Inservice Teachers' Experiences in Intercultural Competence Professional Development

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Globalization continues transforming the world as we know it, affecting every society's economic, political, social, scientific, educational, and ecological world differently. Despite its drawbacks, overwhelming evidence exists that globalization contributes positively "to economic and human development, environmental performance, mortality, gender equality and physical integrity rights" of nations worldwide (Figge et al., 2017, p. 863). Globalization increases intercultural interactions in business, medicine, and education. Intercultural interactions are complex because they mediate each participant's attitudes, behaviors, and skills. The outcomes of these interactions can be positive or negative depending upon each participant's interpretation as filtered through their cultural lens. Positive intercultural interactions require people to move from an ethnocentric mindset to an ethnorelative mindset.

Ethnocentrism is applying one's cultural lens to judge another culture and viewing that culture as inferior (Bennett, 1993). People with ethnocentric mindsets are less likely to have positive intercultural interactions. Research suggests intercultural interactions guided by knowledge of another's culture could decrease ethnocentrism (Bennett, 1993). According to Colchester (2021), declining ethnocentric attitudes increase cultural relativism by understanding a culture on its terms, free from one's subjective perspective.

Globalization requires that people in all disciplines adopt ethnorelative mindsets. For example, a study of Australian university students' attitudes toward growing cultural diversity on campus reported that Australian domestic university students held positive attitudes toward increased campus diversity (Sahin & Jenkins, 2021). The positive attitudes were based on students' past and present experiences with cultural diversity. In addition, creating environments where diversity and inclusion were respected and prioritized positively impacted students' attitudes (Sahin & Jenkins, 2021). Another study investigated the impact of friendship on historically warring Jewish and Muslim Arabs in the West Bank and Israel (Lev Ari & Husisi-Sabek, 2020). In a survey of 436 Jewish and Arab graduate students, Lev Ari and Husisi-Sabek indicated that experiences of encountering one another positively impacted the Jewish and Arab graduate students' ability to connect.

Intercultural Competence

According to Pastori et al. (2018), intercultural competence reflects the attitudes, skills, knowledge, values, and beliefs from a human rights perspective, wherein diversity is highly valued. How people learn to be interculturally competent is of interest to researchers in many disciplines. For example, in Poland, a homogenous country, interviews of 12 Polish university students participating in study abroad semesters illustrated the

potential for strengthening students' global-mindedness and intercultural competence (Sobkowiak, 2019). However, Sobkowiak suggested that intercultural competence training combined with study abroad experience would further increase students' intercultural competence. In a similar study of intercultural competence conducted in Japan, Fukuda and Nishikawa Chávez (2021) cited that perspective-shifting intercultural experiences positively impacted students' growth on the intercultural effectiveness scale.

The current focus in teacher education is culturally responsive teaching or culturally responsive pedagogy. Gay (2002) defined culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). Culturally responsive teaching intertwines with Banks and Banks' (1995) multicultural education. Grounded in equity, fairness, and the importance of culture in learning, culturally responsive teaching and multicultural education seek to modify pedagogy, curriculum, and policies to provide equal access for diverse populations (Ortiz, 2012). Both concepts focus on educational practices within the school environment.

Intercultural competence requires people to investigate, analyze, and reflect to acquire new knowledge. According to Larsen and Adu (2021), people reveal what something means to them when engaged. Understanding how teachers negotiate their identities and gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be considered interculturally competent comes to the forefront. Furthermore, research supported the importance of teachers developing global mindsets in today's diverse world (Alismail, 2016; Sahin & Jenkins, 2021).

Intercultural Competence in Teacher Education Programs

Critics of teacher education programs claim that teacher preparation programs need to re-evaluate their policies and procedures because current practices hamper educators from becoming interculturally competent (Hernández-Bravo et al., 2017). In addition, McGregor et al. (2019) called for teacher preparation programs to add intercultural experiences to the requirements for teachers because education requires regular, sustained communication with diverse people. Moreover, teachers echoed the desire for experiential training in intercultural competence that could be applied in the classroom (Symeou & Karagiorgi, 2018).

