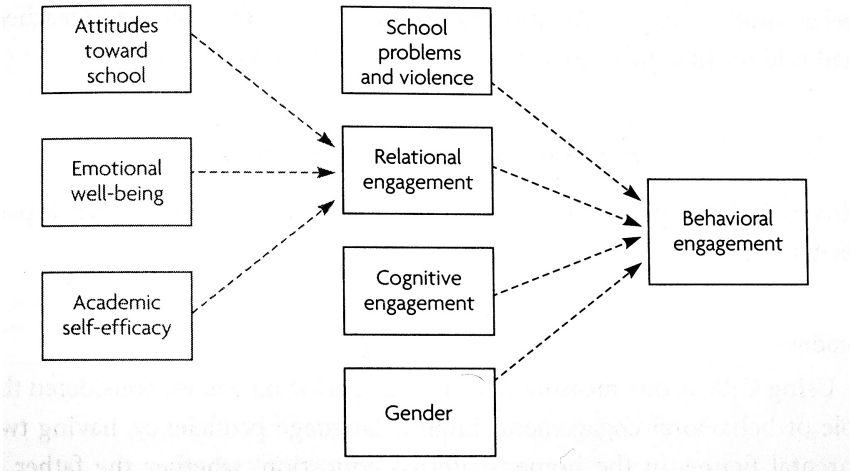
> Well, he's the youngest of six or seven children. They're all at home. I think they're just overwhelmed. I mean, the mom is very young. [The oldest is just in middle school.] So they probably had a child very other year, or something like that. Well, that's one of the families…so, they don't come in; they don't respond. And they're going to make a home visit because…he came to school with pants over two sizes too big and without any underwear. I called the mother, and the mother said, 'Oh, but he has clothes.' So, it's like they're overwhelmed with other children and other things to do. *[Interviewer] So, you think that's why they don't come?* Yeah. It's almost like they've given up. So it's back to what I was talking about before, about the culture of poverty…. It's what the children need… They need… but when you see the total chaos in some of the classrooms right now… and when I say chaos, you know it's chaos… from what we were expecting. (Anita, #3)

Symone described issues of poverty and the meeting of basic needs, yet she also conveyed concern about families wanting their children accepted. The lack of economic resources was just one part of poverty: the experience of rejection and labeling also was

in their minds. She said, "But perhaps, because they had an accent, which they do, they had to do something extra. You know? So, can you imagine these parents in Springfield? They want their kids to…to feel part of the community [at school]. But they don't have the resources. So it means that sometimes, you have to be thinking…even in these little things. You know?" (Symone, #3). She went on to explain that you have to attend to this emotional piece amid poverty: "I see…your heart is in it. And it's critical work… because it's attending to the emotional piece, as well as the cognitive" (Symone, #3).

In the physical environment of the classroom, there are always mitigating variables, which impact children's expressive behaviors: social class, affiliation, residence, and immigration are four that these teacher-participants have described in their narratives.

Figure 6.2 Predicting Behavioral Engagement.



Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008). *Learning in a new land,* p. 49.

How the children's behavior was expressed in their physical classrooms seemed to be highly influenced by whether or not basic needs were met, or how much stress they brought into the room. Anita described one particular emotional response:

> What I have are runners. *[Interviewer] What's a runner?* They run out of the classroom. They run out of the building. They run. *[Interviewer] What are they running from?* We don't know. They don't want to do the work and they run. I mean I have this little boy, who is cute as a button. He's really… I think all my kids are really intelligent. You know they have great potential. But this child's really advanced. Great reader. You know, he can write. He can do it. But he refuses to do the work and when you tell him to sit and do his work. He'll take off and he'll run. And we have moveable walls, so he'll hang off the walls. He'll hang off the second floor railing. It's dangerous. He'll throw furniture! *[Interviewer] And he's third grade? He's eight?* Yeah. He's eight. So that's the kind of behavior I call the office for. He is very frustrated, stressed. (Anita, #2)

I made many memos regarding the examples of behaviors that these teachers felt were connected to poverty, with its relationship to stress in children, families, and neighborhoods. These are their anecdotes, their stories, their attempts to make connections between their classrooms and the culture of poverty that they observed there. However, later there was a change in their language; they began to speak about the challenges of dealing with the "street" behavior in their rooms. I present their descriptions of the "culture of the street" in this next section, in their various voices and within the contexts of the physical environments of these three classrooms filled with over fifty percent immigrant children.

Culture of the street

Many neighborhood characteristics are reflected inside the schools. How do these factors play out? What are these schools like? According to Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-

Orozco (2001), "Research has demonstrated that effective schools have a number of common characteristics. These include: positive leadership and high staff morale; high academic expectations for all students regardless of background; a high value placed on students' cultures and languages; and a safe and orderly environment" (p. 132). This section will look at the last attribute: a safe and orderly environment.

Each of the three schools were in lower- and lower-middle-class urban areas, with nearly 100% of children qualifying for the free lunch program; yet poverty alone does not determine whether a "field of opportunity" or "field of endangerment"[15] will exist for the immigrant students. Anita returned to describing behaviors in her classroom, when answering an interview question, mid-dialogue in one session. I asked, *[Interviewer] So, when you walk into your pod in the morning, what's that feel like for you?*

> For me? I think it's almost like every day is trying something new to see which way we can focus. Keep the children focused rather than dealing with so much of the behaviors that are coming up. Which none of us were anticipating in the way they have been emerging, or that they have been manifesting themselves in the classroom. *[Interviewer] Tell me more about the behaviors.* More about the behavior… I mean, it's just the way they talk to each other. They bring the street into the classroom. And we're really trying really hard to get them to leave that behind and to learn other ways of responding to each other, or treating each other, or treating themselves…of…just having them feel safe. (Anita, #2)

The snapshot of Symone's classroom was not quite as intense a picture, yet she described the need for the children to learn new ways of behaving inside the school that were not the same as being out on the street. She said, 'It's like they don't…Well, they

[15] These terms were developed in the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation study (LISA) began in the fall of 1997, as a major research initiative of the newly established Harvard Immigration Project. LISA had strict criteria for participation: all are youth born abroad who recently arrived in the U.S. LISA is tracking over 400 students in 50 schools in either Boston or San Francisco (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

need to learn, like…the basics. You know? They need to learn like to…how to…maintain a conversation. To take turns… social skills… [We] called them life-learning skills' (Symone, #2). She went on to describe a particular situation with a difficult child, when the age-level team needed to plan new ways to support or guide his behavior:

> I think when you deal with bilingual [immigrant] children like…and so it's like nobody tells you…you did wrong or this shouldn't be done or something like that. The most… we sometimes negotiate about the kids like…'Well, what do you think? Should he stay with you? Should he go?' So, it's like…and we, we, I mean we look at a lot of pieces before we move anybody. And in a couple of times. Very few times, we try and we sit with the child and we tell the child, 'Okay, you're going with this teacher. We're going to see how you do there.' Because we're not sure. And so we says…we are truthful to the child. We say, 'We'll try and see how it goes.' So when he goes, he knows…and he's overwhelmed. Or he's feeling upset. Or different reasons. (Symone, #2)

Of the three schools included in this study, the one that had the most visibly orderly physical environment had a lower incident of the "street" behavior that seemed to characterize the others. This school was the only primary school campus I visited: Pre-k to 2nd grade, with an Even Care Program in the same building. It had been a K-3rd grade, but the local demographics had created a shift. The descriptions that Jackie gave concerning acting out behavior were ones that she felt came from the stressors of poverty or exposure to street behavior of older children.

> *[Interviewer] So, last week when we spoke and you talked about…the behavior. And some of the extreme behavior in terms of kid's language. Actions. What do you make of that?* Well, I think for me it seems like that's what they live with. That's what they hear. And that's the way of becoming strong or kind of defending themselves. I don't really understand. We have this new kid, who is becoming more comfortable in the classroom. So, he's exhibiting a lot more behaviors, but yet he cries. None of the children in my classroom cry. None. Crying is not something that you do in the streets. You don't cry. I mean, you might in the privacy

> of a room or whatever, but never in a public setting like a school. So, he is not making friends by crying all the time. (Jackie, #3)

Yet, when I asked her about the acting out, "street" behavior becoming more extreme or violent, Jackie had not experienced it as such in this first grade classroom, in the primary level school; she answered:

> No, I haven't [seen]…overall violence. I haven't. I mean I've had some cases, but it's not generalized to our immigrant population at all. I do feel poverty in our immigrant population. Well, more so our Hispanic, and that our Mexican population is very… is a poor, poverty stricken population. Some of the other immigrant families, like our Russian families… But over all, our Mexican population is very low-income. The parents don't have a very high level of education, you know. Very nice families that want to help, but they just don't have it. But I haven't seen violence among our immigrant population; I haven't had any experience with it in our district. The poverty, yes. (Jackie, #3)

Returning to the fact that the neighborhood shapes the lives of immigrant children, the degree of racial segregation will have a series of important consequences; language is one of them. I wondered how this might support my understanding of the differences in street language and behaviors among these three schools. Jackie's school was located in a very racially and ethnically mixed neighborhood, while the schools Anita and Symone taught at were filled mostly with Latino and Caribbean immigrants. Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001) assert that "New arrivals of color who settle in predominately minority neighborhoods will have virtually no direct contact with middle-class white Americans. This in turn will affect the kinds of English that the children will be exposed to, the networks that are available to access desirable jobs, and the quality of schools they attend" (p. 131). Anita made a connection between street language, respect, and community in one interview:

> So, it's hard in that way. And she doesn't like to do the work. I mean, the vocabulary. The expressions that they use…to treat each other. So, that's my day, every day. *[Interviewer] Can you give me some examples of expressions they use? Do they speak in English or Spanish? Both?* Don't speak English. Okay, so if this little girl was mad at someone…they basically say, you know…Fuck you! Or fuck your mother. Or, you know…that is common everyday. I don't allow it in the room. I don't. You know. I talk about respect. Respecting yourself. Respecting others. Respecting your community. Respecting our classroom. Every day is about respect. Every day I try, try to do community building one way or another. We sit in a circle at the rug. I try to share…I try to have a closing circle. (Anita, #2)

Language varies; different languages are used in different situations. Stubbs (2008) writes, "It is a basic principle of sociolinguistics that there are no single-style speakers…. People adopt their speech to the person they are talking to and the point behind the talk. These are social rather than purely linguistic constraints" (p. 74). So, what is happening here when the children are using abusive or "street" language inside the classrooms? Is this a conscious choice, to give voice to one environment, while living inside another? Are the children blurring their multi-stylistic language environments? Or is it a type of transference, where the words from one place are unconsciously used in another? These were notes I jotted down in my memoing, during review times with the transcripts. It remains a question how the teachers read this use of swearing in the schools.

In the second interview, Symone also reflected on the street culture in her classroom and school, as well as the actual dangers that were apparently present on the very street where the school was located:

> It's the street culture that comes in. It's that violence, like you know. I say something to you and you're going to choose to either say, 'I'm going to wait after school and jump you.' Or you're going to say, 'I don't like the way you talk to me. Don't do that again.' Or you're going to wait for

> a better, a time, and smack the kid in the head when the teacher is not seeing. Those are the types of things that happen everyday. And I'm not saying they shouldn't be street savvy because that's the way they survive. I know that. I understand that. My upbringing has been very different that theirs. And I'm very naïve. I mean, I would go walking down Main Street. And until the assistant principal told me never to go there after a certain time. I'm like, 'What? We let our kids go there, but I can't go there?' No, there is something wrong with this picture. (Symone, #2)

I pondered the question of safety – in the neighborhood, on the streets, in the homes, and in the school or classroom. I wondered about each teacher who was individually trying to make her classroom safe for the children; did they feel safe themselves? All three said yes, yet to varying degrees. Here was Anita's response to my direct inquiry about safety. Her school, Pre-K to sixth grade, with an Even Care program and community center, was the largest. She had described the most extreme behavioral incidents of the three teacher-participants:

> *[Interviewer] So, you said you're trying to make this safe for the kids. Do you feel safe?* Well, I feel safe. Well…Matthew is this little boy. He's my example because he has something every day. And you know, he was trying to do something, I can't remember. He was climbing, and I was trying to pry him [down], so he wouldn't hurt himself. So he jabbed me, as he's trying to get away. I mean, so this is the kind of thing that is happening, yet I feel safe in my room…. But I heard other comments from other teachers. Particularly my pod-mate, who apparently wrote a letter to the principle saying, 'I don't feel safe. I don't feel safe for myself. I don't feel safe for my children. This is not safe.' (Anita, #2)

Culture of violence

In their work with immigrant families across the U.S., Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova (2008) state this: "Immigrant youth today enroll in schools that range from well functioning, with a culture of high expectations and a

focus on achievement, to dysfunctional, with an ever-present fear of violence, distrust, low expectations, and institutional anomie ”(p. 40).

I pondered the physical environment in these schools over much of the year of interviewing all of the teacher-participants, including those whom I will not report on. This reflecting and memoing continued into my time of writing and analyzing, as well. I wanted to clarify meaning and give nuanced direction to my thoughts; I particularly wanted to define *anomie: a state or condition of individuals or society characterized by a break down or absence of social norms and values, as in the case of uprooted people.* Thinking about the context of the physical environment—these classrooms, with the culture of violence present—was much more complex than I had originally anticipated. Anita discussed the culture of violence thus:

> They have to be street smart. They have to survive. That's their world now. It doesn't have to be, but for right now, that's where they live. But I think it's giving them [their teachers] the option of doing something different. You know? Mothers call each other and say, 'My daughter told me that your daughter says she's going to jump [her]. Well, guess what! If your daughter does this to my daughter, this is what's going to happen to you?' It's like… It's just like that. How are we going to get this school to be normalized? I don't know. (Anita, #2)

When teachers and children are spending their days where they sense a lack of safety, they can be thrown into a state of fear. Their physical environment is more than their classroom; recess, lunchtime, and walking the hall become places of confrontation and intimidation. The descriptions from the teachers of the culture of the street often moved into a heightened sense of violence and fear:

> *[Interviewer] So, when you say 'the street' what does it mean?* Oh, it's just the violence that they live with everyday. From the moment they get out of their house and even in their buildings. I mean the language that they hear everyday. And I'm probably generalizing, but I'm going to say,

> of my own classroom, probably 97% of them…have been exposed to some aspect… being community violence. Domestic violence. Physical violence themselves. You never know when to call the parent because some parents beat them, after they have to come in and meet with us. If we don't give a good report. So, it's kind of bad. It's really walking a very fine line. (Symone, #2)

Anita also commented on street violence in school:

> *[Interviewer] So, back to the street in the classroom and violence. Obviously on the street there are weapons other than hands.* We've had guns in the school. We have policemen coming into the school. *[How often?]* Just yesterday. Not for my children, yet but we had two…three children. One from a second grade, if you believe that, and two fourth graders or fifth grade. Two fourth graders. Because this is the way it is. You can go to a certain floor and you can see the street. They were throwing rocks at cars on the main street. And then not only that. They were truant because they walked to school and they never went into their room. And then they pulled down the fire alarm, so the whole school had to be evacuated. So, but that's the kind of stuff I think is an every day occurrence. Not the weapons, but the kind of behavior. (Anita, #2)

As mentioned earlier, the ongoing Harvard Immigrant Project (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008) has labeled this environment of fear, distrust, and violence, as a "field of endangerment." Their work has shown that many immigrant children, especially those who live in urban neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, face daunting obstacles in their schools and communities. "Neighborhoods characterized by high unemployment, violence, and intense segregation by race and poverty, tend to have overcrowded, understaffed schools that have high rates of turnover among teachers and other staff, are poorly resourced and maintain low academic expectations, and are plagued by hostile peer cultures and ever-present threat of violence" (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008, p. 41).

