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The Role of Teachers' Cultural Intelligence in Working With Diversity

As the world is becoming increasingly flat (Ang, Van Dyne, Koh, Templer, & Chandrasekar, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Friedman, 2005), the classroom has become a mirror that often reflects this phenomenon at a microcosmic level. As such, teacher-preparation programs are continuing to emphasize the importance of understanding and valuing student cultures to inform teaching practice. This study sought to examine how 10 in-service teachers in the San Diego area understand the role of culture in their daily work with their culturally and linguistically diverse students using the cultural intelligence framework (Earley & Ang, 2003). While the cultural intelligence framework provided some insight into how teachers understood certain aspects of culture in relation to their students, it also brought to light the complexity of defining and assessing cultural competence. In fact, teachers challenged the elevated emphasis on culture in the literature, and instead, highlighted additional competencies of value to them in this work.

Introduction

In order for our students to participate in this increasingly interconnected world (Friedman, 2005), it has become of utmost importance for researchers and teachers alike to equip our students with the tools to engage on the global platform. Darling-Hammond (2010) believes that this work begins in our classrooms as we address issues of social justice and equity among our own children. When children recognize the power of their voice and understand the wealth that their backgrounds and cultures bring to their classrooms, their communities, and the world, they will more likely begin to see themselves as valued members of the global community. As teachers continue to work with an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student population, their roles have become more complex in addressing not only the academic and institutional demands of their work, but also the interpersonal and intrapersonal demands of meeting the needs of all learners. The growing number of teacher-training materials for public school teachers explicating best practices on teaching CLD populations mainstreamed into their classrooms not only ex-

pect teachers to understand the linguistic needs of their students, but they also make an argument for teachers to expand their roles to include that of "cultural mediators" (Echevarria & Graves, 2007) and "cultural brokers" (Gay, 1993), teachers who "thoroughly understand different cultural systems, are able to interpret symbols from one frame of reference to another, can mediate cultural incompatibilities, and know how to build bridges or establish linkages across cultures that facilitate the instruction process" (p. 293).

In a similar vein, researchers in the field of teacher training also expect teachers to develop "sociocultural consciousness," which is an awareness that helps them negotiate their interactions with their students with an understanding that these interactions are mediated by their sociocultural backgrounds. In other words, they need to realize that their worldviews are influenced by their experiences and backgrounds (Banks et al., 2005). Teachers are expected to advocate for their students and eliminate educational disparities (Banks et al., 2005, p. 233). In Quintanar-Sarellana's (1997) survey study of teachers working with CLD students, she found that culturally unaware teachers may or may not be aware of the differences between their students' and the schools' cultures or they may reject their students' cultures covertly, but unfortunately at times, overtly. Alexander and Schofield (2006ab) indicate that the unconscious stereotypes that teachers carry with them about their students often lead to their students' academic needs not being met. On the other hand, the teachers who appear to be culturally aware are able to understand their students, include their students' cultures in the school setting, and are more likely to try different strategies and methods to support student learning. They are also more likely to engage in self- and professional development to enable them to connect with these students (Quintanar-Sarellana, 1997).

Purpose of the Study

Given the emphasis placed on culture in the literature, the purpose of this study was to ascertain 10 in-service teachers' cultural competence using the cultural intelligence (CQ) framework (Earley & Ang, 2003), and the extent to which this framework provides insight into how these teachers understand and approach their work with their CLD students. In addition, this study explored how these teachers understood the role of culture in their daily work with their CLD students.

Theoretical Framework

Before this paper operationalizes the concept of *cultural competence*, an examination of what constitutes culture warrants some attention. Slawomir (2005) provides three basic meanings of culture. First, he defines the concept of culture to be derived from the notion of cultivation, whereby the mind, land, and the complexity of human civilization are cultivated, generated, and constantly evolving. Second, he describes culture as the "black box," which includes shared meanings, values, and behaviors used by a group of people. A third meaning he provides for culture is the "sense making practices" that individuals, groups, and societies pursue (p. 6). This "backpack," which includes shared values, beliefs, and norms learned through socialization, is

essential to the evolution of complex societies, where what we describe now as globalization and internationalization requires a sense of "cultural engineering and re-engineering" (p. 7). The key notion in this definition is the term "shared." Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) describe culture as the "software of the mind," which distinguishes one group that holds "shared" values, beliefs, and norms from another, though it is important to acknowledge that there is variability within and among groups.

With rapid globalization, interactions between individuals and groups with different "softwares of the mind" are inevitable, just as "cultural engineering and re-engineering" becomes a necessary survival tool. In other words, there is no more room for individuals to be "culturally encapsulated," a term coined by Pedersen (1997) to describe a counselor who does not see beyond his own terms in understanding his client. When applied to teachers, "cultural encapsulation" could refer to those who are unable to understand, experience, and interact with those who possess different "softwares of the mind." To be able to hold various perspectives requires intercultural competence, the ability to engage in "cross-cultural compromises" *(*Slawomir, 2005, p. 48) with openness for "intercultural learning," defined by Nakanishi and Rittner (1992) as "a process that occurs in complex ways with increasing levels of cultural self-knowledge as an integral part of understanding how responses to culturally different persons are manifested" (p. 29). This learning, as Nakanishi and Ritter (1992) describe it, is not a clear-cut process, but rather an undertaking that is extremely complex.