Just as good teacher-student relationships positively impact students' school engagement with general education students, training teachers to become interculturally competent could positively impact diverse students' school engagement (Quin, 2017). Becoming interculturally competent goes beyond culturally responsive teaching and multicultural education and asks a person to confront their own cultural rules, biases, and values while exploring someone else's cultural perspective. The self in relation to others is a central theme of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2019). Although extensive research exists regarding intercultural competence in foreign language education (Barnatt et al., 2020; Shin & Jeon, 2018), there was a gap in research focusing on the lived experiences of inservice teachers involved in intercultural competence training that included explicit teaching of intercultural competence ideology and immersive intercultural experiences (Leask, 2015).

Purpose and Research Questions

This phenomenological study aimed to explore the stories of inservice K-12 teacher participants' experiences in intercultural competence professional development. The intended outcome of the research was to describe and explore how engagement in intercultural competence activities designed to foster an intercultural friendship impacts teachers' cultural knowledge and self-knowledge. This study defines cultural knowledge as knowing what components make up a culture. Self-knowledge is understanding one's worldview, attitudes, and beliefs about being or existence (Witsel & Boyle, 2017). The two research questions were:

Q1 What cultural knowledge do inservice K-12 teachers perceive that they attained from experiencing intercultural competence professional development?

Q2 What self-knowledge do inservice K-12 teachers perceive that they attained from experiencing intercultural competence professional development?

Method

As a research method, phenomenology aligns well with people-centered industries such as nursing and education (Mackey, 2005). Mackey stated, "Phenomenology's philosophical premises accept the human experience as a valuable source of knowledge, and its methodological approaches allow, indeed encourage, the complexity and depth of human experience to be expressed" (p. 184). It is within phenomenology that this study was situated.

As researchers, we assumed knowledge was created by reflecting upon one's previous beliefs and backgrounds through descriptions that followed a constructivist epistemological framework (Wilkinson et al., 2019). An interpretivist theoretical perspective within a constructivist epistemology allows multiple perspectives and representations of meaning to understand inservice teacher participants' meaning making of intercultural competence training (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In addition, a qualitative, phenomenological design allows a researcher to explore how participants interpret their experiences, make meaning of their experiences, and construct their lifeworld (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Thus, an interpretivist theoretical perspective in a constructivist epistemology supports the exploration of inservice K-12 teacher participants' experiences engaging in activities designed to cultivate their intercultural competence.

Intercultural Competence for Educators Curriculum

The first author designed and developed the Intercultural Competence for Educators Curriculum which contains three lesson plans. It was designed to be completed in the following order: (a) constructivist lesson plan, (b) aesthetic lesson plan, and (c) integrated social-emotional lesson plan. Using the McConnell et al. (2020) curriculum design approaches, the activities built upon each other, culminating in participants forming a new relationship and understanding of a person from a different culture.

To support authentic interactions and avoid contrived interactions, the aims of the curriculum were revealed at the end of the professional development. The first author chose art as a medium because it was open to interpretation and evoked authentic participant emotions. Art interpretation allowed participants to share their thoughts, beliefs, and assumptions. The Intercultural Competence for Educators professional development took approximately three hours from introduction to completion, and it was completed in one day.

In the constructivist lesson, the teacher participants engaged in an introductory activity that sought to elicit the

participants' assumptions about a person's social identity and how these assumptions and beliefs were filtered through their identities and belief systems. Adapted from Herrera's (2016) biography card, participants completed a social identity card detailing their sociocultural experiences and learning experiences, identified culture and customs, ethnicity, languages, religion, politics, etc., and interviewed other participants regarding their identities. Participants noted similarities and differences between interviewees and themselves. The constructivist lesson plan took approximately 60 minutes.