This study was not set up to investigate the variables, such as violence, that other larger research projects have shown to exist in urban schools serving many immigrant students. Nor can I make a correlation between these three schools and their specific neighborhoods' rates for poverty and street violence. This case study was based on the narratives from three teachers in different locales, which cannot be easily generalized. The task here was to convey the themes and patterns that seemed most salient and real to the teacher-participants in this study. I had not expected to focus on these other factors—poverty, the street, nor violence—when I began this work. Nor would these cultures be the first words out of the mouths of these teachers, if they were asked about their work; each would speak about their children first. But it was striking to me that every teacher-participant mentioned this context—the physical environment of their classrooms, as shaped by the children's behaviors—in every interview session.

Classroom: Pedagogical Environment

The second aspect of the classroom setting, the pedagogical environment, is where the emotional, or affective, skill of the teacher intertwines with the physical space to co-construct the learning environment. In examining the pedagogical environment, we are concerned with *the how*, with a focus on the intended and unintended messages that are conveyed to the children through teachers' choices and uses of language, their curriculae, and their conscious and unconscious teaching strategies and expectations. By their attitudes, as conveyed through language use, choice of teaching and assessment strategies, as well as overall expectations, teachers can model and support a caring and respectful learning environment (Garcia, 2003). Moreover, by using students' home

language in the classroom, children and families learn to value their own language and to feel respected and valued (Delpit & Dowdy, 2008). The teachers' narratives touched upon all of these activities, in sort of a patchwork pattern. I piece together this pattern of the teacher-participants' *pedagogical environment* as it emerged from memos done while listening to and re-reviewing the tapes.

I described in the Methodology chapter, how I would listen and make notes on *Interview 1#,* usually the week before I would have *Interview* #2; I did similar preparation for *Interview #3*. Listening to the voices—mine and the teachers—again and again allowed for a level of nuance to be internalized in a non-verbal way, to sink subliminally into me without being contained in an outline or structure. My memoings from this time often were reminders of interviewing techniques (Seidman, 2006, 2007, 2012): listen more, talk less; ask to hear more about a subject; follow up, don't interrupt; explore, don't probe; seek concrete details; take risks, when timing is right; and ask participants to tell a story.

The teachers did not tell their stories about their pedagogical work in the same concrete way as they depicted the physical environment and the cultures of poverty, the street and violence. Perhaps because one's pedagogy requires reflection, on so many parts and pieces of teaching, it is just simply harder to define, resulting in a more abstract language. Thus, organizing this section of the data units and creating a holistic piece was challenging.

Engagement

Teacher-participants consistently described a strong sense of engagement with the learning process. In the excerpts below, their sense of excitement and delight in the learning-teaching process comes through. Here Anita recalls, "…having just an amazing experience" in the first classroom she ever worked in, a Kindergarten in Honduras.

> So teaching…the young children…I mean it just kind of clicked for me. *[Interviewer]And when it clicked, what does that mean?* I mean they enjoyed it. They were learning something… that was very different. I was able to do thing my way, without someone…I was able to bring… If all we wanted to do was sing or we wanted…I would incorporate some of the things we were teaching…. So, I think it was working with the children. And [me] seeing how they responded to what they were learning and seeing. And *just seeing!* Seeing something tangible, you know. By the end of the year, they knew words and could sing songs in English. And that they wanted to learn more…. It was basically the children in school. And then, they really loved something new. Something different. And learning for them was fascinating and I think I started seeing… maybe internalized it in a different way that I wasn't processing at the time…how they…how easy it was for them to learn…they're sponges and they had no fear or embarrassment or anything. (Anita, #1)

In interview two, Symone commented: "…[I] want to be with people…And to be a part of their lives." Jackie also described her engagement:

> Like I said because even when you have 21 kids in the room and sometimes with one kid, you're having a rough day, but the others…these three kids over here do something and it's just… You're like that's why I teach. Right there. They just got it. It just clicked for them. They had that spark! Like, okay, having it bad over there, but this is going to keep me going…and this is going to get me through the situation…because you [all] just calmed me down, because you made me smile, and now I can deal with this situation. So, it's just that interaction with kids. Knowing they're happy and they feel like it's their room. (Jackie, #2)

Jackie, who has been teaching first grade for seven years, also described her engagement with the edge of balancing all the changes that happen daily in the classroom, and all the different roles she has to play, which seemed to invigorate her:

> So it's just that dynamic of the classroom. I call it the three-ring circus. You're constantly just moving and trying, trying to reach everyone. So it's just a difficult balance and it's something you have to constantly have to be conscious of and thinking of…am I getting? Am I reaching everyone? And, yeah, it's like three full time jobs in a classroom. It's not easy. They're like separate full jobs. I'm like, 'You're the nurse, you're the psychologist, you're the social problem solver. You're all these. You have to wear all these different hats, but that's the way you're going to be an effective teacher.' (Jackie, #2)

Beyond these descriptions about their engagement and watching the learning process happen for children, the data demonstrated that teachers shared patterns in their actions in the classroom by modeling, scaffolding, and being demanding. They approached their work in the manner Geneva Gay (2000) articulates as the important roles and responsibilities when working across cultures. Gay (2000) writes,

> These teachers use a variety of approaches to all aspects of the educational process, including curriculum, instruction, and assessment, embedded in multicultural contexts. They consider critical and reciprocal dialogue and participatory engagement as central to the acquisition and demonstration of learning. Academic success is a non-negotiable goal for everyone and the responsibility of all participants in the teaching-learning process. In their interpersonal relationships with children, culturally responsive teachers are warm, supportive, personable, enthusiastic, understanding, and flexible, yet rigorous in demanding high-quality academic performance from both themselves and their students. (p. 44)

This excerpt from Symone depicts an easy, everyday sort of response, which portrayed a high level of awareness about students' need to know the expectations, to have some manner of self-assessment, and to have activities modeled:

> It's like, every time I enter a classroom, I know what's going to happen. In what I expect from them to learn and they know what is expected from

> them. So…that's an important piece. Them knowing what the expectation is…So they can meet it or not meet it. And evaluate themselves. You know? Yes, and I always try to have a routine. In the sense that I do for example. First I teach. Then they…I've seen like new teachers and I think what they are missing a lot of them is like they don't model enough. If an activity, if you want them to do the cursive writing. Well, you need to model and model. Before you can expect the kids to do [it] by themselves. It's like modeling…and then the child models with you…he does it with you and then after quite awhile, they can do it themselves. Because many times if you don't model a lot. Or you don't give clear instructions. It's like they're lost. I have been in classrooms where the teacher gives instruction that everybody understood, 'And now you do it.' And so the classroom is chaotic. Nobody knows what to do. And that's when the problems start. You know? They are there and it's like… I try to not let that happen with me. I'm not saying it didn't ever happen. But it's like…very clear, clear instructions. 'This is what you're going to start with…' and I model for them. (Symone, #2)

Anita gave multiple examples of fluidly scaffolding individual children's learning amid the busy and needy group in her large third grade classroom; for instance, here she describes her work with one child:

> I have a child who is very frustrated because he doesn't know anything at our grade [third]. He can't read and yet he loves baseball. So I have to go and find books of his level and print them or copy them and read with him. And he can't write. And we write everyday. So, I give him a writing prompt and he says, 'I can't. I'm tired. I'm not going to do it.' And I said, 'You're going to come with me. We're going to sit together and you're going to dictate it to me and I will write for you.' So, that was it. He dictated to me. So, instead of him, you know, not doing his work…so I work with him. (Anita, #2)

Her words also conveyed a sense of supporting the whole group and making sure that the students stay on track with learning:

> And you know, I turn around and I see all these kids, and I see all these kids working and doing so beautifully on their own…I mean things are happening in the room…I have moments of [all]…my kids working. I mean it's not perfect! It's going to last 5 or 8 minutes tops, and then they're all going to loose it. But you know for the most part they are really good kids, and I have been able to get somewhere with them…. So

> I've got to make it so…you know, they can be successful at whatever [it] is that they're doing. So, it's very…it really is differentiating for every single one of them. Trying to pull them together in small groups, but really focusing on exactly what it [the learning task] is…and that's time-consuming. (Anita, #2)

In the interview excerpt below, Jackie explains how a teacher needs to be realistic with keeping students on track with their learning in the day-to-day setting of the classroom. A teacher has to know her students. All three of these experienced teachers mentioned this necessity over and over. They agreed that their students' learning comes from support, with an informal assessment of the whole child. Jackie seemed consistently attuned to the links made while listening and watching the children; she said,

> It's not just about knowing your content area and knowing the pedagogical strategies and methodologies. It's about, you know, what… you have to listen and you have to pay attention. You have to be aware of what's going on with these kids. Because if you just try and cram in the content, you're missing a lot. And you're doing a disservice to these students…if you don't know where they're coming from and understand them. Because, yeah, you can teach the content all you want and, yes, it will get through to a lot of them. It's not, you know, they're not going to make as much growth as you would want them to just by shoving content down their throats. (Jackie, #2)

As she described this push and pull between the reality of the students' lives and the curriculum of schools, Jackie offered a sense of realism, without lowering her expectations for the children's ability to learn. She also offered a vision of hope as a teacher in an urban school. Though she realized that she could not control the problems of urban society, nor the effects it had on her student's lives outside of school, she truly believed that she can create a space for possibility, each and every school day:

> Okay. I'm in my classroom. I closed my doors. I have these kids. I have these 20, 21, kids. Ok, I know a lot about them because I'm with them for six hours a day, and I take the time to talk to them and I take the time to know them. But if you get that other piece of their home life too, it's

> just…it's invaluable. You get so much more because, I mean I've said it. Kids are different at home than they are in school, and having that knowledge and that piece of it…gives you a lot that you can do in [the] classroom and work with. (Jackie, #3)

Likewise, Anita compares how, in the same children who create frustration, she can see great potential and wants that to flourish. It is through knowing them and being honest in her relationship building investment that she hopes the children will grow. This hope of potential for learning to happen amidst the muckiness of the day-to-day seemed to be a part of what kept her going:

> They make my life hell, you know. But they listen and respect me and they trust me. Most of them, not all. But it's been a slow thing. And I think I really had to work with them individually. To really focus on each child. Every other day, when I can…to learn a little more about them. To call their parents and tell the parents, you know, 'This child has such potential, and that's what I want to work with you on.' Instead of sending notes home about the awful things he will do. (Anita, #2)

Nieto (2003), in her work with a teacher study group, examined this question: "What keeps teachers going?" She found that one of the dominant themes in the stories and words of her teacher-participants was "teaching as hope and possibility" (p. 53). In the chapter in which she discussed hope, as it was manifested in teachers' work, Nieto states,

> Hope is at the very essence of teaching. In all my years of working with teachers, I have found that hope is perhaps the one quality that all good teachers share…In spite of anger and impatience or the level of frustration and exhaustion that they experience, most remain in teaching…because of hope. (p. 52)

The members of Nieto's study group were predominantly veteran teachers, like Anita, Symone, and Jackie. Her study group members were teachers who had stayed in

the classroom in spite of everything and who had remained vibrant and energized by the work of teaching and learning. Although I cannot make the statement that the teachers I interviewed were "vibrant and energized" in their classrooms, because I did not see them in action with children; I would say that their words about their work contained vibrancy, excitement, energy, or what I might label simply engagement.

There is a considerable body of literature that has emerged in recent years that points to the significant role that academic engagement plays in academic success. "The extent to which students are connecting to what they are learning, how they are learning it, and who they are learning it with appears to play a central role in how well they do in school," according to Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorova (2008, p. 42). These researchers of the Harvard Immigrant Project also refined out scales to measure two other forms of engagement: cognitive and relational. Cognitive engagement is explained as the degree to which the students are engrossed and intellectually engaged in what they are learning; relational engagement is the extent to which students feel connected to their teachers, peers, and others in the school (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). From the words of the teacher-participants I worked with, I gained a sense of relational engagement in all the classrooms. Aspects of academic and cognitive engagement were less consistent; these seemed more connected to the teachers' professional skills and what commitment to high expectations they held for the children.

Professional skills and commitment

> The school environment has a tremendous influence on the engagement and performance of students. It is hard to be open and eager to learn if you have to be constantly on guard against being attacked. Exposure to and fear of violence also undermine the possibility of trusting relationships

> among students and teachers. Since students of color and those attending urban schools are most likely to encounter violence, such concerns affect a disproportionate number of immigrant students. (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008, p. 41)

I refer to this quote from the Harvard Immigrant Project researches to keep this section of the *pedagogical environment* connected with the previous section, the *physical environment* of the classrooms. The teacher's narratives revealed an environment that includes exposure to and fear of violence, yet their relationships with the majority of their students seemed successful. It appears that trust has been built into their relationships. As I reread and reviewed the excerpts, I wondered why, but seeking cause and effect was well beyond the work of the current case study. So, I returned to the teachers' narratives and the patterned themes presented across the interviews: the teacher-participants' confidence in their work, ability to ask for help and support, concrete teaching skills, being bilingual and bicultural, feeling valued, and their goals and expectations for the children.

The most experienced teacher, Symone, was confident in her work and abilities and felt valued and respected by her colleagues. This clearly stated excerpt expresses these qualities:

> But you know I'm…I feel like…if you go to a place and you do your job. And people notice what you're doing and because now everybody depends on everybody. For example, the MCAS[16]. Like, the child needs to do well in math, in language arts. But to do well in math, you have to do well in language arts! So the classroom teacher…needs all the help she can get from everybody on the team. So, when you are confident and do your job well. Everybody values that. And that makes…is good for you. And it makes you feel even more confident. You know? So, it's…it's just do you're job and do it well. And you feel good because the other ones are happy with you. (Symone, #2)

[16] MCAS: Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

Anita also was confident about her abilities to work with the majority of the immigrant children whom she has taught over the years. Her perspective on her work since a transfer to a new school was less strongly expressed. The extreme behaviors and the behavioral modifications that colleagues had agreed to follow had her concerned:

> Here it's like we have an entire ELA[17] block [of time]. So children can be reading, while others are writing in their journals. Others can be, you know, supposedly 'playing' not playing but learning through learning games that we make. That's what it's supposed to be looking like…I'll be working with a small group…. Those are the kinds of things that I can deal well with the children who are with me. I have fun with them. I'm always, 'Remember to make the right choice for yourself!' And I have a child who is very, very angry also. So, I have those kinds of things, but I know I'm equipped to work with that. You know. That doesn't really intimidate me… as much as a kid who is going to jump from a second floor railing because he doesn't know… Those are the things that for me are like… Baffle me. That I have to be calling the office with like, 'Matthew is on the run. I have 18 other kids here. I can't go after him.' (Anita, #2)

Jackie's confidence was expressed more indirectly, though her description of classroom preparations. Her organizational skills were strongly and firmly in place. As she explained the overview of the year's curriculum, it was clear she gave much thought to starting up and culminating events: "[I know] when the main events are, but as far as the very specifically planned [work], I'm a week ahead of time. I have a whole lot, like, at the beginning of the year. I think about where I need to think I need to take my kids by the end of the year, and how am I going to break it up in between" (Jackie, #2). Jackie's confidence and skills in managing her lessons and activities were very developed: "And differentiating makes it even more planning and organizing. Making sure everybody's

[17] ELA: English Language Arts

needs are being met. You have like five lessons going at once!" (Jackie, #2). Although she did not mention it directly, her confidence was present in her tone and demeanor, as shown in the following excerpt:

> Like a lot [is] going on…Yeah, now that I've been teaching seven years, especially in the same grade level, some of it just comes natural. I do change a lot what I do, and every year I change around how we organize it. I basically plan for five days ahead of time. You know? Of course, with always having some extra things that you can throw in, when things go short or things go long, re-adjusting. But I basically plan for five days ahead. A week ahead of time. We have to hand those things [lesson plans] in, so just basically think about each of my subject areas and just get… I'm very organized. I'm like a little bit anal about that (laughs). Here is this week's stuff and underneath is next week's stuff [pointing to stacks on her living room floor]. You know, very organized. So I have everything ready. And I need to be like that for me, as well as for my students. To make sure I have everything. I can't be scattered because then they'll be scattered. So, I'm very. I like to make sure that everything is prepared for that day in the week. (Jackie, #2)

Jackie seemed to show confidence and skills, rather than discuss it directly. At one point in the first interview, she described her self-confidence and a sense of being valued through a response about her extended family. *[Interviewer] So, how did everyone feel about you being a teacher?*

> They love it! I mean, there are a lot of teachers in [my family]. Like my great-aunt is a bilingual teacher, and my cousin Nancy…and they love it. And they think, they think I've found where I belong because they feel like I'm really good at what I do. And they feel like I'm happy with what I do. Which I am. And so they love it and they're very supportive, you know. They, I mean honestly, are the ones that gave me that push in that direction, when I was really kind of confused. They were like, "Do you think you want to pursue this?" So they are really happy for me. And any time I get an award or anything like that goes on, they're the first ones to be bragging about me to everyone and anyone. And I'm like, "Okay, guys. Take it down a notch. It's not like I wanted this whole big thing. You don't have to brag about me." But they're really proud of it…Where you know, being a teacher is a very valuable career and so, I'm glad my family was supportive of it. (Jackie, #1).