Though much work has been done in this area, current research on cultural competence provides very little consensus. Landreman (as cited in King & Baxter Magolda, 2005) found that definitions of intercultural competence are inconsistent and "do not address the application of one's understanding and skills to intergroup relationships" (p. 572). Her framework of *intercultural consciousness* includes an understanding of oneself, the ability to interact with others in a variety of historical, political, and sociocultural contexts, and the ability for reflection that leads to action (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005).

Other researchers describe components of cultural competence using various terminology: "intercultural sensitivity" (Green, 1999; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Hawes & Kealey, 1981), "cultural flexibility" (Arthur & Bennett, 1995), "cultural empathy" (Hannigan, 1990), "bicultural competence" (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993), "extracultural openness" (Arthur & Bennett, 1995), "global mindset" (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002), "cross-cultural competence" (Barrera & Corso, 2003; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000; Lynch & Hanson, 1993, 2004; Magala, 2005), "cultural competence" (McPhatter, 1997; Pinderhughes, 1995), "cross-cultural effectiveness" (Lynch & Hanson, 2004), "cultural awareness" (Green, 1999), "intercultural maturity" (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005), and "cultural intelligence" (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Earley & Ang, 2003). It is clear from this list of terms that the study of cultural competence is not a new phenomenon, but that it is a construct that has sparked interest among many researchers seeking to find what it takes to interact effectively with those from different cultural backgrounds given the rapid globalization that marks our times.

Because there is little agreement on what constitutes cultural competence, and there are ongoing debates on this issue, the construct of cultural intelligence (CQ), which represents a more holistic approach to cultural competence, was chosen to guide this study.

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) Framework

Cultural intelligence is an "individual's capability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity" (Ang & Dyne, 2008, p. xv). By function, the authors mean "the capability to grasp, reason, and behave effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity" (Ang, Van Dyne, Koh, Templer, & Chandrasekar, 2007, p. 337). Cultural intelligence incorporates four qualitatively different constructs, which include metacognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ. They are defined as follows: Metacognitive CQ is the ability for conscious awareness of "planning, regulating, monitoring, and controlling" cognitive processes of thinking and learning during intercultural encounters (Van Dyne, Ang, & Koh, 2008, p. 18). Cognitive CQ includes "the knowledge, norms, practices, and conventions in different cultural settings" (Van Dyne et al., 2008, p. 19). Motivational CQ is "the capability to direct attention and energy toward learning and functioning in intercultural settings" (Van Dyne et al., 2008, p. 19), and behavioral CQ is "the capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds" (Van Dyne et al., 2008, p. 19).

Though not used for teachers before, these four constructs of CQ also appear to encompass the expectations of cultural competence and effectiveness that are placed on teachers in the literature. When applied to teachers working with CLD students we can say that teachers should have metacognitive CQ, or an awareness of their own assumptions and cultural constructs, and be able to gauge those of their students; cognitive CQ, or knowledge of cultural values, norms, and systems of their students' cultures; motivational CQ, or the willingness and drive to really be successful in their intercultural interactions with their students; and behavioral CQ, or the capacity to act in appropriate ways so as to not impose their own cultural behaviors and norms onto their students (Ang et al., 2007).

Methodology

Participant Selection Procedures

One hundred fifty-three public school teachers with experience working directly with English learners (ELs) from districts in San Diego County were contacted with a request to participate in this study. The teachers were contacted via email with a description of the study, an invitation to participate, and a request to respond to the demographic questionnaire. These teachers were recruited through convenience sampling, which included referrals and email lists from professors and colleagues at an institution of higher education in the San Diego area. Also used was snowball sampling, which involved asking participants to recommend other teachers, perhaps those who may have had

different experiences from theirs. The demographic questionnaire helped to determine the diverse sample of teachers for participation in this study. Variation in terms of age, teaching experience, content area taught, ethnicity, language background, and previous experiences interacting with people from other cultures were considered in selecting the 10 participants for this study because of the attention paid to these variables in the literature.

Participant Backgrounds

The teachers' ages ranged from 24 to 60 (mean age = 36.8). The education level of the participants included nine teachers with master's degrees and one teacher working toward her doctorate degree. At the time of this study, three teachers were teaching at an elementary school, two teachers were teaching at a middle school, and five teachers were teaching at the high school level. The teachers' teaching experience ranged from 1.5 years to 38 years (mean years teaching = 11.05). All teachers in this study were female. In terms of racial/ethnic backgrounds reported by the teachers, six teachers were Caucasian, two were Hispanic, and two were of mixed race, one being half Italian and half Japanese, and the other half Hawaiian and half Irish. Of the 10 participants, four of the teachers identified themselves as being bilingual. Of the four, two were Hispanic and two were Caucasian. Six teachers thought that they were proficient only in English, though some of them had taken some level of foreign language classes in either high school or college (see Appendix A).

Of the 10 teachers, three had a specialization in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The three elementary school teachers had master's degrees in TESOL, English, and Literacy. Most of the middle and high school teachers were trained in English or had training in working with CLD students. The exception was one Mathematics teacher. In her case, training to teach CLD students was embedded within her credential program, because she received hers most recently in 2009. Their current teaching assignments varied from teaching English learners only in English language development (ELD) classes to teaching English learners in mainstream classes (Appendix B).

Cultural Intelligence Interview

The cultural competence interview used in this study is based on Earley and Ang's (2003) Cultural Intelligence Scale and was adapted for this study to elicit a more in-depth understanding of the participant's response to each item in the scale (see Appendix C). This framework was selected because it was believed to provide a direct examination of the cultural and linguistic knowledge of the teachers. Also, as opposed to many other cultural assessment tools, this framework showed promise because of its "clear, robust, and meaningful four factor structure," which has been tested to be stable "across samples, across time, and across countries" (Van Dyne et al., 2008, p. 34), and has "convergent, discriminant, and criterion validity" (Van Dyne et al., 2008, p. 31). In addition, each of the four constructs in the cultural intelligence scale—metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ—has been determined and defined based on an extensive review of the literature on intercultural competence and interviews with executives who have global experience (Van Dyne et al., 2008).