In the aesthetic lesson, the teacher participants engaged in art interpretation to discover how their social identity and experiences influenced their assumptions and perceptions. Initially, partners used their identities to attribute a backstory to a character or characters from Frida Kahlo's (1929) *El Autobus*. Participants discussed why they chose the backstory of the characters and how their own identity and worldview influenced the fictional tale. In addition, participants read the first stanza of Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* as a prelude to creating an artifact that marries both participants' identities. The aesthetic artifact tasked inservice K-12 participants with creating an artistic representation that combined their values and identities. The first author took pictures of each artifact to stimulate conversation during the interviews. Participants shared the aesthetic artifacts with their partners, explained how they combined identities and values, and then reflected upon the activities. The aesthetic lesson took approximately 60 minutes.

Lastly, the integrated social-emotional lesson immersed teacher participants in meaningful conversations and a contemplative mindset to synthesize what they learned about their partner. Charged with creating an artistic representation of their partner, inservice teacher participants interpreted their partner's essence. Paints, canvases, picture frames, and art supplies were purchased to aid participants.

Participants articulated their similarities and differences and what they discovered about themselves and their partners. This activity aimed not to create a perfect artwork but something that thoughtfully considered another's nature. Each artifact was photographed and used for the interviews. Reflection journals contained information from participants on how well they felt their partner captured their being and the value of these activities. This integrated social-emotional lesson took approximately 60 minutes.

Participants and Setting

Phenomenology utilizes purposive sampling, where participants meet predetermined criteria. In this study, the predetermined criteria for research participation were inservice educators but their level of cultural competence was not measured through any means (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Participants were recruited through snowball sampling via personal email and connections. School districts and former colleagues were invited to the training in the fall of 2022. Participants in this study included eight inservice teachers from a small midwestern city and a large midwestern city in the United States (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The inservice teachers ranged in age from 33 to 47, and all participants were female.

The inservice teacher participants taught K-12 special education, math, social studies, English, religion, and health. The professional development setting was a rental space equipped with comfortable seating and a kitchen. They received the detailed location information two days before the professional development date.

We randomly assigned the eight teacher participants to four pairs (Colette and Sue, Lily and Kim, Ryan and Negan, and Jamie and Anna) with pseudonyms during the Intercultural Competence for Educators professional development.

Data Sources

The data sources included inservice teacher participants' artifacts, reflection journals, and interviews.

Artifacts

Artifacts enhance a study by providing data about a participant, society, and culture (Given, 2008) as well as providing insight into one's values, beliefs, and experiences. Participants explored their perceptions of the artifacts created in the aesthetic lesson and integrated social-emotional lessons via the photographs we took during the professional development. The artifacts acted as a catalyst for the open-ended interviews and represented their intercultural competence experience. Throughout the intercultural competence professional development, participants created two artifacts: the aesthetic and the integrated artifacts.

The first artifact was a visual representation produced by each set of partners. During the aesthetic lesson, participants were asked to create backstories based on the identities of the characters in Frida Kahlo's (1929) *El Autobus*. After sharing with their partners, participants created a piece of artwork that captures both partners' identities. The second artifact was a product of the integrated social–emotional lesson where participants designed an aesthetic representation of their partner. The representation was open to the participants' interpretation of what they had learned about their partner. Each partner assessed the value of the representation regarding their identities. Participants articulated what they discovered about themselves and their partners. This activity aimed not to create a perfect artwork but something that genuinely considers another's being.

Reflection Journals

Participants reflected on their experience after completing the aesthetic and integrated social–emotional lesson plans. Reflection journals gave us insight into participants' thoughts about their experiences. Two reflection journal prompts were given: 1. Please explain what areas of another person's social identity you feel are most important in getting to know a person and 2. Please identify how your interpretation reflects your worldview and your partner's worldview. Reflection journals were collected upon completion of each lesson and guided discussion in the interviews. In addition, data collected from the reflection journals were triangulated with information gathered from artifacts and interviews to facilitate trustworthiness. The reflection journals provided insight into how participants represented their worldview throughout the lessons and further explored their effectiveness in capturing their partner's essence and attained insight into how well they felt their partner captured it.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interview questions ascertained information about participants' cultural knowledge and self-knowledge. We asked participants what cultural knowledge they attained about themselves and their partners. They explored how the artifacts represent themselves, their partners, and both worldviews while disclosing their thought processes when engaging in these activities. Three interview questions were asked: 1. Please share how this artifact represents you. Your partner? You and your partner? 2. What did you learn about yourself and your partner's culture

throughout the intercultural competence professional development? and 3. How do you feel you grew as an individual throughout this experience?