When I reflected on the three teachers' confidence in their teaching and commitment to the children in their rooms, I was struck by how hard they worked for the children and their families, and again, by how much they cared. Their caring was put into action daily in their relationships. They seemed bent on maintaining an environment, both physically and pedagogically, that supported learning and that had solid, consistent, and articulated demands on the learners. Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova (2008) write, "The optimal educational system then, should build on children's naturally early curiosity. Classrooms and schools that foster cognitive engagement – that is, students who are engaged, curious, and eager to learn – is the standard we have come to look for" (p. 138). The teacher-participants in the current study believed that their children could learn and pushed them to do so. For instance, Symone said,

> But you know, I know, I think as you get…to be, like, how can I, how can I say…like an experienced teacher. It doesn't make any difference [to me] if they're Cambodian, if they are Spanish speakers. When I teach a lesson, I'm teaching in English. And so we try to, use this, and sometimes I use [that]. But you can believe that the Ivory Coast kids could learn some Spanish! I mean they are so…I mean kids are very fast learners! And so, it's like for me, it's like they are not Spanish speakers, but I don't feel like I cannot reach you, you know? It's like I use pictures or I use some, many things to engage them. I don't think it's more difficult [for me], because I know they need more visuals to learn, and so I use them. (Symone, #1)

Educators and researchers have substantiated that teacher expectations matter, that the classroom teacher can obstruct learning or develop it in the children under their care (Good & Brophy, 1994; Goodlad, 1984; Page, 1987; Weinstein, 2002). This concept of the "self-fulfilling prophecy effect" was popularized by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) in their landmark study, *Pygmalion in the Classroom.* My interviews with the teachers

did not address academic success in general, but rather looked to the broader perspective of the learning and achievement of immigrant children moving through our public schools. Gay's (2000) writing on culturally responsive teaching relies on complex details concerning persistent trends in expectations. This work, theory, and practice are intriguing and relevant. There is one research finding—*teachers' expectations and sense of professional efficacy are interrelated*—that seemed related to the experiences of the teachers interviewed. Gay (2000, 2003) writes, "Teachers with strong self-confidence and feelings of efficacy in their teaching abilities have high achievement expectations for students. They use a greater variety and range of teaching strategies; hold themselves and their teaching accountable for the achievement of difficult learners; are more persistent in their efforts to facilitate learning; and spend more time in planning for instruction and professional development activities to improve their teaching quality" (p. 61). Jackie's comments fit into this description of professionalism and efficacy:

> Well, I see, I view myself as a constant learner, like [I] constantly have to be reading things and learning things, observing it. We were just having discussion, I guess before school ended, with one of my colleagues, who I really look up to. She's a huge mentor for me and we were talking, and I was like, 'I don't understand, you know, we sit at these meetings and, you know, some of the teachers talk and talk and talk. And, I'm like, when was the last time, you know, you researched anything? Or looked or read a book about this or went to a professional development that wasn't like fluff?' You know. ' No, I've taught the same thing for ten years.' And I'm like, 'Well do you…have you had the same group of children for ten years? Like, why do you think that's a good thing?' And you know, try to push their thinking…you have to constantly…have to learn. Things are constantly changing around you. (Jackie, #1)

Anita spoke about her expectations for academic learning, as well, yet the experiences she described were not as clearly related as those of the other two teachers. She said, "I think, yeah, I think what it meant for me at the beginning [of the year at this

new school] is, you know, giving the opportunity. Giving children the opportunity to experience school… a method...that works very well. But I can't provide that to them by myself. If the system doesn't support you, so that sort of leaves you…well, you question. You say, if it's not happening [solid learning]. So what's the purpose of this?" (Anita, #3). This teacher expressed the most isolation of the three; she also had mixed reviews of her administrators: principal, two assistant principals, and social workers, as well as counselors. Yet Anita's third grade students "loved her" and begged for her to move with them or loop with the class, into 4th grade. She was not certified above 3rd grade, so could not move to the next grade with them. When I asked her why she thought her students wanted her to loop with them, her response was about their learning: "It's about proving something. It's about proving that it can be done. But it's almost like bulldozing their way through it… and taking me with them! It can be done, and I'm not denying that it can be done. I've seen it work" (Anita, #3).

Within this last section of data concerning teachers' professional skills and commitment, there emerged a category that I labeled *ability to ask for help/support.* At first this seemed pertinent as it reflected a level of confidence; a teacher must be secure in herself to ask for help or to say "I don't know what to do here" or "I am stuck; do you have any ideas or suggestions?" Although each teacher spoke about asking for help and about collaboratively working with others within sections or pods, or teamwork across different areas in their schools, each school offered different responses to their requests for support. Regarding learning to report or to create different levels of analysis in a case study, Merriam (1998) states that "...emergent categories usually prove to be the most relevant and the best fitted to the data" (p. 183). He also states that categories should

reflect the purpose of the research and be conceptually congruent. I wondered if including narratives about school leadership would be conceptually congruent with my overarching questions. However, I decided to include them because "positive leadership and high staff morale" (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, p. 132) is one of the common characteristics of schools that are effective with new immigrant children. Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova (2008) assert:

> Rhona Weinstein (2002) has beautifully demonstrated how teacher expectancies shape the educational experience and outcomes of their students. She shows that these interactions tend to be manifested in repeated interpersonal exchanges between students and their teachers and other adults in the school – exchanges that corrode self-confidence for those students held in low esteem…. Students are well aware of the perceptions that teachers have of them. Well-regarded students receive ample positive social mirroring (or reflections and feedbacks) about their capacity to learn and thus are more likely to redouble their efforts. (p. 138)

So what might be the impact on children, if their repeated interpersonal exchanges with their classroom teachers are positive, yet their teachers' repeated interpersonal exchanges with the other adults in the school are not positive, but rather are negative?

In our first interview, Anita described her school as one built with an open and assessable design: "So, it's a very open school in terms of the building and structure itself. So, it's called a community school. It's also a community school because it's a bridge between two of the main venues in Springfield: Plain Field and Main Street. So, anybody in those two communities can access it. To get from one end to the other" (Anita, #1). Although designed to enhance community connections, in practice, the structure made this teacher feel that she worked in isolation: "We hardly see each other. We see each other in passing…see each other in the morning because they [the children] all have breakfast as they come in. And some see each other at recess, but for the most

part, no, they don't. So, that's being separate… isolating. Yea, that's the feeling. It feels like you don't actually see people [other adults] unless they are in your pod, or you make a point of seeing them. Going to see them" (Anita, #2). This school was divided in "Casas" [homes/houses], with two classrooms for each grade, first to fifth, for a total of ten classrooms. For support, Anita's Casa had its own principal, assistant principal, counselor, and a social worker/behavioral specialist; yet she felt distanced from the administration. She said, "I think the community [for teachers] is built around the pods, right now, and so like our pod is the people we kind of…count on for support or to provide support" (Anita, #2).

Our second interview fell at the very end of October, when I was surprised to learn there had only been one staff meeting at that point in time. Anita said, "And I'm speaking for myself and a couple of others maybe, but mostly for myself…you can see the disconnect between the administration and the staff" (Anita, #2).

> *[Interviewer] So, how can you build community, when the community isn't ever together?* That's the thing. And I think…you know I should be more, a little more understanding now because I've never been principal. And I know she must be overwhelmed and overworked. And she gets paid very well. But the thing is, that I know she has a lot on her hands, but if she would just realize that it's better to be more open about things that are happening, than to glossing it over. That's my thing. I don't do with platitudes. Personally, I don't know…There is no follow-through. I'm just a person of one. You know? I need support from the administration. (Anita, #2)

There was a high level of frustration and anger in Anita's voice and words when she spoke about the lack of support for her requests and classroom needs. This was exemplified in one session where she vented to me, after an important parent-teacher conference, when a one-on-one aid for a demanding child, had been cancelled without

notifying her. She said of the problem, "Ok. You guys aren't giving me what I'm asking. What I need. Forget about the damn para [the one-on-one aid]. I can do this on my own. You're not even communicating with me that there is not going to be a meeting! I'm just going to take care of myself, so I can be present for the kids on Monday" (Anita, #3). *[Interviewer] So, it doesn't sound like the school is taking care of you.* She responded, "I don't feel it. Maybe I'm just disgruntled. I don't feel it right now. I feel like they're asking a lot of us, from us. I'm sorry. [Shakes head] A lot from us" (Anita, #3).

The tone of this narrative was strikingly different from the other teachers' descriptions of their colleagues and school leadership. Symone's words expressed that "team work is the basic thing," as she described sitting in groups and solving problems:

> So we…we were, really can make a good team. Nobody felt like they were less than anyone…most of the time, it's like, 'I have a problem with a child' and so we give ideas. We brainstorm. So, when you're a good teacher, I say, 'You don't feel bad saying I don't know what to do with this person. Or, give me ideas!' And that's how everybody did. It's like this. *[Interviewer] That's great…* This child has like…like, I don't know how to reach them and everybody had ideas and I think that's…and I feel this school, you know, is very good like that. All the teachers are very experienced. Well, I can say there are a couple young ones, but most of them are experienced teachers. And they like to do team work. (Symone, #2)

Likewise, her discussion of the school's principal was filled with realistic praise and genuine respect. Symone had spoken to her principal concerning a possible move next year into an ELL 4th or 5th grade classroom. The school was big, between 550-600 kids, and would have more bilingual needs in the higher grades. Symone's preference was to stay working with K-3rd graders. She was realistic in her knowledge of how bigger systems have to juggle their resources, their teachers, around each year.

> Well…if like, next year, I have what I have now, I will stay. If they give me something different, who knows? But I guess, if like, the principal, you know…if it's a good principal and this is a very good principal. And she's a very experienced lady. And everybody in the system knows she's very good…. if she's smart and…wants the best for her school. She will put you where, where you, where you can do your best. So, and she's a smart one. So, I guess she'll have me where I can be the best for the students. Some other people are better qualified to fifth grade or fourth grade. And that's what I think. When she saw my resume [again] and my reference letters and what I did, have done before, she's like, 'Well, the best place for this person is here.' Yeah. So, I hope that, she keeps realizing that. And I am sure she will because they want kids to do well. So, they should place you where you are more, confident. (Symone, #2)

Symone felt supported by her principal and reciprocally trusted the thinking and decision making of the administration. She said, "I think, you know…every school, I guess, should try to do what is best for the kids. And so, I think a lot has to do with the principals also. How, how she runs the school. And how much cooperation that's been among teachers, yes, but also among the principal with the teachers" (Symone, #2).

Jackie demonstrated the most direct contact with her administration, most specifically her principal. It seemed that she and her principal had a daily working relationship. This school building was also the smallest one, both physically and demographically, and the only one that was strictly a primary school, housing Pre-K to 2nd grade. Also, Jackie had been the director of the Even Care Program housed there for several years; perhaps the collegiality was impacted in part by her past administrative role and responsibilities.

This narrative shows Jackie's ability to integrate her ideas into the larger educational community at her school. She expressed a concern, started a committee to investigate the concern, and worked with others to see what was possible to implement. She described the process:

> I think all that [information about families], and knowing that about your students, and communicated about it, is really important to really educating them. And really teaching them and making them feel comfortable. Feel a part of the classroom and feel like you truly care about them. Because if you don't know those things and they're talking about someone and you're like, 'Who's that?'….They would pick up on that you're not paying attention to what is going on in their life. Like you just care about school. And I feel like their social/emotional is a huge piece, and studies do show that, you know, more than their academic IQ, their social emotional learning is going to play more of a part in them being able to learn and continue on. So, it's huge to me. It's something that I'm pushing at my school. I started my committee. *[Interviewer] Your committee on?* Social/emotional learning. And now we're like dedicating the first two weeks to building community, you know! Talking about feelings. Taking about being a part of the classroom. Being a part of school and getting to know each other. And the less of the focus on the academic piece and more of the…let's get comfortable in our classroom. Let's get to know each other. Let's go over routines and, you know, rules… talking about getting along in our classrooms. So we [the whole school] have these projects to be going on. *[Interviewer] That sounds great.* Yeah, and the principal agreed to devote the first two weeks to it. So [laughs], I'm excited! (Jackie, #3)

Actually, Jackie was leaving our interview session to go to school and meet with the committee and the principal, who had not only given time and financial support to their summer work, but had gotten the necessary district approval. Clearly, Jackie felt supported by and responded to by both her peers and the administration in her building.

Relationships with Families and Community

The relationship with families and communities, built by teachers in our public schools, is a critical area in early childhood education, more so when the teacher is working across cultures (Delpit & Dowdy, 2008; Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2004; Soto & Kharem, 2010; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zepeda, Rothstein-Fisch, Gonzalez-Mena &

Trumbull, 2010). The majority of the narratives in this chapter thus far have focused on the relationship between the teacher and her self, or the teacher and her students, or the teacher and her colleagues. In this final section, the stories focus on the experience of the teacher's relationship with families, what these teachers spoke about that described the nature of their relationship with families. As I worked with the transcripts, I was able to identify themes that emerged concerning working and communicating with families. This section will articulate the creation of those relationships.

In the daily work of classrooms filled with young children, teachers initiate contact with families, though when, where, and how varies immensely. At this stage of the family life cycle, parents are the most involved with their child's school life. In terms of their initial contact with families, none of the teachers interviewed had done home visits or connected before the school year began. They explained it was not feasible because of district bureaucracy: children were not registered or enrolled, correct addresses were not available, phones were disconnected, and so class lists were not prepared in time. None of the teachers lived in their school's local community, so there would have been a time[18] and financial commitment as well; however none of the schools' budgeted for this expense. Each teacher knew the value of making personal contact early and would have covered the costs, yet felt it was not possible. They all described past years when they visited homes, mailed out letters, and/or had an "open house" day for families to visit prior to school's start-up. When interviewed, their initial contact with children and families had been made on the first day or during the first week of school.