Data Analysis

The cultural competence interviews were transcribed and analyzed looking at each teacher's responses to the questions for the metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral constructs. In order to check for validity of the cultural competence interview across contexts, the first participant was asked to run through the questions with respect to two different settings in which she taught. She answered questions for both her current and previous teaching contexts, where she had many more students from diverse backgrounds. There were no significant differences between the two contexts in which she worked. The initial categories used to analyze the data were generated inductively from the questions themselves. For example, the first question asked the participants what types of cultural knowledge they used in their work with their CLD students. The responses were categorized under "types of cultural knowledge." Comparisons were made between each of the 10 teachers' responses for each of these categories across cases, which allowed for the generation of additional themes. This hybrid approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) was important because as it often happens with predetermined categories, or inductive categories in qualitative studies, some of these categories became extraneous as the transcripts were analyzed and other categories emerged and assumed their places through the deductive process.

Findings

Teachers' Cultural Competence

Unfortunately, the responses from the cultural competence questionnaire, based on the four constructs of the cultural intelligence scale, did not elicit clearly demarcated lines between the four (metacognitive, cognitive, behavioral, and motivational) intelligence constructs. For example, teachers often provided similar responses to a question from the metacognitive CQ construct (How do you check for accuracy of your cultural knowledge as you interact with your students from different cultures?) and a question from the motivational CQ construct (Describe how you deal with situations when adjusting to student cultures that are new to you.). As in this example, there were some overlaps between the questions within the four constructs, which warranted a holistic analysis. As a result, the following section is organized around central themes that emerged from the data, which are also grounded in the literature as having value in working with diversity. The theme of challenging assumptions and stereotypes emerged from the data from both the metacognitive and cognitive constructs. The theme of negotiating meaning with students emerged from the metacognitive and motivational constructs, and the theme of advocating for their students surfaced from the data obtained from both the motivational and behavioral constructs.

Challenging Assumptions and Stereotypes. In this study, all of the teachers shared insight into their ability to "think about their thinking" with regard to their CLD students, but only six of them challenged stereotypes and generalizations that often appeared to be inherent in the interview questions themselves. For example, Barbara prefaced her response to one of the questions

with "this is stereotyping at its worst," and Malorie repeatedly stated, "Not all of them, don't get me wrong," as she began her response. Katherine prefaced one question with "as if there is just one in the entire African American population?" and "I can never lump sum my kids." With regard to their socioeconomic levels and family structures, Katherine explains,

> I mean even within free and reduced there are so many more layers and levels of homelessness, poverty, and you're not sure if they're even going to eat tonight versus you do have one income coming in, but it's still not at the level to sustain three kids much less five kids versus you have two parents, or you have two incomes coming in perhaps, but you have nobody at home to take care of you, and you are now the oldest having to take care of five children underneath you.

She attempts to understand her students based on their individual circumstances rather than make assumptions about their particular behaviors or performances based on their cultural backgrounds. Likewise, Ramona shares a stance similar to Katherine's regarding her students' backgrounds. She realizes the complexity of culture and has a strong viewpoint toward pinpointing particular aspects of her students' cultures. She does not believe that she will ever fully understand where they are coming from because she "did not have the direct experience of growing up in their households." She says, "Even if they are Catholics, their involvement in the Catholic tradition may differ where some go to Mass every Sunday, and others do not." She goes on to explain misconceptions people have about the Hispanic culture, in that she believes that people often mistakenly believe that their Hispanic students and their parents do not value education, while in fact, she believes, this has more to do with socioeconomic status, or the "culture of poverty," than with being a generic trait of Hispanics. She believes that most Hispanic students in San Diego are often from a lower socioeconomic background and are thereby generally thought not to value education, as four other teachers in this study also observed. She also notices, as two other teachers did, that girls are often encouraged to have children early, at ages 14 or 16, but again, she suspects that this may have less to do with culture and more to do with socioeconomic status. In conclusion, she repeats the stereotypes that are often associated with Hispanic culture, such as the teen pregnancy stereotype, the "not caring about school" stereotype, the gang stereotype, and the "working low-income wage job" stereotype.

> All those things, you would have to be blind not to be aware of in our society because that's what is shoved down our throat by the media. And also, you know stereotypes come about for a reason. You can go to any school and see any of those things and if you are not looking closely enough, that might be all that you see. I think it's important for teachers to know what the stereotypes are, to be able to even cite examples of those stereotypes, but then to be able to see beyond that. If they never go beyond that, which many teachers don't, then we have a serious problem.

Asked to elaborate what she meant by "beyond that," she explained that it means

> recognizing that there is a huge range of values and families within any culture, and that you might be able to say you know, that these are bell-curved trends, but that does not go very, very far from defining an individual who happens to walk in your classroom.

Georgina also demonstrates an understanding that people have different perspectives that need to be acknowledged. She describes her perspective on the differences she encounters with her students.

> Yeah, like everybody has their point of view and everybody's family believes in something different, so I really like to stay open to that and allow all kids to express themselves. … A lot of times the kids don't know what I feel because I am playing devil's advocate.

Georgina has a different set of beliefs, which she values, but she knows that her students have their own and does not try to impose hers on them.