[18] Anita commuted 45-60 minutes each way to her school; Symone commuted a solid hour each way; and Jackie commuted 20-30 minutes each way.

Building networks

As teachers in urban schools, each described a general sense of few families physically coming into their schools and classrooms. Jackie mentioned that the first week of school, she had a lot of families coming into school, yet not making direct contact: "So, the parents drop them off in the cafeteria [for the breakfast program], and a lot of the students are bus students, so a lot of the parents weren't even involved in dropping them off. So you rarely saw the parents except for at dismissal time, but even then…like this year, I had a lot of walkers, but in the family groups, so you don't even see the adults…unless you schedule or have an activity in the classroom" (Jackie,#2). The three teacher-participants all attempted to make contact by phone with every family during the first week of school. They were committed to doing the outreach early and having it be positive, so that when later contact might be needed, the "ice was already broken." Through their experience with urban neighborhoods, they knew that families might need positive experiences to move relationships forward. Anita explained one instance of contact with a student's family:

> Yeah, I have this little girl, Jennifer, who…she's great. She's a great artist and you know, I said, 'Jennifer, I need to talk to mom.' And all of the sudden her eyes start…I'm like, no, 'Honey, it's nothing wrong. I need to talk to your mom because you're a great artist. Just, I want to make sure that if I find you an art class for free here at school, she'd be okay with it.' And she's a really good girl. I'm not going to call her mom to say anything wrong. But that's their first reaction. *[Interviewer] So, her first reaction to a teacher contacting a parent was…?* Fear. And what happens is that they get smacked at home too. They get hit at home. They get hit at home, if there is a bad report. They do, they say it. *[I] So, when you call parents, why do you call parents?* To get to know them. *[I] So, have you talked with every family?* Not every. Almost. They tell me they're going to come and they don't. Especially those whose students need a lot of help. (Anita, #2)

Symone described her first contact with families as very informal, usually happening at dismissal time. Her tone was almost like she had met them at the park or Mercado or in their backyards:

> *[Interviewer] And so, do you meet with families or parents before school begins? Or call…*Well, I haven't done it. But we do… but we are sending notices for next week, and the following week, and yeah. Well, like we meet because we, we walk with the kids out. And we see the families, you know, informally. We have, I have met many. Many of the parents. And some have like a kindergartener, a second grader. Like I have one [mother] with a child in kindergarten…there's a brother in second grade and there is a brother in the fifth grade. *[Okay.]* So, when the parent…they usually come to get their little ones and you get to know them. Yeah. Yeah. Sometimes you say, 'Will you make, if you have time, can I talk to you for a minute? Can you come inside?' And they come. (Symone, #2)

Again, because these three teachers were not monolingual, their communication showed awareness of switching languages. Jackie's first grade classroom had two other adults: a Special Education teacher and a para-professional:

> One of us, one of the adults would greet them [families & children] at the door and would say, 'Good morning.' And they needed to say, 'Good morning' back. Depending on the time of year, we would say it in different languages. We taught Spanish in our class, so we would, you know, say it in Spanish a lot. 'Good morning! How are you?' But some kids would choose to say it in different languages. We had a bunch of languages, and we had a bunch of languages hanging out. (Jackie, #2)

The first month of school at Anita's school was occupied trying to connect with current families; there was a new principal, many new-to-the-school teachers, and families who were new to the area, as well. In her third grade class of seventeen, she had six children who were new to the school. She said, "Yeah, the older ones, they're used to their old teachers…to the school being a different way. There was nothing told to the

parents about all the changes. My understanding now [in November] is that the parents were never told that the previous teachers had left, and about the difference in school climate nowadays…." (Anita, #3). This experienced teacher, working in a new locale, felt that the whole system was overwhelmed: the school, the families, the teachers, and the children. She described it this way:

> Right now, I think there is just way too much happening. *[Interviewer] So, what is happening?* Well, we're trying to implement the program, with mostly new [to the school] teachers. We're trying to do that in an inner city school. Where… most, where just about all the teachers who knew the families left. We are left now, to form new bonds with these families. They don't know a thing about us. We were never introduced. Nothing. Not to my knowledge. *[I] Did you have an open house?* We had a parent night. Seven, out of seventeen came. Yeah. Other than my letter of introduction, and monthly newsletters, that I write, that's it…. But that's about it. But there is nothing personal to my knowledge. Is there connection with the families? The school's not doing that right now. I'm not seeing it done…and if they're going to put that responsibility on the teachers… It's going to take away…you're dealing with students…I think that we're trying to deal with a lot of things right now. Some [people] more than others. (Anita, #3)

Connecting school curricula to students' lives and culture was a teaching strategy employed by all three teachers. This was done not superficially, but rather with intention to help to build a bridge between the students' cultures and the culture of the school. Ayers (2001) recognizes the importance of the teacher's responsibility in taking this action. He also asserts that teachers are responsible to stay attuned to students' cultures – cultures that are dynamic, alive, and sometimes elusive. He writes,

> Bridge-building requires someone to lay the first plank…It seems clear enough to me that the teacher must be the architect and the contractor who begins to build the bridge. She must know the child in order to know where to put the first plank. She must also the world, have a broad sense of where the bridge is headed, and have confidence that she and the students together can get there…Effective teachers must learn to be life-long students of culture. (Ayers, 2001, p. 75)

In light of Ayer's idea, it is interesting that each of these teacher-participants was so intrigued with the cultures of the world, as shown in their interview excerpts. I wondered if their outreach to families came so easily because they themselves were immigrants, or the child of immigrants, or from their travel and cross-cultural experiences from early in their lives. They did not hesitate to think of building bridges with families, of working across languages and cultures.

In this way, these three teachers were markedly different from what I had expected to find in this study and what the educational literature had in general presented. These teachers understood bridge building as a basic part of their job. Again, I pondered if this was because they were all bi-lingual or tri-lingual or bi-cultural. These narratives cannot explain this analytical dimension of cause and effect; but given the lived experiences of these three teachers, what follows depicts a model of a healthy teacher-family relationship that most likely does not exist for most teachers.

Even though Jackie knew most of her parents were working one or two jobs, she still asked for volunteers in her first grade classroom; she justified it this way:

> So, I've always had that relationship with the parents in my classrooms. To try. To try and get them involved as much as they can be. Even when I ask for volunteers, I always say, at Back-to-School, 'I know not everyone can come into the classroom. It's not a reality, you have to work, but there are things that I can have you do to help at home.' And I'll ask for translators…if you speak another language, can you translate letters? Like students need their, when we do Writers Workshop, we publish their work. I need parents who are willing to just type up their stories at night. So giving. And families have always said, 'I appreciate that, because I can't come, but I'm happy to cut & color at home at night, or type something up, or read a book on tape, but I just can't physically be in the classroom.' They're like, 'That I can do at night when the kids go to sleep. I can sit and do that for you in half an hour and still feel like I'm being a part of my kid's school.' So, that's a big piece of it. *[Interviewer]*

> *Well, kids would know that their family's…* Yeah, that their parents help. Because they get the little yellow envelope with all the stuff in it and, 'Bring this to mommy. Make sure mommy sends it back.' So, they feel important. (Jackie, #2)

During her final summary in our last interview, Symone referred to pulling families into the class curriculum as one of the most important things a teacher can do:

> *[Interviewer] So, you know, when I think if I have any last questions, I think my questions are more…would be things like, what…if there's anything you would want to say to people who work across cultures? Or, if you feel as a summary, what your experiences…led you to believe, what's most important? I mean, you've said things like flexibility,* Yeah. *[I]…and supporting, working with the whole child…* And. And working with families. Knowing the families well. That could be an asset to your teaching… If you can bring the families to school. It's great for the kids to see their parents in the school, because they always have something to share, you know. Their experience moving [to the U.S.] Even, if they are not like professionals… we had one opportunity, we brought in parents…like we had community helpers. And people came, and they were like mainly parents. And they made their job so important. To show how important it was, that the kids were like, "Oh, my goodness. Yes! This is important." And that one from Bradley Airport, he was like…. one cleaned the airport, and he got a lot of tags for the kids and he showed them how important it is. So, and like nurses, or a mother was a nurse. And a father was a firefighter. So, the more they involve the families. The families will trust the school more. And feel more welcomed. And the kids feel the same thing. Feel more welcomed and proud of their families. So, I think the most important thing. Involve the families. And make them feel more comfortable. (Symone, #3)

Her thoughtful reflection, simple in tone and genuine in excitement, has far-reaching implications for teachers and the impacts their everyday actions can have to include families. It sounded so simple—to feel welcomed, comfortable, and proud.

The attributes listed from the data, which surrounded the level of cooperation that was offered by these teachers to build family networks, were many: honesty, openness, empathy, respect, confidence, caring, determination, and at times, even tenacity. As the teachers shared stories and vignettes about their interactions with families, these

attributes came to the surface. Jackie spoke several times about the importance of the first parent night and using that pivotal time wisely, maximizing it: "I want you [parents] to be a part of this classroom. How am I going to keep that open line of communication? It's hard. They're six [age]. So, 'Give me the best phone number. Give me the e-mail. The time of day that is the best time to reach you.' So, you really have them, there…even though you only have them for a short time…you can get to learn about, where they're from, what their home life is like, how to get in touch with them, if they want to come into the classroom" (#2). Jackie gave out a questionnaire about siblings, who lives in the house, languages spoken, religion, holidays, and what their child's most interested in now. Every year she does an ancestry project in which each child presents history about his or her family; so whether they are new immigrants, indigenous, adopted or in foster care, their stories can be shared in the classroom. She explains:

> I just want them to talk about their family. Where did they come from if *they* were born somewhere else? When did your family come here? So that gives a little glimpse into the cultural piece…. Because sometimes you don't even realize where a lot of your families come from, and you think they've been here for so long. And a lot of times I've found out, no, that their parents came over two years ago. And they were born, so they just came over here two years before they started school! So you do learn a lot abut the families that way. (Jackie, #2)

It was Anita who struggled the most with her efforts in collaboration with the families of her third graders. She employed many of the same strategies as the other two teachers: early phone calls home with positive news; notes home and classroom newsletters in Spanish, Portuguese, and English; and inviting families into the classroom to share their cultural heritages. The parents seemed disconnected from this large school with many new teachers and new administration; yet Anita described what she saw as a

disconnection from their children, as well. This following exchange was from the last interview, where participants were asked to reflect on how they make meaning out of their work:

> *[Interviewer] ...Now that we've talked about how you came to your present situation, and what it's like for you...Now the discussion is about what does it mean to you? To do this work, with these kids? With these families?* To be at this school? I think it's becoming very challenging. I mean. Since our last interview, I've been working with, trying to work with the families a little closer. Trying to get the parents and caregivers involved. And have them take some responsibility for, you know, their children in the classroom. And it's been very difficult. I think parents are not used to being that involved. Especially in that community, and…they leave it all up to the teacher and to the administration. So the responses have been varied. *[I] Does that surprise you? You look sort of quizzical, like...* Yeah. Sometimes it does surprise me, it surprises me that they don't understand the seriousness of the children's behavior. They leave it all up to the teacher, or that they will say, 'Well, at home, you know, he or she won't do this or that.' Well, sorry. They [children] come to school with something that they observe at home, or life. And we, right now, are the recipients of that. (Anita, #3)

Anita's unsuccessful attempts to connect and communicate with families were undermining her ability to move ahead while feeling isolated from the larger community: "My question right now is, how are they planning to involve parents? If they are going to leave it [all] up to the teachers, that is not the right way. We are so overwhelmed and so overworked. There is very little time to build connections with parents, except for calling them to parent-teacher conferences" (#3). Anita was in the midst of preparing for these fall conferences and was concerned that families would not attend. At her Family Night in September, only seven out of seventeen children had family representatives come; she was concerned that attendance would be poor for these important meetings, as well. Anita described how third graders, usually eight or nine years olds are at a critical juncture in their education, as their developmental tasks move into new areas: identity

issues, peer relationships, and cognitive shifts. She referred to the old saying: " First and second grades are when kids *learn to read*, and in third grade, kids *read to learn*." Yet, her children were not learning at the levels she expected. She shared her concerns:

> Back to the beginning question of how do I make meaning? I think it is very hard to. Once you're in the classroom, and you're seeing some of the learning take place, or some changes [behavior] take place, you can say, 'Okay!' But the moments are very few and hard to come by now. I don't know what is happening in the school. I don't. Sometimes I tell myself, maybe things are supposed to get worse before they get better. But I just think that's a stupid constellation. (Anita, #3)

When I asked Symone about what families think about the school, her response referred back to their relationship with the teachers, as if the classroom teachers themselves were the school to families:

> I think it, I mean…I think Puerto Rican families [majority of immigrants at her school] think very highly about teachers and they…believe that you're doing the best for their child. I think they are very positive and have…it's like they say with little ones, 'The teacher is your mother, es tu mama…tu mama.' I mean that's my impression. But I think Puerto Rican families…are happy with the schools just in general. There are some people maybe who might not be happy, but for…what I see…I have the idea they are happy. I always work in a good school system, I can tell you…I don't know, like some schools that are around are performing below…so, I don't know how it's. How it's…impressions families have of those schools. (Symone, #2)

Jackie, who had been with an early childhood program at her school before she began to teach first grade there, described how that contributed to stronger communication and family collaboration in her present assignment:

> I used to do a program at our school called Even Start, so that opens up a door. And so that program, a lot of families had a comfort level with me because they knew I was the teacher in that program, and I worked very closely with the families and the students. So even still now, even though their students aren't in my class and the program is not there…Like I'll get phone calls in my room and the principal is like, "Um, there's a parent

> here and is just saying in English, 'I need M. L., I need Ms. L.' " I'm like, 'I'll be right there. It's okay.' It's got to be one of my families because they are the only ones who do that because I told them, 'Whenever you come in the school and feel uncomfortable, just ask for me. Somebody will come get me.' I was like, 'Just say my name over and over again. And they will eventually just find me, to figure out why you keep saying my name over and over again.' They're like, ok, so…they still do that. So with those families, I have a good relationship. And you know, my other…all my families, I feel like I have that relationship. I am...very open in my classroom. I want parent volunteers to come in. I make an effort to have things at different times of the day. Make sure I give parents enough notice, like, 'I know you have to get off of work. So, next month, we have this, this, this and this. You know? Pick which one you're most interested in coming into…come in!' (Jackie, #2)

Each of these teachers spoke about a sense of "interdependency" that they experienced in working with families to support the children. Their narratives show they cared about the children and their families. Obviously, then, caring is a multidimensional process. According to Berman (1994), the essence of caring is responsiveness, which is contingent on understanding people in context. Speaking more specifically about caring teaching, Gay (2000) writes, "Bowers and Flinders (1990) suggest that being responsive is understanding and acting on, in educationally constructive ways, cultural influences on the behaviors and mental ecology of the classroom. Hence, for teachers to do culturally responsive teaching, they must be competent in cultural diversity and committed to its inclusion in the educational process" (p. 52). Gay reminds us of the work of Sullivan (1974) who, over three decades ago, observed that it was not enough for teachers just to like ethnically diverse students; rather "the challenge is to effectively teach them within a cultural context" (p. 56). The experiences narrated by these three teacher-participants showed this cannot be done in isolation; there must be communication and collaboration with the children's extended families.

Communication concerns

These teacher-participants had to be good listeners to work well across cultures with their many immigrant families. They learned to watch for body language, shifts in tones, or anything that might indicate discomfort in their families. They described the need to be careful to not insult or disrespect families that are culturally different from one's own:

> I mean you can't always know. I mean, it's basically knowing people. Not only knowing cultures, but I mean you can see when a parent starts to kind of shut down, or looks away, or, you know, stops asking questions during conferences. You kind of just try and read their body language most of all because it's usually a change in, even…if you don't know culturally how they're going to respond, you do see a change in their behavior all of a sudden and that's kind of how I tell more so. (Jackie, #3)

One concern each teacher spoke about was the lack of dialogue or response in parent-teacher conferences. The concern was ultimately about not knowing just how much the parents understood the teachers' words and then the meaning of those words:

> So getting the language was difficult for them. Learning English was… had…just hard for them. You know? So, even in their own language, it was a difficult [idea]…so it was just adding extra layers, upon layers. And so, just even reaching their families. Like one of my students from India, his parents were so nice and so willing to help and…educated, but I always felt like they just would listen. They respected me as a teacher and what I say, but they always just nodded. And so it was very hard for me. And I would always be like, 'Do you understand? Do you have any questions?' 'No, no [questions].' And I'm like, 'I know you respect me as a teacher and I appreciate that respect, but I want a conversation and some inputs…' It was hard to reach those families. Luckily with my Mexican families, I do speak enough Spanish that they are comfortable with me…so that opens a door. (Jackie, #3)

Communication was complicated when the teachers needed to connect with families about a learning disability, style, or need, or bigger reports on grades, evaluation, and testing. Anita explained this kind of situation:

> I think some of the kids are benefiting, but… some of us being there…is very hard. To come away with that [MCAS concerns] every day. And, I don't know if it's a good idea, to feel like I need to distance myself and not get so involved. But at the same time, I think it's a healthy thing to do…so, that's the same thing, you wonder. Okay, so I have 12 who are ready. But what happens to those 5 who are not? They're just going to slip through the cracks like every other kid in the Springfield public school systems. So, you're just becoming one more teacher who lets the kids, you know, slip. And you don't want to do that. But then again, if you don't have a support system, or even like a para-professional in the room that can work with the ones that are ready, so you can work with those who aren't! So, if you don't have the systems in place? How do you talk about that with them [families]? (Anita, #3)

Symone told about a difficult situation with the MCAS evaluation, too. It made her think about how to evaluate for the positive aspects of being bilingual. We know the negative evaluation is concrete: if they don't have the vocabulary they miss the word or section. Yet, she wondered, does any school system look to evaluate bilingual strengths?

> *[Interviewer]...but you were starting to talk about, you said… "Like the kids had a broader base to begin with..."* Well, I can say that. Like in one sense they are richer. In the sense that they have two languages. They have two cultures. So, because they are always bringing, like, their Spanish in. Or when I talk in Spanish, they are happy to hear me. So they have that thing, that some other kids don't have. So, in that sense they are richer than the other ones because they are always, they have the Puerto Rican background. Or some…Ecuadorian background. So, in that sense they…I think they are more flexible, you know. And like, they can switch between two languages and they can make connections. (Symone, #3)

Symone went on to muse about how public school systems often look at culture as a deficit, how we know how to measure the immigrant students' weaknesses, but not their strengths.

On a lighter note, the teacher-participants told stories about communication attempts that went awry, especially in introductions of people or books, or when reading a unfamiliar foreign language aloud. Even in serious conferences, miscommunication was not always bad, as it showed the families they were making an attempt. All three teachers complained about the lack of translators for documents, letters, to work in the classroom, or at parent meetings and/or conferences. Jackie related this humorous story:

> We tried one year in our district because we didn't have a lot of translators, so we tried to use one of those on-line, like, the free ones. But it was hysterical because we sat in a meeting and it was a Russian family. We have a huge Russian population in our district also, and it was an INRS meeting. We wanted to make sure they understood, you know, the academic problems. So the principal, like went on and translated in Russian. And the parents were just laughing the entire time. They were like so appreciative that we tried, but they were like, 'Don't use that again!' Because it translates so literally. Word for word for word. But they were just laughing. It was funny. They were like, 'Thanks for trying.' And we were like, 'Yeah, we tried.' Didn't work out so well, but you know… (Jackie, #3)

Symone and Jackie both had numerous frustrating experiences trying to connect translators with families. Sometimes they were successful; sometimes the schools' administrators made this a priority and had funding. But more often, the teacher-participants just told parents to "bring someone with you."

The shared concern here around communication was not about families understanding the school or teachers' information; rather their concern was that families would come to school and leave feeling disconnected or that no one understood them. It was about the reciprocity of conversation, communication. The three teacher-participants sensed the critical need for teachers to be able to hear from the families, and the need for the families to feel they had been heard. Anita voiced it best when she said,

> Well, I think the thing is that people don't communicate in English, they don't. A lot of them [families] are more hesitant, like they have more ability than they think they have. But they feel like nobody understands them. So, they come to school and the can't communicate well, and so you see a dynamic on how people, not that people are mean to them, because they can't have a conversation they don't understand. It's kind of like everyone avoids everyone because the parents don't want to speak English. Because they're nervous. That they don't sound educated. Or can't ask the question they want to ask because they can't get their point across. And then on the flip side, the people who work in school don't understand. So, don't know how to help them and don't know what to do. So, I think more and more the parent just stay away. They go, 'I know my child is in school. I know they are learning.' And they just take a step back. And they feel like things do go home in…Spanish…but not often. Like the office does send things in Spanish, but I feel like they've almost been trained not to look at the things in the folder, because they don't think they'll understand them. Because the majority of letters, and this has come from the feedback from the families, the feel like everything is in English. And they're like, 'I can't read English, so why go through it?' And I say to them, 'But then there are notes in Spanish that you can understand.' So I think it's kind of like this *learned helplessness* that's going on. And I feel that it's not only with the Hispanic families. There are the other immigrant families that don't have enough English. (Anita, #3)

The importance of communication being open and ongoing with all the families, across all the cultures, was a focus of each of the teacher-participants. As stated earlier in this chapter, they each said that initiating patterns of good communication was the responsibility of the school; as teachers, they were the ones in the more intimate position of making the first move from the classroom to the family. Jackie said, "My biggest thing, sometimes with the cultural things, or with any relation with parents because sometimes it's just not cultural, is you don't want to push…to move…and have them shut down more. But you don't want to hold back too much because then you're not going to get back the information. So, it's about finding that balance, with the parents, and

finding out where you can push a little to get more information, and where you have to hold back. And I think you learn that with your families" (Jackie, #2).

The last patterned concern surrounding communication that all three teachers consistently mentioned was how to share with families the value of keeping the home or native language alive in their children. These three teachers were all adamant and passionate about this topic. They said that everywhere and everyone else in this "new country" give the message to immigrants to speak English, learn English, conduct all business in English. But to the contrary, Anita felt strongly that the children should not speak English all the time; she said, "No, encourage them to not speak English at home! No, because they need to keep their first language, too" (Anita, #1). These three teachers had experienced the gift of being bi-lingual or tri-lingual in their own lives and valued it in the lives of their immigrant families. Jackie said in her first grade classroom the learning of the new second language progressed quickly:

> Especially in my grade level, you see them coming in and within months you're like, 'Is this the same child who spoke not a word of English?' Yes, grammatical syntax is off, but… And I constantly hear other teachers saying [to parents], 'Encourage them to speak English at home too.' And I'm like, 'Well, no, because their families don't speak English. So, you know that's not gonna help them!' I'm like, they can still read and write in their own language, and it will carry over into English, you know, when they are in school. They'll pick up those skills. It'll just take them a little longer. (Jackie, #1)

Each of the teachers gave examples of conversations with parents, older siblings, or grandparents in which they were advocating for the young child in their class to maintain their first language. The family recipient always received this advice with surprise. Parents who were hesitant to help with homework in English were set at ease to work with their child in Spanish or whatever language was their home language. None of

these three teachers were trained as ESL instructors, and they all knew that there has been debate in the bi-lingual educational literature about this topic. Yet, their attitudes toward language diversity were open, positive, and respectful. These shared stories shed light on the every day classroom life of these three teacher-participants; classrooms that work and support new immigrant students and their families.

> If teachers and parents can truly reach a level of mutual understanding and acknowledge their different worldviews, epistemologies, and cultural frames of reference without pathology, it is believed that they common grounds and interests will become more readily apparent. And if they can reach that next step, their caring and commitment to children promises better outcomes for all (Lawson, 2003, p. 138).

The above quote is the one used to open this research study in Chapter One. It seems to be a placeholder to reflect upon now, before I move into the concluding chapter. Much has been written in the past decade since the Lawson (2003) article; yet it is still true. Soto and Kharem's (2010) research with bi-lingual and bi-cultural children points strongly to the voices of teachers: They write, "When we value teacher's voices we learn that each teacher brings unique experiences and strengths, not as a miracle worker but within the realistic complexities coupled with the rewards of the classroom experiences" (p. 11). I leave these three teacher-participant's voices now, and move into my own process of focus, reflection, closure, and further research questions.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTIONS

There are two faces from a current N.A.M.E. (National Association for Multicultural Education) DVD, *Multicultural Education: Past, Present, and Future* (2013) that are forefront in my mind, as I launch into this final chapter. The faces I see belong to educational researchers Carl Grant and Sonia Nieto. In this film, eight of the NA.M.E. founding members are interviewed about the history and current context of this international organization. They each condense massive amounts of information from events since WWII into their individual replies. There are two statements in particular that resonate for me: education in America is to teach, "all people, in all groups" (Grant, 2013), and "every child deserves a good education" (Nieto, 2013). These two simple statements speak to the practitioner and scholar within. Each person has deep reasons that motivate him or her in their life work. My return to graduate school, which led to this current research, was motivated by the values contained within these two sentences. In part, Grant and Nieto also reference The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 26: 2: *Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom* (United Nations, 1948). We are global citizens and we are educating children who will live, work, and contribute to global world society. For me, this research is about contributing in some small way to this much larger human reality.

Lessons from the Process

The purpose of this dissertation study was to explore the experiences of elementary teachers working in classrooms with over 50% immigrant children. As stated in Chapter One and Two, the word immigrant needed clarification. The children in these teachers' classrooms could have been documented or undocumented new immigrants, or they could also have been the children or temporary or migrant workers. Some were children of new immigrants; some were from the territory of Puerto Rico, therefore U.S. citizens and not technically new immigrants. Whatever their actual status in the U.S., collectively the children were identified as immigrants children by their teachers; more importantly they could all be grouped as linguistically and culturally diverse student populations. In listening to these experienced teachers' narratives, I heard stories, anecdotes, and reflections of the intellectual and emotional complexities of cross-cultural teaching in urban centers.

As I conducted the in-depth phenomenological interviews for this study, I was guided by two broad questions. Here, I will summarize the three areas that focus on the initial research questions discussing (1) the overall findings, as well as (2) what emerged from answering the research questions. Then I will reflect upon (3) the actual interview process used in this case study. I have learned an enormous amount about research and scholarship as I have engaged with my original questions about culture over the past five years. I am reminded that research simultaneously answers questions and creates new ones. As Nieto (2004) says about the use of case studies in multicultural research, "The case studies are meant to challenge you to ask questions rather than to make assumptions" (p. 7).

Research Questions: Initial and Emerging

The initial question that I started with was: *How do teachers think about culture in their own lives and in the lives of their classrooms, and how does their theoretical conceptualization of culture in this framework relate to their understanding of immigrant families?* In my two data chapters—*Chapter Five: What I Sought* and *Chapter Six: What Emerged*—I have documented a wide range of thought from the three teacher-participants that I interviewed regarding this question. Culture—as a topic, issue, or word—was always present. In every interview, with every participant, culture was central to the conversation.

I would argue that these three teacher-participants are alert to culture in numerous ways. The clearest and most salient way is their consistent thinking that equates culture with race, language, and ethnicity. When teaching linguistically and culturally diverse student populations, many teachers have the same type of thinking and treat culture as a social category. Current research by Gutiérrez (2002) highlights that the problem of conflating culture with social categories, i.e., race/ethnicity, language, and ability, is that these descriptors lack specificity, offer little useful information, and promote "one-size-fits-all" educational practices: "Defining culture as a social category results in overly deterministic, weak, and uncomplicated understandings of both individuals and the groups or practices of which they are a part" (Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 318). I should recognize, however, that each of the teacher-participants did delve into the complexity of these social categories at different times, most especially when thinking about a specific

child or family. While their analyses of culture were not overly categorical, they did reference social categories as their first, baseline representations of culture.

I reflected about each of these women's lived experience as a bilingual or trilingual person of color living in our racialized contemporary U.S. culture. I did not recruit the teacher-participants looking for a particular race or language ability, yet the three teacher-participants who volunteered and completed the interview process were indeed not members of the mainstream classroom teacher profile that I had expected: White, middle-class, Judeo-Christian, and mono-lingual. The three teacher-participants self identified as immigrants and were linguistically and culturally diverse. Two were born outside the U.S., one is a resident alien with a "green card" and the second became a U.S. citizen. While the third teacher-participant is the child of parents from Puerto Rico, their family life emulated the U.S. – P.R. migratory sojourn pattern. I cannot determine how these variables in their own lives have impacted their views on culture. I only mention it to keep their lived experience in context, however they may have been marked by others for their race or language differences, or by their culture or country of national origin.

As I began this research project, I included the racial demographic picture of the current wave of new U.S. immigrants, the majority being brown-skinned peoples. Therefore, race was a factor in my research thinking. Yet, these teachers' voices and sharing of lived classroom work push me to engage with race more strongly than I had anticipated I would. Some scholars offer troubling explanations for the poor educational outcomes for low-income students and students of color (Howard, 2010). In the literature, these deficit-based theories and "explanations usually are centered on low-

income students and students of color lacking or being devoid of culture, coming from a culture of poverty that is not suited for academic success, possessing an oppositional culture, having a disdain for academic achievement, or having parents who lack concern for their children's academic aspirations (McWhorter, 2000; Ogbu, 1987; Steele, 1990; Valencia, 1997" in Howard, 2010, p. 68). In contrast, each of the three teacher-participants reported here that they valued and sought out parent involvement in their classrooms: Symone and Jackie were the most successful in this process. Again, they were also the two teachers who felt both supported by and in good communication with their schools' administrators.

Before taking on this research, I was well aware of deficit thinking in schools, yet not familiar with current work of deficit theorists, especially around race. I have learned much about this topic during this research project: "Some scholars have maintained that academic achievement outcomes are caused by innate differences in intelligence between racial groups (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994), a belief that is not as prevalent as it was half a century ago, but still present nonetheless" (Howard, 2010, p. 69). My knowledge of this topic grew as I looked at the number of ways scholars have responded to cultural deficit theory. One response is the cultural difference theory: "These scholars describe different ways of thinking about students, their families, and communities, and offer different ways of thinking about closing the achievement gap" (Howard, 2010, p. 69). I would summarize and argue that each of these three teacher-participants thinks about cultural theory in part from this perspective.

There are five identifying characteristics given in the literature: (1) Culture is rich, unique, and complex; (2) language is an asset; (3) home environment has capital; (4)

environment matters; and (5) the solution for change is to transform or change the school, rather then to change the student. All three teacher-participants—Anita, Symone, and Jackie—expressed these five characteristics in their narratives. In summary, their practice is connected with Gay's (2000) pedagogical paradigm: culturally responsive teaching. An examination of the research and theory on this pedagogy reveals that it is based on five key principals: the first is "the eradication of deficits-based ideologies of culturally diverse students" (Howard, 2010, p. 70).