Barbara hesitated to discuss family structures of her students from different CLD backgrounds in response to this interview prompt because she has noticed that in her experience with students, the family structures vary greatly. She explains that she has had students who are raised by single parents and others who live with up to 10 people in one household. "Wow, that goes across," she says. "I mean you name it. There's married. There's divorce. There're foster kids. There're kids living with grandparents. There're single-parent homes. There are families as large as having nine or 10 in the household." For this reason, she does not believe that family structures have much to do with culture.

Moving Toward Authentic Negotiation of Meaning. Teachers in this study provided evidence of a wide continuum between projecting one's worldviews onto their students and engaging in authentic negotiation of meaning. When teachers engage in authentic negotiation of meaning, they will truly be motivated to understand their students' experiences and adjust their understanding and perspectives of their students accordingly. On one end of the spectrum, Kay, as a Caucasian teacher brought up in a lower-income neighborhood, has difficulty understanding her students and their parents from the middle-class neighborhood where she teaches. She said that she would feel much more comfortable teaching in a school with students and parents who share a background similar to hers. In another example, Heather talks about how the students in her class dress and act in vastly different ways from how she was brought up and how she brought up her children and she shares how much she dislikes the style (e.g., baggy pants, tongue piercing, tattoos, and sunglasses) of this new generation. Likewise, Annie shared how she believes her experiences with her parents are not the same as what she believes her students struggle with in dealing with their parents. Brenda provided an example about the Border Patrol class visit and how she did not consider the impact this would have on her students, who either were not legal residents or knew of others who

were taken back to Mexico by the Border Patrol agents.

> My children were freaking out. They were having fun for some time, but then they were like, oh, they have come to our house. I was thinking like an American teacher, not really thinking about, you know, do I need my green card kind of thing because they had some experiences that I have never had, like checking the green card and them actually coming to their house and seeing if there are any illegals there and you know … so that was an assumption that I didn't even think about. I am Americanized and I haven't had those experiences, like they were making little cards for themselves and being funny.

Brenda demonstrates an ability to negotiate meaning with her students through this experience. In other words, she realizes that her experiences being a Mexican American differ from those of some of her students who are recent immigrants. Because Brenda has the ability and awareness to think about her thinking, she was able to step out of the experience and attempt to understand it from her students' perspectives. Projection, as we saw in the previous examples, is viewing the world from one's own perspective and believing that one's own interpretation of an experience is how others will understand that same experience.

All of the teachers shared some examples and evidence of how they attempt to understand their students; however, some responses were more cursory than others. For example, Heather described a situation in which she was shocked when a female Muslim student shared with the class that she went swimming over the weekend. She remarked, "How can they go swimming if they cannot wear bathing suits?" She learned that her student swam with her clothes on and brought additional clothing with her. In another example, Ramona discusses how she approaches her students' cultures with "absolute curiosity," which is a step in the direction of authentic negotiation. In the following excerpt, she describes how she makes attempts to get to know her student from China.

> Monto taught me about China. One day, he came in early before class started. He came in at lunch and I started asking him questions about China and he said something about where he lived. …We went on Google maps and we found his house and you know, this is where my house is and this is where my parents work and it's like 50 feet away. And it is this whole complex. A house is built around a central building where everybody works for a news organization. His parents are both reporters, you know, and he needed to work on his English skills. He got up one day and taught my CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam) class about Chinese math, and he gave them a really hard problem and he said, in China, this is a first-grade problem.

Ramona acknowledges that she can never really understand her students' experiences unless she lived them herself. In the excerpt above, she takes the

time to learn from her student and allows him to be the knowledge holder. In Katherine's case, we see a slightly deeper level of negotiation of meaning, in which she describes how she uses her understanding of the family structures of her students to inform her work with them. For example, reflecting on what she has done in the past, she said that if a particular student is from a single-parent home, which often operates from a "poverty of time," she would provide additional time after school for this student to work on his or her homework with her. Here, we see that she not only operates under her principle, which places education at the level of primary importance, but she also takes into consideration what contexts surround her students and meets them halfway. In other words, she understands what their obstacles are and finds a way to remove these obstacles for them.

In an example in which two teachers are discussing "theft" in their classroom, we see one teacher taking things personally whereas the other teacher attempts to understand the meaning behind the theft. Heather's reaction to this situation was to suspend her students because she was "sad" that they had done this to *her* and she felt betrayed. Her emotions were directly affected by the actions of her students because she took these actions personally. On the other hand, the way Katherine responded to an episode involving a student who was constantly stealing in her classroom was to find out why her student would steal. She found out from him that he had been homeless for the last few years, and she worked with the class as a community to help this student work through his problem.

Advocating for Students. Another interesting theme that emerged in this study was how seven of the teachers saw their roles as advocates for their students. There was, however, variation in the degree to which these teachers advocated for their students. For example, even though Georgina does not believe in getting involved in students' personal lives, when it comes to something that would block her students' paths to academic success, she moves beyond her role of teaching content. She says that when her pregnant student struggling in school expressed her intent of quitting school,

> I worked with her because I knew that she was really struggling in school and she was having a hard time with her mom and so I talked via email with her mom quite frequently and worked with her to turn in late work, so that she could graduate.