From a review of teacher education research, Rueda and Stillman (2012) have recently compiled a historical perspective of a thematic view on teachers' conceptualization of cultural factors in education over time. Their research created four clusters covering the 1960s to the present: (1) deficit perspective—*Cultural differences are negative factors that impede education and should be minimized or erased.* (1960s-1970s); (2) difference perspective—*Cultural differences exist, but they represent differences, not deficits.* (1970s-1980s); (3) universal perspective—*Cultural differences exist, but play a minimal role in learning or educational practice, good teaching is universally applicable.* (1990s); and (4) culturally responsive, "assets" approach—*Culture and cultural practices are useful resources, which can be used to design instruction.* (1990s-Present) (Rueda & Stillman, 2012, p. 248). This is very condensed, yet it gives an overview from which to continue thinking about the teacher-participants' concepts of culture. It should be kept in mind that this historical perspective was based on reviewing research literature, not on the practice in school settings. Schools and practice do not always align with research and/or theoretical perspectives in the literature.

Table 7.1 Conceptualization of Cultural Factors in Education Over Time

Perspective on culture	Description	Time period	Representative citation
Deficit	Cultural differences are negative factors that impede education and should be minimized or erased	1960s-1970s	Bereiter and Engelmann (1966)
Difference	Culture differences exist, but they represent differences, not deficits	1970s-1980s	Au and Mason (1983)
Universal	Cultural differences exist, but play a minimal role in learning or educational practice, good teaching is universally applicable	1990s	Cognitive strategy instruction (Chamot & O'Malley, 1996)
Culturally responsive, "assets" approach	Culture and cultural practices are useful resources, which can be used to design instruction	1990s-present	Lee (2007); Moll and Arnot-Hopffner (2005)

Rueda & Stillman, (2012). *Journal of Teacher Education* 63(4), p. 248.

My analysis of the teachers I interviewed would not place any in the universal perspective of culture; two of them, in fact, spoke from an opposite perspective. Their high awareness and inclusion of a sociocultural context in their practice and pedagogy made them feel that "good" teaching was contextually based: You might be a good teacher here in this particular setting, with this group, yet not such a good one somewhere else. From their perspective, "good" meant skilled, effective, *and* able to connect with a particular group of children. They had been in situations where their skills and abilities were a mismatch for the setting, and they knew that they needed new or different skills to be a "good" teacher in those situations.

I would place the conceptual thinking of the three teacher-participants in the cultural responsive perspective. Gay's (2000) writing on the theory, research, and the practice of culturally responsive teaching expands on this: "Many educators still believe that good teaching transcends place, people, time, and context. They contend it has nothing to do with class, race, gender, ethnicity, or culture of students and teachers. This attitude is manifested in the expression 'Good teachers anywhere are good teachers everywhere.' Individuals who subscribe to this belief fail to realize that their standards of

‘goodness’ in teaching and learning are culturally determined and are not the same for all ethnic groups” (Gay, 2000, p. 22). This attitude was expressed by each of the teacher-participants. More will be said on this topic of culturally responsive teaching later on in this discussion.

Reflecting on this historical perspective of conceptualizing culture, I have many questions. Why does the deficit perspective persist so strongly in educational settings, when its roots are from the 1960s? What causes a person to shift their perspective: experiences, education, or attitudes from peers? Why did the universal perspective, which harkens back to post-WWII attitudes of the 1940s-1950s, emerge when it did? I believe that part of research is to create new questions and to push my own learning. I feel that this research process has done just that. I am delighted to have met and interviewed three teachers who shared so openly their thinking about culture.

Preparing for this research study, I deliberated how to engage with one multicultural education goal, which is to understand cultural differences and causes of cultural conflict or misunderstandings. As outlined, I chose to engage with the cultural dimension defined as the individualism/collectivism continuum. People in individualist and collectivist cultures have differing traits that directly affect schooling and classroom behavior. I understand that the I/C dimension creates generalizations, yet it seemed a viable, specific, authentic, and realistic way to look at a potential area for conflict or miscommunication in the context of culture. My concern that the U.S. is identified as an individualistic nation, it also contains collectivist groups within its borders, whether newcomers, past immigrants, or indigenous tribes that are identified as having a collectivist cultural orientation. I believe teachers need to recognize their own cultural

style. Spring (2008) writes, the "individualist prefers society to be governed by the rule of law. This gives free range for individual choice as long as no rules are broken. In contrast, the collectivist prefers society to be controlled by social obligations. People act properly because they feel obligated to others to be good" (p. 12). This becomes a particular area for conflict because, depending on a teacher's orientation, the classroom either can be governed by rules or by a sense of social obligation to the teacher and the students.

Although this cultural I/C dimension might have come up in the interviews with the teacher-participants, they did not explicitly address it, nor did it emerge from the data. Collaboration as a value or learning goal was reported, yet not the I/C dimension per se. My tool for gaining this information was to engage in four scenarios designed by educational researchers and used by WestEd (2001, 2010) in their *Bridging Cultures Project*. I now feel that my premise was simplistic, or perhaps only naïve: I thought if I could find effective teachers and have them share their understanding of what they do in their practice, then perhaps they would apply the I/C dimension to situations where there was cultural miscommunication. I knew there would be complex layers of issues in this research study; in this particular research goal—to document teachers' cultural understandings of the I/C dimension in culture—I was not successful. In summary, the teachers did not respond well to the non-interview items: (1) the four scenarios and (2) the Ideal Child Survey.

This concludes my summary of the teacher-participants' responses to the first research question in terms of clustering their answers around *what I sought*. There was also considerable data that *emerged as patterns* surrounding this first question on culture.

I had not anticipated each teacher-participant's description of three very pronounced cultures: the culture of poverty, the culture of the street, and the culture of violence. I would argue that the cultures of the street and violence, as described by these particular teachers, are inexplicably connected with what they saw as the culture of poverty. Again, because of the direction the teachers-participants' narratives went, I was pushed to learn more about teaching children in poverty.

The roots of the culture of poverty concept can be found in Oscar Lewis's (1961) *The Children of Sanchez: Autobiography of a Mexican family*. Lewis based his thesis on his ethnographic studies of small Mexican communities (Gorski, 2008, 2012): "His studies uncovered approximately 50 attributes shared within these communities: frequent violence, a lack of sense of history, a neglect of planning for the future, and so on. Despite studying very small communities, Lewis extrapolated his findings to suggest a universal culture of poverty" (Gorski, 2008, p. 32). Researchers around the world tested Lewis's concept of the culture of poverty, raised a variety of questions about poverty, and dismissed the construct: "Differences in values and behaviors among poor people are just as great as those between poor and wealthy people. In actuality, the culture of poverty concept is constructed from a collection of smaller stereotypes which, however false, seem to have crept into mainstream thinking as unquestioned fact" (Gorski, 2013b, p. 33). More than 55 years later, I heard teachers describe this poverty paradigm and apply it to many of the children in their classrooms, as if all people living in poverty share a consistent and observable culture.

Although the teachers used the language of this concept, they did not share the majority of the stereotypes of this myth of the culture of poverty. Much of the content of

the narratives that they shared was based on the realities of their low-income families. The story this research study tells is from the reality of three teacher-participants working in urban elementary schools, where 90-100% of students were on the free lunch program: the informal district indicator of high poverty schools. Again, I felt pushed by their thinking and reflections to learn more about effective teaching in low-income schools. If poverty is a more salient overarching issue in the lives of these teachers and the diverse families they work with than culture per se, this should impact my work and how I continue. I re-read bell hooks (2000) thoughts on socio-economic class in the U.S.; her critique on the issue of classism, that although less spoken about in our society, it impacts us as greatly as racism and sexism. There was great strength in each of these teacher-participants' perceptions of their role as classroom teachers. Thanks to their direct relationships, they had the capacity to bridge families to physical and economic resources in the local community. I felt humbled and moved learning about their engagement with their under-resourced families.

The second question I asked in the case study was: *What intercultural communication skills or tools do teachers have in their repertoires, and how do they use this knowledge to inform their inclusion of immigrant families?* Again, I will briefly recap the findings from my data, whether reported in *Chapter Five*, as part of what I sought, or in *Chapter Six*, as data that emerged in unexpected ways. The research of Gutiérrez & Rogoff (2003) makes a few suggestions for proceeding with this idea of repertoires of practice and this approach has the benefit of apparent simplicity: "In research and practice, we often have to proceed on the basis of partial information. We

need to consider the implications for research and educational practice when only a little cultural information is available" (p. 22).

There were several communication skills that the teacher-participants spoke about during the interviews: (1) learning to be a good listener, (2) facilitating outreach to families, (3) being a direct link to other community resources, and (4) being a cultural interpreter for their students and families. Review of these particular repertoires of skills revealed important aspects of my research. It seems to me that each is an important skill for effective cross-cultural communication, yet their acknowledgement of and their skill with interpreting and explaining cultural expectations directly to students, or their families, is paramount when working with this population of students. When teachers can make explicit their own implicit knowledge and beliefs about schools, teaching, and learning, then immigrant children and families will fare better in their classrooms (Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull & Garcia, 2009). Without explicit cultural frameworks and information, cross-cultural communication will not support linguistically and culturally diverse populations on the many levels needed. The data shows that these three teacher-participants have learned the importance of this skill.

Each teacher interviewed shared how learning to make cultural differences explicit had developed in them, yet what is important is that it required more than personal experiences and awareness or sensitivity. It depended in part on their in-service training and professional development, such as the college courses they were taking or research articles they had read in the fields of cultural psychology and/or educational anthropology. These aspects of professional development supported them in negotiating cultural conflicts for themselves and their students. I believe there are implications here

for seasoned teachers pertaining to the need for authentic and sustained work at demystifying culture. As employed and experienced elementary teachers make explicit the culture of their classrooms, they will better understand and support the children and families they care for and teach.

Table 7.2 Characteristics of Sympathetic and Empathetic Teachers

Characteristics of sympathetic and empathetic teachers

Sympathetic Educators	*Empathetic Educators*
Lower expectations of students due to race, poverty, or language	Hold students accountable despite difficult circumstances
See limitations in students	See promise and possibilities in students
See deficits in students	See assets in students
Paralyzed by problems	Become active problem solvers
Have narrow, limited teaching repertoire due to perceived student capacity	Develop critical and complex teaching practices to engage students
Place little to no value on students' perspectives or voices	Listen and learn from students' experiences to inform teaching
View learning as a teacher-dominated practice, with students having little to offer	View learning as a reciprocal process between teacher and student

Howard. (2010). *Why race and culture matter in schools.* P.49

An important piece of data that emerged from the interviews concerned the high level of caring each of these teachers expressed for their students and their practice. I included this in the data section *Self: Awareness and Knowledge of Self—Values: Internally held and externally exhibited*. I believe that each of the three teacher-participants depicted an extremely high level of care for their students and their families, immigrant and non-immigrant alike. Their words produced vignettes that showed deep caring in a holistic and professional manner, for each student in the class. This was true

for those students who were endearing, and those who were challenging, as well as those where the relationship fell somewhere in-between.

One common strategy is how, through a sense of caring, many teachers lower expectations for students from low-income backgrounds. They do so because they feel sorry for the students, or their circumstances, and therefore are sympathetic teachers. A consequence is not to challenge these students. Haberman (1991) refers to this as a pedagogy of poverty, when teachers water down curriculum and lower expectations. Conversely, there are teachers who are caring about the situations of their low-income students, who express an empathetic orientation (Noddings, 2005). Teachers with an empathetic orientation communicate to their students a belief in their ability to succeed and hold students accountable despite any difficult circumstances resulting from poverty's obstacles: "Embedded in an empathetic teaching approach is a deep-seated concern and care for students" (Howard, 2010, p. 48). The data shows the three teacher-participants each having an empathetic teaching approach.

In Gorski's (2013a) research on effective engagement with students in poverty, he found that one critical classroom strategy is to express high expectations through high-order, engaging pedagogies: "Like everyone else, low-income students learn best at schools in which pedagogy is driven by high academic expectations for all students—where standards aren't lowered based on socioeconomic status" (Ramalho, Garza & Merchant, 2010) in (Gorski, 2013a, p. 50). This research study did not review any type of classroom, school, or district level academic measurement or scale; therefore, I can not base my assessment of high expectations and effective teaching on anything other than the teacher-participants' shared self-reflections.

Reflections on the Interview Process

> We can think about the narrative interview as an origami. Initially, the origami is in the paper as potential: that is, the paper can or cannot become an origami. After the figure has been created, the paper can become a flat sheet again, which—despite the wrinkles—can be molded into a new figure. Like an origami, untold and forgotten memories exist as potentials of one's constructions of the past. But, by merely observing the flat paper, we cannot know the final form it will take. Many times, not even the origami artist will know for sure. (Gemignani, 2014, p.132)

During the months of conducting the interviews, the hours of transcribing each interview tape, and then the too-numerous-to-count times spent reading and reviewing the written scripts, I have been thinking, annotating, memoing, and reflecting upon this qualitative research process. While I reread these materials, as well as notations on discussions with my critical readers during the coding and analysis stages, I am a bit overwhelmed as a new researcher. This process of conducting qualitative work is an enormous task, both tremendously frustrating and rewarding. Weis and Fine (2000) reflect on qualitative research, which they have been conducting for over four decades, as "—an honest, reflective cacophony of voices and research decisions made, mistakes and regrets, and simple, amazing moments that will never make it in to the final version of an article or book" (p. 2). I cannot say it any more clearly. I have learned so much from this process. I cannot imagine having continued with my first round of semi-structured interviews and having produced anything authentic and of value; yet, at the same time, I feel I need to continue to grow as an interviewer. I was comfortable with the design of the three-interview series of the phenomenological interviewing sequence (Seidman, 2006) that I used. The structure was invaluable for creating a process in which the

content would surface. I will continue to use a similar structure in future research projects. At the same time, I need to become better at honing in on threads of content during the actual interviews, so that questions can be answered and nuances explored.

On different occasions during this process of gathering data for my dissertation on teachers and their work, I realized on different occasions my background as a classroom teacher affected both the teacher-participants and me. I cannot say that the impact was positive or negative; I can say simply that it was not always neutral (Gemignani, 2011). The process of asking, listening, and learning was very recursive; I feel that collaborating with others in a team would have strengthened my research work. I know that a dissertation is an individual process, yet there were many times I felt that I was working in isolation. The two years I worked with the *Work-Family Transition Project* (Perry-Jenkins, 2000), I never felt the same sense of isolation. Teams of graduate students working in pairs conducted the interviews, and the lead researcher held monthly team debriefings, as well. Understandably, I was not in isolation when I made use of my critical readers during my research process, yet I have learned that I would be more productive working in a research group. As I look forward to new research work, I will incorporate collaboration in the design where possible.

Qualitative research in general and interviewing in particular are not straightforward research techniques. Lippke and Tanggaard (2014) have written about novice researchers' interviewing skills and the need to look at "muddy" interviews as knowledge production processes: "Rather, it [an interview] must be acknowledged as a peopled affair, situated in social practices in which discourses, emotions, subjectivities, and identities come into play" (Lippke & Tanggaard, 2014, p. 137). As a researcher, I

am still learning about these subjective levels of engagement, and how the interaction between the participant and myself influences the outcome—the knowledge produced. I feel I must be an active and empathetic listener. Pelias' (2011) metaphor of "leaning" describes the level of listening and trust building I seek: "When I lean in, I am attentive, listening presence, trying my best to become attuned with another person….I want to be a good reader of others, sensitive to what they might need, alive to what they are trying to say, open to what they may share" (p. 9). This quote may appear to describe a therapeutic style, but in the context of this study, it simply means communicating through clear, attentive, reflective, and active listening.