Georgina does her best to support her student in completing her work on time so that she can graduate. She believes that not having a diploma would be yet another obstacle her student will face as she has her child and attempts to pursue her goals. Georgina shares how on another occasion she stepped in and helped a student stand up to her father so that she could go to college. She also describes her work with a Hmong student whom she also supported beyond her teaching assignment. She describes her rationale in helping this student in the following way:

I just thought she was a really sweet girl and she would come in and get some extra help and I knew that she was serious about school and I knew that she did not have anybody at home who could help her with her college applications because she came, stayed after school, and we did them together on the computer so she could apply to college and I helped her with her college applications.

Here again, Georgina demonstrates motivation to work with her students, especially when the work is directed toward achieving academic goals.

Malorie also advocates for a student who was struggling at school. She narrates the following experience in which her student's mother could not understand why it was important for her son to attend tutoring every week. Malorie thought that this student was really struggling and could use the extra help that she could provide, "so that he could pass the class and make sure he gets good grades for college." According to this boy's father, what his son needed was not a college degree, but a job to support his family. Malorie did not want to offend this mother, but she did state her position in that if her son wanted to go to college, the mother should support him.

Ramona shares an example of how she advocated for her student from the Middle East who was not going to be issued a diploma based on her length of residence in the US. She says,

But if we have decided that those credits are acceptable transfer credits, and the only reason for denying a diploma is that the child has not been in the country long enough, that's just discrimination. You know, she is here legally. You know, I mean, even if she was not here legally, it shouldn't matter.

Asked why it was important to stand up for this student, she clarified the philosophical backdrop to her actions, in which she asserts, "Justice, equality, equal opportunity. I think we, our educational system, in trying to level the playing field, sometimes create more hoops for kids that need fewer hoops."

Barbara describes her role as an advocate in the following excerpt when she describes herself as their representative between the school and the community.

I think I am their representative to a large extent. Their arm to the world, or their arm to the community because I'm out there in the community talking to people out there more than people in their age group are, and if I start to believe, or don't care, or become apathetic about what other people think, then I've lost my purpose of wanting to energize and to stimulate inquiry and goals for my students, you know. And I think that I like the fact that, a little bit, that I'm so passionate about where I teach.

The excerpt above illustrates Barbara's strong sense of purpose about where she teaches and her conviction to advocate for her students and the community, which she believes is her responsibility.

Another example in which Barbara demonstrates this role as an advocate is when she describes the steps she took to get her school involved in trying to help a student's parents understand how important it would be for their daughter not to drop out of school and get married only 2 months shy of graduation.

> I knew what this was about. It was about her boyfriend, who she had been dating for a year or two, seeing that she was a highly talented, college-bound girl, and fearful of losing her and/or relinquishing control and not feeling so hot about himself, and so the way to circumvent her from moving on was to say if you love me, let's get married right now. And so the parents again, seeing that he was very stable with a full-time job, willing to provide for her, were all for it. That particular situation was very difficult for me. I felt very connected to her and her family and I could not talk them out of it. I tried. Every one of her teachers tried. We had a whole team of people. We even met. What are we going to say? How are we going to say this? Where are we going to meet? My principal and I tried. We all tried. We talked to her one-on-one and she understood where we were coming from, but she loved this guy and she loved her family, and she thought that she could always go back and finish, but that generally doesn't happen. So when I think about that situation, I felt helpless and when I think about my personal consequence, when I have given it my all and I find students fall short of what they're capable of doing on a grand scale like that, but I cannot internalize that or else I would give up. I internalize it for a moment and feel, "Gosh, you know," and then I get over it and say, "All right, move on to the next one." I have to think about the other students I have now, and set goals for them and help them achieve. Otherwise, I would drive myself crazy over every kid, you know.

Even though Barbara is unable to convince the family, she recognizes that their value system is based on short-term needs and that the person her student was going to marry was going to meet those needs in terms of financial stability.

Although there was considerable variation in the degree to which teachers challenged their assumptions and stereotypes, participated in negotiating meaning with their students, and advocated on behalf of their students, this study brought to light some important competencies in working with culturally and linguistically diverse students that could inform professional-development and teacher-training programs.

Additional Findings

As discussed in the previous section, the interviews based on the cultural intelligence scale provided some insight into how teachers understood and approached their work with their CLD students, but what became of increasing interest as this study evolved was how every teacher in this study challenged these notions of culture through expressing the irrelevance of some of the questions, showing discomfort in responding to some, and/or confronting the underlying limitations of the questions themselves during the

interview. Because of these preliminary reactions to the cultural competence interview questions, an additional question was added to elicit a more direct understanding of the teachers' perceptions of the role of culture in their work with their CLD students. The teachers did not necessarily devalue culture altogether, but instead they challenged the surface-level interpretations of culture often exhibited in their schools. They also saw culture as but one piece in understanding and approaching their work with their CLD students.

Surface-Level and Deep Levels of Culture. Georgina, Katherine, and Ramona all shared their resistance to the surface-level display of culture or "tokenism" (Nieto, 2002) in their schools. Georgina discussed how her school wanted to include ballad folklore or a mariachi band. She thought that these were very "showy" and just things the school could point to and say that the school was supporting cultural diversity. This additive practice was something that she appeared to resent. She said that she would much rather have her school support cultural diversity "by including everybody in the regular program, making them feel welcome so that they can participate in those programs rather than setting up all these separate classes for them." She wants all students to have a strong foundation so that they can go to college and be successful. The deeper lens of equal opportunity appears to guide her teaching practice more than the surface representations of culture. Although she believes that it is important to be sensitive to other people's cultures, she does not think that she needs to "go investigate kids' cultures in order to feel that [she] can teach them."

Katherine finds that the focus on surface features of culture is not authentic. She believes in the five levels of multiculturalism shared in Sonia Nieto's work. The idea of "tokenism" is something she does not support. For example, studying Martin Luther King Jr. during Black History Month or making masks to honor the Hispanic heritage are symbolic, but not authentic. She says, "It doesn't prepare us to deal with cultures when we grow up that are different from ours." When asked what would help students work within differences, she says,

> Where we really have to get to is a place where we are talking and having critical dialogues that matters, that's tough and awkward and hard, and that's what I think I've been able to do with my kids and as comfortable as I am with them, with where their thoughts come from, and I can hear a lot of their parents in them, values that are totally different from mine. I want them to at least engage in dialogue so that they start to think that that is what we should do as human beings. But we shouldn't symbolically have a February—African American History month and think that that is what is going to help instill pride in our children.

Katherine does not believe in compartmentalizing culture into its symbolic forms. What she believes is most important is engaging her students in dialogue involving difference. She believes that through this process, her students may begin to learn more about themselves and how they interact with others as "global citizens."

Ramona criticizes the focus on cultural celebrations and foods "because knowing what they like to eat does not tell you much about what you need to say to parents in a parent conference." She thinks that it would be more helpful for preservice teachers to attend parent-teacher conferences and look at the interactions using culture as one lens rather than learning about the specifics of particular cultures. Ramona also presents the idea of her classroom being a culture in itself and that "all students needed to be oriented to it when they join the class."

Culture as One Lens to Understand Student Backgrounds. An important understanding that evolved from this discussion is that the teachers often used culture as a lens, but also recognized the value of understanding student interests, previous background knowledge, family structures, and socioeconomic levels in relating to and working with their CLD students, where some of these other factors took on greater importance based on the context in which teachers found themselves. In the following section, we will look at how teachers used cultural knowledge as one facet in connecting with their students and helping their students connect to academic content.

The Role of Culture in Building Relationships. Kay believes that

> by acknowledging their culture, being open to it, and having them share their culture with others, students can feel more comfortable and be able to fully bring themselves to the class without feeling as if they have to leave any part of who they are behind when they enter the classroom.

Ramona says, "I would much rather my students have a teacher who cares about them than a teacher who knows everything about their culture." She, like Heather and Annie, thinks that her relationships with her students often deepen when she tries to understand the culture of the youth rather than their ethnic culture. She does acknowledge that students are "honored" when their teacher knows about their culture, but this is not something that they expect. She asserts, "Knowing about their culture would be taken as a sign for them that you care for them, so it definitely has a place." However, she continues, "There is no way a teacher can really understand where they are coming from, what their experiences are." What she finds interesting is that one cannot find students who are truly from one culture or one particular background. She defines this desire to get to know one's students as a characteristic of care, which she finds more important than knowing the details of her students' cultures. She says that when you care for your students, you must

> be open to learning about what's going on with them and you have to have an open dialogue with them, and when misunderstandings do come up about culture, you have to be able to sit down and say, "Okay, why did this happen this way? Is this because we are having a difference of opinions? Is this a failure to communicate? What's going on?"

Ultimately, she says, culture is "just another layer, small piece or tool, not a

tool that affects [her] pedagogy, but a tool that affects her relationship with [her] students." She believes that she can get "the same bang for her buck" if she knew about soccer teams or a *South Park* episode. Katherine shares similar sentiments when she says, "If you feel like your teacher cares about you and is interested in you, you would be a little bit more motivated. And if you know about their previous experiences, that might help as well."

Barbara believes that understanding her students' backgrounds and their culture, and having her express hers, helps bridge some of the distance between her students and herself. She explains, "I think it kind of just breaks down the us-and-them type of wall. And I think it also helps them feel like, 'Hey look, she's 40 years old and she experiences a lot of the same stuff I do. Maybe she does get me.'" She goes on to say that she never wants any of her students to feel "anonymous" or "misunderstood" in the classroom.

The Role of Culture for Student Learning. Barbara believes that to be an effective teacher, one needs to be able to connect student backgrounds with what they are learning. She finds that "knowing all your students is of paramount importance," noting that even Caucasian students have unique backgrounds that vary from student to student. She engages the students with a short personal story, something that they can connect to personally and come back to as a thread through the lesson. The rationale for this type of front-loading activity, she says, "bridges the gap between her students and herself in addition to helping them prepare for the academic lesson."

In Ramona's teaching practice, she always starts with building her students' background knowledge, making connections, and taking a personal stance before they delve into any text. In so doing, she believes that they can bring their family's beliefs, their culture, and their personal experiences into whatever they are studying. She sees culture as a component of the notion of "mirroring" that she holds very central to her teaching practice. She says,

> I believe that when you acknowledge other people's beliefs or their ideas, it makes them open to other people's beliefs or ideas, which leads to richer discussions, because my belief is the purpose of English education is to create really critical thinkers, strong communicators, kids who can read closely and question what they are reading, really question what other people are saying, and I always ask them, "Does that match or not match or somewhat match your own personal experiences and beliefs?" That is the constant question. That is the central question, I think. So, it is always negotiating, you know.

Nikki, like Georgina, believes that culture is important only insofar as it helps build connections to what her students are going to read. Therefore, whether or not culture would be an important aspect in her classroom instruction would depend on how important that cultural knowledge is in helping her students access academic content. She finds it more important to draw connections with what her students are doing in their other classes and use that background knowledge to help them understand text.