Making the Cross-Cultural Work of Teachers Visible

> In 1998, the National Educational Goals Panel suggested that not only do children need to be ready for school, but that schools need to be ready for children (National Educational Goals Panel, 1998). For the most part, schools and districts have emphasized getting children ready for school—only the first half of the equation…But what about the second half of the equation, making schools ready for children? In the case of immigrant children (those who are born outside of the U.S. or who are children of parents who immigrated as adults), this second recommendation—to make schools ready—is of critical importance. (Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull & Garcia, 2009, p. 474).

I have done this research work to understand how to better ready our elementary schools for the immigrant children who attend them. There are many gaps in our understanding in this area. Returning to Epstein's (2001) theoretical and practical work on family, school, and community partnerships, we need to look from these multiple perspectives to understand the influences on children's learning. This work focuses on the teacher-school level, yet from a context of families' needs. My hope is that this

research report will be of some value to others working in schools with cross-cultural dimensions: "At least as important, but less readily understood, is how fundamental differences in culture-based beliefs about child development and learning may guide different expectations for children on the part of parents and teachers" (Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull & Garcia, 2009, p. 475). Although Rothstein-Frisch et al. work from the perspective of developmental psychologists, we are still interested in the same issue: how culture impacts children's learning and development and what can support both families and teachers. Again, I hope that the results this research provides can forward the conversation concerning this critical issue.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

I have engaged in this research from a social justice, multicultural perspective, which I still adhere to, yet the work with these three teacher-participants and the expanded reading I have done on the topic of culturally responsive pedagogy has moved my thinking forward. I believe these three teacher-participants are working from a culturally responsive teaching theoretical model, whether they know it or not. Gay (2000) defines the four basic characteristics of culturally responsive teachers; they are (1) caring and empathetic; (2) reflective about their attitudes and beliefs about other cultures; (3) reflective about their own cultural frames of reference; and (4) knowledgeable about other cultures. I propose that the narratives that these three teacher-participants' shared in this research process demonstrate that their practice contains these four attitudes or attributes of culturally responsive teaching. In a current extensive literature review on this topic, Rychly and Graves (2012) make a distinction between

multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy: "Education that is multicultural can be delivered to a classroom containing students from the same culture; the content presented is representative of various cultural perspectives. Culturally responsive pedagogy, on the other hand, must respond to the cultures actually present in the classroom" (p. 45). I have learned from these three teacher-participants that to be effective in supporting new immigrant children and their families, an immediate and caring response to individual children is essential.

To Become a Scholar: Knowledge Use

> So, here you are; you've arrived at what appears to be the end of your journey. You've designed and implemented a study; you've collected, analyzed, and interpreted data. You have informed your question and have learned something—in terms of both your question and the research process. But have you produced knowledge? Doesn't the information you have in your findings need to be used before it becomes knowledge? How can what you learned contribute, in some ways, to improving the human condition? Perhaps you are not quite finished with your journey because you still have several questions: Who might use your research findings? How do people use the results of research? What does that look like? As well, you might be wondering how to reach those who might be interested, how to best communicate your findings. (Rallis & Rossman, 2012, p.155).

During the past three months of finishing up this research dissertation, I have thought a lot about the questions that Rallis and Rossman (2012) posit to new qualitative researchers. This research inquiry has been a learning process for me; it has taught me how to do a systematic inquiry—" a patterned and deliberative process involving decisions about the questions, evidence, data collection, making meaning of the data, and audiences" (Rallis & Rossman, 2010, p.156). This research needs to be shared to become

part of the larger knowledge base in education. As Rallis and Rossman (2010) argue, "To become knowledge, information must be used, and its use should in some way contribute to improving the human condition" (p. 155). According to these two researchers, it seems that research findings have either an instrumental use—linking directly to action— or an enlightenment use—contributing to a deeper understanding or insight.

To communicate the findings in this case study, I have thought about my audience: Who might be interested in the topic? Where might this information be most useful? From the list of potential audiences—scholars, policymakers, practitioners, and other researchers—I think that practicing teachers, working cross-culturally out of necessity, are those I want to reach with the findings of this study. Practicing teachers might have the ability to follow-up on what I have learned and to apply these findings in their classrooms.

I have to reach this audience directly through more writing. This would entail articles in professional journals or possibly a self-published handbook through CreateSpace© on Amazon.com. I have found several useful handbooks created in this manner (Lowdermilk, 2010) that were follow-up publications from doctoral research. I understand that this mode of disseminating information may not be considered a usual professional mode for distribution. I need to be creative to move my research findings out into practice, and I intend to find the right publishing match. Others would benefit from the voices of these three effective teacher-participants: "But, more importantly an effective teacher is herself a *material* resource: an indispensable person who can connect schooling to the real, *material* conditions of urban life" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 187).

The three women interviewed for this case study are *material resources* for their students and families. For me to grow professionally, I too need to be a *material resource* to the broader educational research community. My aim is that this study will contribute to the array of knowledge so we may better understand what makes urban teachers effective.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER

FLYER-FLYER-FLYER-FLYER-FLYER

August 2007

Hello there TEACHERS,

My name is Anneke Lundberg. I am an elementary classroom teacher who is currently back in graduate school. I know how busy the start-up is & how there is an overwhelming amount to do. I wonder if you even have a moment to read through this flyer… I hope so & appreciate your time if you do.

I am wanting to talk to a handful of you who work with immigrant kids [in K, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd level] and their families. Our public schools are very international communities these days & this impacts our work as teachers. I want to talk with & listen to YOU about this.

I would like to have 3-4 conversations this fall, perhaps once a month, to gather your reflections on any issues around your work with immigrant children… about working across cultures in your various classrooms.

If you are interested in putting a few hours of time into thinking & sharing about your experiences, OR if you can think of any one – in your current school or another one you have worked in -- who might be interested, please be in touch. I can explain more of the details then. My hope is by doing this together, as teachers, we can come to understand a bit more of the picture.

THANKING YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR TIME!!!
 # 413-367-7504 OR annekel@educ.umass.edu

APPENDIX B

TEACHER-PARTICIPANT QUESTIONAIRE

Teacher - Participant Questionnaire

Name_____

School
_____District_____

Address_____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Principal _____ Supt. _____

Personal Contact Information:
Phone_____
(home #) (cell #)
Email _____

Mailing Address
_____

How long have you taught in this school and district?

How long have you taught?

What grades have you taught?

What is the student population like in your school?

What grade(s) are you teaching now? **Pre-K** **K** **1st** **2nd** **3rd**

How many students do you have in your classroom?

What is the ethnic composition of your students?

How many are immigrant children? From what country (s)?

What are you hoping to gain from participation in this study?

Do you have any questions or concerns?

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER

Cover Letter

October 2007

Dear Teacher Participant,

I want to thank you again for agreeing to work with me over the next month in this research study I am doing to finish up my dissertation at UMass Amherst. We have already discussed together the nature of this case study and your role as a participant. This letter is to give you an outline and reference sheet.

The purpose of this study is to investigate elementary classroom teachers' work in their current classrooms. This study seeks to describe the variations and similarities of teachers' work within the increasingly internationalized communities of our public schools. As a descriptive case study, this research will be organized around three, 90 minute long, interviews, each completed about a week a part. I will interview three to six K-3 teachers, currently working in schools with high levels of immigrant children.

As a participant, your involvement is voluntary: you may withdraw from part or all of this study at any time. If you do stop participating, your data will be retracted and there will be no penalty or prejudicial actions from me. You will have access to the data from the interviews, tapes, questionnaires, and any other work that we might do together.

You have a right to privacy: I will not use your name directly in relationship to data collection or analysis. I will do my best to maintain confidentiality in procedures. Given the small number of participants, there is some risk that you may be identified as a participant of this study.

As you know, I am a doctoral student at UMASS Amherst and this study will be the core of my dissertation writing. The results will be included in the published document and possibly included in later manuscripts submitted for publication. Again, your privacy will be protected throughout this process.

If you have any questions, at any time, please give me a call at my home (413) 367-7504 – or cell# (413) 687-5643, or E-mail me at annekel@educ.umass.edu.
I am indebted to you for your commitment to this study – for your time and your honesty. I hope that by doing this work together we can come to understand a bit more the complexity of our work in our public elementary schools.

Looking forward to our time together,

APPENDIX D

TEACHER VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM

Teacher Voluntary Consent

Permission from Teacher Participants

For interviews in study focused on their current classroom

Please Check:

- ❑ YES. I, _____, volunteer to participate in this qualitative study and give permission for Anne Lundberg to conduct research with me as a teacher at _____ School. I give permission for interview and questionnaire information to be used in the research. I give permission for the interviews sessions to be tape-recorded. I give permission for the research to be used and disseminated as needed and decided upon by Anne Lundberg.
- ❑ YES. I have received a letter explaining the research Case Study & how to contact the researcher. I understand that I may withdraw from part or all of this study at any time.
- ❑ YES. I understand the methods employed in the study. I will have access to any data that pertains to me at any time at any time.
- ❑ YES. I understand my right to privacy. I understand my right to information about the study. I understand confidentiality procedures will be in place throughout the study.
- ❑ YES. I understand I may decline to participate at any time, or for any section of the study. I will not be penalized professionally, personally, or in any other way for declining to participate in this research. My data will be retracted from the study if I leave.
- ❑ YES. I understand that results from this study will be included in Anne Lundberg's doctoral dissertation and may also be included in manuscripts submitted for publication.
- ❑ YES. Because of the small number of participants, approximately six, I understand that there is some risk that I may be identified as a participant of this study.

Teacher Name: _____

Home Address:_____

Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

School Address: _____

Teacher's Signature:_____Date:_____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Copy to participant. YES. ❑

Researcher: Anneke Lundberg
P.O. Box 255, Shutesbury, MA 01072

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT'S DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

Participant's Demographic Information

- Where was your mother born?
- Where was your father born?
- Where were you born?
- How do you identity yourself racially, ethnically, culturally?
- How old are you?
- How long have you lived in the United States?
- What languages do you speak?
- What is your primary language?
- How long have you been teaching?
- Why did you decide to be an urban educator?
- Describe your experiences as a student.
- Describe the community in which you teach.
- Describe the community in which you grew up.
- Describe the community in which you currently live.
- How important are the issues of race/ethnicity in your life?
- What experiences have helped prepare you for your work in your urban school?
- What kind of activities do you engage in when you are not working in the school?
- Tell me about the students you work with.
- What do others say about the students?
- Describe your teaching philosophy.
- How important do you think issues of race/ethnicity are in the lives of your students/
- How would you describe your students' cultures, the culture of the classroom, the culture of your school, of the local community?
- What aspects of students' identities do you think need to be affirmed?
- What are some of the ways that culture influences teaching and learning?

Name: _____Date: _____

School: _____Grade: _____

APPENDIX F

IDEAL CHILD SURVEY

What is an ideal child?

I. Your parents' view

What kind of person did your parents want you to become?
Check each of the characteristics, which they felt were generally desirable and should be encouraged. Then double-check the five [5] that they considered most important, to be encouraged above all others. Draw a line through those ~~characteristics~~, which they considered undesirable and usually discouraged or punished. (If your parents were not in agreement, mark for either one or both separately.)

___Adventurous
___Affectionate
___A good listener
___Altruistic
___Always asking questions
___Athletic
___Attempts difficult jobs
___A self-starter
___Becomes preoccupied with tasks
___Careful
___Cautious
___Competitive
___Completes work on time
___Conforming
___Considerate of others
___Cooperative
___Courageous
___Courteous
___Creative
___Critical of others
___Curious
___Desires to excel
___Determined
___Domineering
___Emotional
___Energetic
___Fault finding
___Fearful
___Friendly
___Gets good grades
___Healthy
___Independent in judgment
___Industrious
___Intelligent
___Intuitive
___Likes to work alone
___Likes school
___Never bored
___Negativistic
___Obedient
___Persistent
___Physically attractive
___Physically strong
___Proud
___Quiet
___Rebellious
___Receptive to ideas of others
___Refined
___Regresses occasionally (playful, childish)
___Remembers well
___Self-assertive
___Self-confident
___Self-satisfied
___Self-sufficient
___Sense of beauty
___Sense of humor
___Sensitive
___Sincere
___Socially well adjusted
___Spirited in disagreement
___Strives for distant goals
___Stubborn
___Talkative
___Thorough
___Timid
___Unwilling to accept things on others' say so
___Versatile
___Visionary
___Willing to accept judgments of authorities
___Willing to take risks

Adapted from E. Jones (1992). *Teaching adults: An active learning approach.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

What is an ideal child?

II. Your own view

What kind of person would you like your child to become?
Check each of the characteristics, which you feel is generally desirable and should be encouraged. Then double-check the five [5] that you consider most important, to be encouraged above all others. Draw a line through those ~~characteristics~~, which you consider undesirable and usually discourage or punish.

___Adventurous
___Affectionate
___A good listener
___Altruistic
___Always asking questions
___Athletic
___Attempts difficult jobs
___A self-starter
___Becomes preoccupied with tasks
___Careful
___Cautious
___Competitive
___Completes work on time
___Conforming
___Considerate of others
___Cooperative
___Courageous
___Courteous
___Creative
___Critical of others
___Curious
___Desires to excel
___Determined
___Domineering
___Emotional
___Energetic
___Fault finding
___Fearful
___Friendly
___Gets good grades
___Healthy
___Independent in judgment
___Industrious
___Intelligent
___Intuitive
___Likes to work alone
___Likes school
___Never bored
___Negativistic
___Obedient
___Persistent
___Physically attractive
___Physically strong
___Proud
___Quiet
___Rebellious
___Receptive to ideas of others
___Refined
___Regresses occasionally (playful, childish)
___Remembers well
___Self-assertive
___Self-confident
___Self-satisfied
___Self-sufficient
___Sense of beauty
___Sense of humor
___Sensitive
___Sincere
___Socially well adjusted
___Spirited in disagreement
___Strives for distant goals
___Stubborn
___Talkative
___Thorough
___Timid
___Unwilling to accept things on others' say so
___Versatile
___Visionary
___Willing to accept judgments of authorities
___Willing to take risks

Adapted from E. Jones (1992). *Teaching adults: An active learning approach.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

APPENDIX G

SCENARIOS #1, # 2, #3 AND #4

Scenario #1

One of the K-3 grade classes has been learning about different kinds of art and artist before they go on a field trip to an art museum. The class is looking at some copies of famous paintings. The teacher tells the class that each student has to say, individually, which painting they think is worth the most. Maria doesn't understand what to do, and while the other students are making their decisions, Cathy tries to explain it to her. The teacher notices they are talking.

What do you think the teacher should do?
Teachers might have different ideas about how to handle this situation. For example:

1. The teacher could tell Maria and Cathy to be quiet.

2. The teacher should ask Maria and Cathy why they are talking, and once she finds out that Cathy is helping Maria, she should let her continue with the explanation.

Which solution do you think is better? Why?

What don't you like about the other one?

Scenario #2

It is the end of the school day, and the class is cleaning up. Denise isn't felling well, and she asks Jasmine to help her with her job for the day, which is cleaning the blackbard. Jasmine isn't sure that she will have time to do both jobs.