Malorie believes that much of what she does is not based so much on culture but more on student needs, which are, she realizes after the interview, oftentimes culturally based, but she says, "It's just what's best for my students." Drawing on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Barbara makes a connection between her students' affect and their academic success. She believes that in order to establish a "safe" space for her students, it is important for her to connect to them through understanding their backgrounds and their experiences. She believes that it is only when students feel "safe" that learning can occur. While we see that understanding student cultures, their backgrounds, and experiences are important, the teachers in this study demonstrated the complex ways in which they understand and approach their work with their CLD students, often using the sociocultural and affective lenses.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the teachers' interpretations of culture, how the teachers used cultural knowledge in understanding and approaching their daily work with their CLD students was far more complex than the notion of culture presented within the four constructs of cultural intelligence used for this study. Although half of the teachers in this study displayed some level of resentment toward the additive ways in which culture was incorporated into their schools, they did acknowledge the importance of the deeper levels of culture insofar as it facilitated authentic relationships with their students and supported their students in making connections to academic content. What was of significance to this study was that seven teachers revealed how they considered all students as culturally diverse, whereby each student was believed to possess his or her unique culture, often including background experiences, family structures, and socioeconomic levels.

Pedagogical Implications and Discussion

The findings from this study resonated deeply with Linda Darling-Hammond's (2008) assertions about the process in which teachers should understand and approach their students. The educational system does need to confirm (Noddings, 1984) and validate (Réndon, 2009) students by bringing them into the teaching and learning process. Teachers need to be able to inquire sensitively and productively into children's experiences and their understanding of subject matter so that they can interpret curriculum through their students' eyes and shape lessons to connect with what students know and how they learn well (Darling-Hammond, 2008, p. 335). All of the teachers presented ways in which they tried to understand their students through listening to them, observing them, looking at their written work, and using these tools to address their needs. In the same vein, this study also pointed to the importance of self-reflective practice that many institutional meaning-makers engaged in as they interacted with their students from different CLD backgrounds. This positioned them as learners not only of their students, but also of their pedagogical practice and their roles in these relationships.

Katherine brings up the importance of self-reflective practice on the part

of the teacher. The ability to ask "why," to question oneself, to find evidence for one's thinking, are of primary importance in truly evaluating and addressing the needs of students. To engage in self-reflective practice, a teacher would need to understand herself as a cultural being before she engages in this quest with her students. Some examples of self-reflective practice include activities and experiences that help teachers understand their own assumptions and beliefs, see themselves as cultural beings through study of their own family histories and reading of ethnic literature, write narratives and cases about instances that can be used for growth and learning, and participate and reflect on fieldwork experiences within diverse school communities (see Banks et al., 2005; Gay, 2000; Goodwin, 1997; Hamacheck, 1999; Hollins, 1997; King et al., 1997; Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999; McLean, 1999; Melnick & Zeichner, 1997; Murrell & Diez, 1997; Zehm, 1999). Once teachers engage in this type of ongoing self-reflective practice, they have a powerful means by which to address their students' needs while constantly reflecting on themselves and the process evoked to meet those needs. This self-reflective practice is also important to the cyclical process of teaching, assessing, and reflecting for planning instruction that would take into consideration both what the students bring to them and in structuring appropriate scaffolds to help them, as Mike Rose (2005) would put it, "float to the bar" set for them based on high expectations. Noddings (1984) emphasizes this importance of asking "why," and she provides an example of a student's coming late to class. When a teacher addresses this situation by marking the student with a zero without asking why, this teacher is not operating under the principle of care. A caring teacher, on the other hand, would "first try to find out 'why' and try to offer help in order to remedy the situation" (p. 201). In this study, two teachers were confronted with theft in their classrooms; one suspended her students, and the other tried to understand "why" her student behaved this way. This latter teacher operated from the principle of care, based on Noddings's (1984) definition, by not only understanding "why," but in also resolving the issue with her students as a group. This second manifestation of care "confirms" the student through engaging in authentic dialogue and mutual learning. Katherine was able to exemplify Noddings's (1984) elaboration of this relationship in which she describes the caring teacher as one who values the student as subject, confirms him in his intellectual life and ethical life, and points to his best possible self (p. 196).

Réndon (2009) discusses this idea of confirmation in her validation theory, in which she calls on teachers to validate their students through a caring relationship, which she defines as "an enabling, confirming, and supportive process initiated by in-and-out of class agents that fosters academic and interpersonal development (Réndon, 1994, p. 44). Annie, a high school teacher, and Nikki, a middle school teacher, found it difficult to learn about the backgrounds of every student in their classes because of the limited time spent with students, yet Barbara's position was that even in the case of a high school teacher, no student should go unnoticed, no student should feel anonymous, and no student should feel like a mere ID number. Having high expectations for all students was also a theme that emerged in this study, and it is part of the

expanded role of the teacher as advocate. Having high expectations for each student does not entail watering down the subject matter in any sense (Nieto, 2002), but it does entail providing the appropriate scaffolding to ensure the learning of the desired objectives and goals. Noddings (1984) clarifies what having high expectations is and is not. She says that having high expectations can be another form of "product control" unless the teacher is able to "see and receive the other—see clearly what he has done, and receive the feelings in which it was done (p. 196)." What this means is to not only praise students for what they were able to do, but also to show them where they need to go through authentic, honest feedback. Barbara demonstrates this in her example of working with students on their writing process and how it is important for her not only to acknowledge their strengths, but to also provide feedback that would help them rise to the next level and not debilitate them. This process transfers the power and expertise to the students so that they can eventually have the ability to evaluate themselves.