What do you think the teacher should do?

Teachers might have different ideas about how to handle this situation. For example:

1. The teacher could tell Jasmine to help Denise with the job.

2. The teacher could tell the girls that Denise is responsible for her own clean-up job.

Which solution do you think is better? Why?

What don't you like about the other one?

Scenario #3

A class of elementary grade students is working on posters in their art class. Next week some teachers will come to select five posters for an art show. Then, one poster will be chosen for a $50 cash prize. Erica and Victoria realize that they have some similar deas for a really neat poster, and they want to work together.

What do you think the teacher should do?

Teachers might have different ideas about how to handle this situation. For example:

1. The teacher should let Erica and Victoria work together, and explain to them that the $50 will be for both of them, if they're selected.

2. The teacher should explain to Erica and Victoria that they have to work alone because there is only one prize.

Which solution do you think is better? Why?

What don't you like about the other one?

Scenario #4

Theresa tells the teacher that she will probably be absent tomorrow because her mother is sick, and she has to stay home to help care for her little brother.

What do you think the teacher should do?

Teachers might have different ideas about how to handle this situation. For Example:

1. The teacher should tell Theresa that she understands, but that school is her most important responsibility, and her mother should find someone else to help out.

2. The teacher tells Theresa that it is very kind of her to help her mother, and that she will give Theresa the work for the next day so she won't fall behind.

Which solution do you think is better? Why?

What don't you like about the other one?

Adapted from a Report by C. Rothstein-Fisch, E. Trumbull, & P. Greenfield. (March 1999). *Supporting teachers to bridge cultures for immigrant Latino students: A model for staff development*. San Francisco: CA: West Ed.

APPENDIX H

TEACHER PARTICIPANTS TABLE

Table **Teacher Participants**

Code	Name	Gender	Age	School	Ethnicity
T-1	Francesca	Female	45	Urban Elementary Springfield, MA	Hispanic Central American
T-2	Cynthia	Female	52	Urban Elementary Springfield, MA	White Euro-American
T –A	Anita	Female	46	Urban Elementary Springfield, MA	Hispanic Central American
T –B	Symone	Female	56	Urban Elementary Springfield, MA	Hispanic South American
T –C	Tashina	Female	33	Urban Elementary Holyoke, MA	Afro-American Caribbean
T –D	Tarin	Female	40	Urban Elementary Holyoke, MA	White Irish-American
T – E	Jackie	Female	29	Urban Elementary Springfield, MA	Hispanic Puerto Ricana

APPENDIX I

PORTRAITS OF TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

Portraits of Teacher-Participants

Because I have chosen to include my three teacher-participants' words throughout Chapter Five and Six of this dissertation, it is important for my readers to have an understanding of who my participants are. Therefore, the following is a portrait of each participant, including biographical information, as well as information on the context in which each participant taught during the 2007-2008 school year. My hope is that these portraits will provide my readers with an easy reference guide to these women, to which they can refer throughout their reading of this dissertation.

Anita: Anita grew up in Tegucigalpa, the capital city of Honduras, in Central America, where all of her extended family still lives. Her mother was trained as an accountant and owned her own bookstore before marrying Anita's father, who managed a Volkswagen dealership. When Anita was born, her mother stopped working outside the home and spent her time raising her three children. Anita began learning English as a three-year-old, when her mother placed her in a bilingual playgroup that started up in their local neighborhood. Anita reflects on her mother's decision, "The only thing that she wanted to leave us was an education. And at the time, she knew that speaking two languages was the way to go about it." Anita went to elementary school at the American School, a small private school that had 50% Honduran children and 50% American children of employees of the U.S. Embassy, the United Nations, and other government agencies. The Honduran educational system for high school had three choices in the mid-1970s: vocational, normal [teachers], and generalized. Anita graduated from a Catholic all-girl high school, after which she worked as a clerk and secretary while saving money to

attend college in the U.S. Anita earned her B.A. in elementary and special education at a private college in Virginia and then returned to Honduras to teach at her alma mater, the American School, for eight years. Her first two years there as a teacher, she subbed and worked in several Special Education programs, and then taught in first grade, kindergarten, and third grade classrooms. Anita returned to the U.S. to earn her Masters in Education at a state university in Massachusetts before reentering the elementary school setting. The year of this research study, Anita was in a new situation, teaching third grade in a large community school, which went from pre-K to fifth grade; she had received a transfer notice over the summer from the district's Superintendent Office in Springfield, Massachusetts. During this academic year, Anita usually had eighteen children in her class, several who were repeating third grade. She had children withdraw and return during the year, and she also had new students arrive mid-year, so the number of students in her classroom fluctuated. Within the total group, there were fourteen students who were from immigrant families, most of whom were from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Guatemala. She also had students from Haiti, Jamaica, Turkey, and Ghana. Anita was teaching this group solo, yet requested a paraprofessional at every opportunity. Anita was in the same school and district in 2008-09, yet teaching first grade, which she might be able to loop with the following year, as the children moved into second grade.

Jackie: Jackie grew up in the Bronx, the borough north of Manhattan, one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. When she was a toddler, her large, extended Puerto Rican family moved to a new neighborhood, where they bought homes near each

other and where most continue to live. Jackie grew up within this family enclave with her mother, a disabled homemaker, her father, and an older sister. As a child, she lived near and knew all four of her great-grandparents. Jackie was seven when her parents divorced, yet even then her father remained in this neighborhood, living with his grandmother and next door to his ex-mother-in-law. This large, Spanish-speaking extended family is very close and provides support to each other emotionally, physically, and financially. Jackie attended a local public elementary school, which was predominantly Italian-American; minority students attending were just two other Puerto Rican children and one black, so she always stood out in this school. In her junior high school years, grades sixth, seventh, and eighth, the demographic mixture changed dramatically; the Latino minorities became the majority, and this impacted her school experience positively. Jackie graduated from an all-girl Catholic high school in her Bronx neighborhood. She attended college at a large state university in central New Jersey, earning her B.A. in English and Elementary Education and then her M.Ed. in Early Childhood and Elementary Education. Jackie thinks of herself as a "city girl" who has a Main Street and can walk to everything. During the year of this research study, Jackie was teaching her seventh year of first grade at a primary school for pre-K to second grade. For the past three years, she had been the lead teacher in a collaborative classroom, which also had a Special Education teacher and a paraprofessional. Her classroom this year had between 20-22 students enrolled, with eight counted as Special Needs students through their IEP- Individual Education Plan. Within the total group, there were eleven students who were from immigrant families, with many Asian or Latino backgrounds, from China, India, Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, and Mexico.

She also had students from Turkey and Russia, and noted that a couple of her students were "mixed" ethnically, having family from two countries. During the 2008-09 school year, Jackie was still teaching first grade in this collaborative classroom and working with a school-based committee to develop curriculum to build community across all the classrooms and to support students as they transitioned into the elementary schools. Jackie was feeling the pressure, both internal and external, to move into school administration and had begun the state's training to be a supervisor in her district, yet was not ready to leave the classroom work with her children and families.

Symone: Symone was born in a small town in northern Uruguay—the Oriental Republic of the Uruguay—situated on the Brazilian border, and because of this location in South America, she grew up bilingual in Spanish and Portuguese. Her mother was an elementary school teacher, and her father, who ran a supermarket, supplemented the family income as a notary to the police department. Symone was a precocious learner; as a child she learned to read the newspaper by watching her family members. She was put into first grade at age five, and although young and physically small, she engaged academically and held her own. Her hometown was so small that there was just one school with only one class per grade, so her mother was Symone's fourth grade teacher, and her sister's godmother taught her in second grade. When she was ten, her father was transferred to the capital, Montevideo, which is where she went to public high school. Symone graduated from the national university with a B.A. in Sociology, during a time of economic, civil, and political unrest. The coup in 1968 closed programs within the university, so further studies were not possible there; as a new bride, she moved to

Venezuela. Nearly ten years later, when two of her three children were born, her husband accepted a job as a chemical engineer in western Massachusetts. Symone was excited about coming to the U.S. The decision to relocate was not hard she says, "Because I was having a spirit in traveling and always wanted to live abroad, and my husband, too!" Once stateside, she received teaching certification, K- third grade, and began working in bilingual classes in Holyoke and Springfield school districts, while she worked on her M.A. in Elementary Education. Although she is not certified per se in bilingual education, Symone has worked for eighteen years in classrooms where she uses Spanish and English every day. Her current classroom is a SEI (Sheltered English Immersion) program with 32 children and has two head teachers: one designated English and one Spanish speaker, though they are both bilingual. Symone has been teaching three years at this school and thirteen years in the district. During this time, she has taught kindergarten, first, second, and third grades. Symone's current classroom is composed of nearly all Latino children from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, and El Salvador, though she also has children from Croatia, Cambodia, and the Ivory Coast. Symone estimated newcomers made up 60% of this year's class, with the other 40% children born to new immigrants. She identifies herself as a tri-lingual and bi-cultural person who enjoys working in this English immersion classroom as a member of a collaborative team. The district has approached Symone several times to become an ELL Coordinator or to be moved into administration. She has resisted these offers, as she feels it would be too isolating to become an administrator: Symone likes her work with young children.

APPENDIX J

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

A Structure for In-Depth Phenomenological Interviewing

The Three-Interview Series:

Contact Time.

Each teacher-participant was interviewed separately, without overlap. Each participant had three interviews, two hours each, for a total of six hours. The interviews were done within 1-2 weeks from each other whenever possible. Most of the interview series were therefore completed in a three to six week time period. Each interview, numbers 1, 2, & 3, had a specific focus and they were conducted in sequence.

Specific Selected Criteria.

The phenomenon under research needs to account for 50% of the current environment. For this research this meant to interview teachers who teach in classrooms with 50% or more immigrant children enrolled. The topic explored must be important to the participants' lives and present on a daily basis in their environment.

Interview Process.

Each and every interview was tape-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Interviews were listened to and reviewed before the next interview took place. Listening to the interviews several times before transcriptions were made permitted time for writing research memos, and formatting follow-up questions, or probes, for the subsequent interview. [*Note: My transcriptions have been edited for idiosyncrasies of oral speech, by using (...) when omitting or skipping material. Otherwise they were as spoken, with notations for pauses (P), overlaps between speakers "[", and with interruptions or other non-verbal signals marked.*]

Interview Number One: Focused life history, historical/ biographical context.

Orientation was done on the telephone prior to meeting each participant. This included a basic overview of the three interview series. At this first session, I would again review the format and explain our work for this interview: How did you become an elementary classroom teacher? Tell me about your life up until you started teaching this year. What led you into becoming a teacher of young children?

Interview Number Two: Present work, details of the experience of their present teaching and classroom work, the participant in their present context.

The focus of this second interview was to have them describe their current experiences as a teacher: Tell me about your life in your school and in your classroom. What is it like to be a teacher with so many immigrant children? What are your days like in this classroom? I would like to know as much as possible about the details of your experience at your present job. What is it like for you to go to work there?

Interview Number Three: Meaning making, reflection on the meaning of their work.

Participants have already reconstructed (1) her/his life history leading to teaching and (2) their experiences as a teacher in their current setting. Now the participant seeks to make meaning of their experience. In this research, they needed to articulate their work as a teacher of new immigrant children and families. Initial questions: Given what you have said and shared in the first two interviews, what does it mean to you to be a teacher of new immigrant children? We have talked about how you cane to your present situation and what it's like for you, now the focus is what this means to you. What

understanding have you come to from this work with these kids, with these families? This last interview is reflecting on that experience of teaching kids, particularly children of immigrants and working in a public school with all the different parts that you've talked about. How do you make meaning of your work and how do you do it?

Follow-up Questions: *Exploring/ probing*

Although I came to each interview with a basic question that established the purpose and focus of the particular interview, I asked numerous follow-up questions, responding to the teacher-participant's remarks and asking for (1) clarification, (2) concrete details, and (3) examples or explanations. I did not use a specific interview guide, rather first asked generalized questions to support clarification, trying not to lead the participants. Chronology: Can you tell me again when that happened? Vague words: What does ____ mean? Hearing a public voice while seeking an inner one: If I were your teacher/ friend/ parent, what would you say to me about this issue? To reconstruct rather than remember: What happened? What was your elementary school experience like? The goal was to keep participants always focused on the subject of the interview. The concrete details constitute the experience they had; their attitudes and values are based on the experience. Especially in the first two interviews, the priority was to stay grounded in the concrete details.

Samples of Specific Follow-up Questions Used in this Research:

Interview one.

- Before your training, what made you want to be a teacher?
- Can you talk about being in an international school within your country? Tell some stories about this. How did it influence your progress to your present work?

- So what was pursuing teacher education like for you?
- Can you remember when you thought, "That's what I want to do?" Did you have that kind of realization or did it evolve gradually?
- Could you explain whether your interest is exposure to language and skills, or if it's learning abilities?
- About your own history and your stories of moving from law into education, may I ask what drew you to that?
- I heard you talk about how you always knew that you wanted to travel. Can you talk about this?
- Going back to when you were first in college, you decided not to do teaching. Can you say what that was about?
- How did you learn how to reflect? How did that happen?
- As a child, did you connect with your teachers?
- What were the gangs like? Were there ethnicity differences then? Or was it just territorial issues?
- How did everyone in your family feel about you being a teacher?

Interview Two.

- Tell me about why they did this vertical grouping?
- When you walk into your pod in the morning, what's that like for you?
- When you say "the street", what does that mean?
- Can you give me examples of language expressions they use? Do they speak in English? Spanish? Both?
- You said you are trying to make this room safe for the kids. Do you feel safe?

- Tell me what you like about doing this work. What are the pieces of this job that you like?
- When you get into your car and you're driving to Holyoke in the morning. What are you thinking about? How does it feel to go to school?
- When you're working in teams with the teachers, how does that go? I mean you're not supervising, right? Can you tell me more about this?
- You speak so clearly about what you're doing, what fulfills you. Is there anything that frustrates you, irritates you about your job or the daily work?
- How do you get to know your families?
- When you say, "They are scared." What do you mean? What do they fear?
- Do you have mentors for yourself? Your growth? People in that role?

Interview Three.

- So what does it mean when they think they can "pull you" [remove from the room]?
- What does that mean to "slip through the cracks"?
- Following up on what you said right before – you said you think some parents have given up: "So he's in 3rd grade, he's 8 years old." What has been given up?
- I am wondering about the families you've talked to who want their kids to have more homework, in kindergarten. Is this a difference in what the parents want from the school and what you want as a teacher?
- What does it mean to be a caring teacher? It sounds like that part of being a caring teacher is thinking about life skills?

- You were talking about culture and its values and actions, the way you do things. What happens when you sense a conflict among, in a student or in a family? Between the culture of the family and the culture of the school?
- When I listened to the last tape, I noticed that you used the word "teacher" sometimes and then sometimes you used the word "educator". I don't know if those have different meanings for you? I wanted to check in and see if you felt these were two different roles? Or if you use them interchangeably?
- You have shared that when you found there was a gap in your knowledge you sort of hit a dead end, how did you know? And then what did you do?
- You said something last time also about working with families, not wanting to insult families when you're trying to help them? In that context it was around economics, but obviously there are other areas too. How do you read that across culture? How do you know when you're beginning to do this?
- I made a note here called "cultural knowledge" that you mentioned. You put those two words together when you were talking about the classroom and teaching. When I say "cultural knowledge", in terms of your life and your work, how do you think about it?
- What are your thoughts about how culture impacts cognition or thinking?

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