Last, multicultural education can begin to move beyond the tolerance level, where students' cultures are validated at the surface level, to one that is based on understanding students as individuals, approaching culture as something that is not static, but in constant motion, and giving students the skills to dialogue about differences by critically reflecting on their own cultures and those of others (Nieto, 2002). This type of multicultural education would also come from a place of care by validating students and their relationships with each other and their teachers.

Author

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Appendix A
Participant Backgrounds

Partipant	Age	Education	Level*	Years teaching	Ethnicity/ race	Language
Annie	24	MA	M/H	1.5	Caucasian	English
Brenda	38	M.Ed	M	5	Hispanic	English/ Spanish
Heather	46	MA	H	5	Hispanic	English/ Spanish
Georgina	34	MA	H	12	Caucasian	English/ Spanish
Nikki	60	MA	E/M	38	Caucasian	English
Malorie	25	MAT	H	2	Caucasian	English
Ramona	36	MA	H	13	Caucasian	English
Kay	32	M.Ed	E	8	Caucasian	English/ Spanish
Barbara	40	M.Ed	H	15	Italian/ Japanese	English
Katherine	33	PhD (candidate)	E	11	Hawaiian/ Irish	English

Note. * E—elementary school; M—middle school; H—high school

Appendix B
Participant Educational Background and Current Teaching Assignment

Participant	Degree specialization	Credential/ certification	Current teaching assignment
Annie	TESOL	SS* English	Technology/ELD
Brenda	TESOL	SS Spanish Supplemental English	ESL 6-8th grade Spanish 7th grade
Heather	Cross-cultural teaching	MS** BCLAD*** English/Spanish	ELD Levels 1-6
Georgina	English	SS English	English, Journalism, Dance; 12th grade
Nikki	English	MS Reading specialist	Reading 6-8th grade
Malorie	Math	SS Math	Geometry w/ support, 9-12th grade
Ramona	English	SS English/ Social Studies CLAD/ GATE****	English 11th grade, CLAD CAHSEE support
Kay	TESOL	MS/ CLAD	Kindergarten
Barbara	English	SS English CLAD/ GATE	English 9th-grade resource teacher
Katherine	Literacy	MS Reading specialist	4th grade

Note. * SS—single subject; ** MS—multiple subject; *** BCLAD—Bilingual Cross-Cultural Language and Academic Development; **** GATE—Gifted and Talented Education

Appendix C
Cultural Competence Interview Protocol

Note. Used with the permission of the Cultural Intelligence Center © Cultural Intelligence Center 2005 and adapted for this qualitative interview protocol to understand the experiences of teachers and their work with English learners with respect to the four constructs of cultural intelligence. The items in parentheses and set in italic are the original items in the Cultural Intelligence Scale.

Metacognitive CQ
1. What are the types of cultural knowledge you draw upon when interacting with your students from different cultural backgrounds? *(Original: I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.)*
2. How do you adjust your cultural knowledge as you interact with your students who are from a different culture that is unfamiliar to you? Can you provide some examples? *(I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.)*
3. What types of cultural knowledge do you apply to cross-cultural interactions that might arise in your classroom/school? *(I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.)*
4. How do you check for accuracy of your cultural knowledge as you interact with your students from different cultures? *(I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures.)*

Cognitive CQ
1. Can you describe the legal and economic systems of the cultures represented in your classroom? *(I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.)*
2. Can you describe some of the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of the languages represented in your classroom? *(I know the rules [e.g., vocabulary, grammar] of other languages.)*
3. Can you describe some of the values and religious beliefs of the cultures represented in your classroom? *(I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.)*
4. Can you describe the marriage systems of the cultures represented in your classroom? *(I know the marriage systems of other cultures.)*
5. Can you describe some of the arts and crafts of the cultures represented in your classroom? *(I know the arts and crafts of other cultures.)*
6. Can you describe the rules for expressing nonverbal behaviors in the cultures represented in your classroom? *(I know the rules for expressing nonverbal behaviors in other cultures.)*

Motivational CQ

1. Can you describe your experiences interacting with your students from different cultures? *(I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.)*
2. To what extent do you socialize with communities that are unfamiliar to you? For example, do you participate in community events and/or do you interact with people from your students' cultural communities? Can you describe the nature of these relationships? *(I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.)*
3. Can you describe how you deal with situations when adjusting to student cultures that are new to you? For example, if a student stands up when called upon to respond to a question you ask, how would you respond? If a student does not appear to participate in classroom discussions, how would you respond? If a student doesn't look at you when you are addressing them, how would you respond? *(I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.)*
4. Would you like to live in cultures that are unfamiliar to you? Can you explain why or why not? Are there any communities where your students come from where you would enjoy living? Which communities would you find to be most uncomfortable for living? Can you explain your reasons? *(I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me.)*
5. Can you describe how the shopping conditions might be different in another culture? Is this something that you feel you could get accustomed to? For example, do you have experiences shopping or engaging with different cultural communities, perhaps those of your students? *(I am confident that I can get accustomed to the shopping conditions in a different culture.)*

Behavioral CQ

1. Do you change your verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when you interact with your students from different cultures? If so, in what ways? *(I change my verbal behavior [e.g., accent, tone] when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.)*
2. Can you describe how you use pause and silence differently to suit different situations involving your students from different cultures? *(I use pause and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural interactions.)*
3. Can you describe situations where you vary the rate of your speaking with your students from different cultures? *(I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it.)*
4. In what ways do you change your nonverbal behavior to communicate with your students from different cultures? *(I change my nonverbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it.)*
5. Can you provide some examples of how you might alter your facial expressions when you interact with your students from different cultures? *(I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.)*