Procedures

For this phenomenological study, a variety of procedures were utilized. First, we obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board at our university in the summer of 2022. After receiving approval, we contacted several educators and school districts to inform them of this professional development. Participants were also recruited via personal email and word of mouth. Once we had participants, we sought a comfortable, neutral environment for professional development. Potential participants were provided and signed the informed consent form before engaging in intercultural competence activities.

The professional development occurred in October 2022 as part of a voluntary educational professional development opportunity. First, participants created two artifacts. For example, participants created an artifact representing their partners during the aesthetic lesson. Photographs of the artifacts were taken and labeled by participants' names. Then, two reflection journals were incorporated throughout the professional development to better understand participants' intercultural competence professional development. Participants wrote two reflection journals after each lesson, which were collected upon completion of each lesson. We provided participants with journal questions to gain insight into participants' opinions, feelings, thoughts, and experiences of each lesson. The journal writing took approximately 10 minutes after each lesson. Finally, we used a semi-structured interview technique to understand their experiences better. The semi-structured interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was a continuous, reflective, interpretive process where we employed two specific stages of coding (Saldaña, 2016). According to Johnson and Christensen (2020), researchers should search for significant statements that capture the essence and essential elements during the first data analysis cycle when conducting a phenomenological study.

During the first phase of data analysis, we employed descriptive coding. Descriptive coding is a method of first-cycle coding that summarizes qualitative data by reading it and assigning tags to topics. We analyzed the two reflection journals to find the essence of the experience and to aid in forming additional questions for the semistructured interview. Data gathered from the semistructured interviews about the artifacts was also coded descriptively. We triangulated meaningful statements from the reflection journals with information from the interviews about their experiences and the artifacts to help us develop a deep, comprehensive understanding of how the participants experienced the intercultural competence phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014).

During the second phase of data analysis, we employed value coding to code reflection journals and interviews for themes. Value coding allowed insight into the participants' values, beliefs, perspectives, and worldviews (Saldaña, 2016). In addition, member-checking was employed during the interview sessions and through email inquiry when necessary to verify the interpretive process of the reflection journals. Finally, we used triangulation, researcher reflexivity, and thick description to establish

trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness, the triangulation of data from artifacts, reflection journals, and semistructured interviews was first applied to verify emerging themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In addition, triangulation of the data sources elicited thick descriptions authentic to in-service teacher participants' voices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Saldaña, 2016). Next, researcher reflexivity was accomplished by bracketing biases in the theoretical perspective and researcher positionality. Third, thick descriptions of the data from journals and interviews were used to convey the research findings. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), thick descriptions are used in qualitative research to facilitate transferability.

Findings

We presented the findings by research question and data sources. For both research questions, each data source was presented by inservice K-12 teacher participant partners of four pairs. Participant responses were organized by data sources:

artifacts, reflection journals, and interview questions. Data was presented in the inservice K-12 teacher participants' own words.

Perceptions of Cultural Knowledge Attained from the Professional Development

To answer research question one, inservice K-12 teacher participants created art that combined their identities. The aesthetic artifact afforded insights for the first reflection journal and the first interview question. First, through art interpretation, inservice K-12 teacher participants made connections between their social identities, worldviews, and how their identities and worldviews affect their perceptions. Discussions based on the *El Autobus* activity facilitated the creation of the aesthetic artifact because it asked participants to assign identities and backstories to the characters in the painting. Subsequently, partners worked together to establish which parts of their identities were the most salient for representation in the aesthetic artifact that combined their identities. All four pairs' aesthetic artifacts are shown in Figure 1.
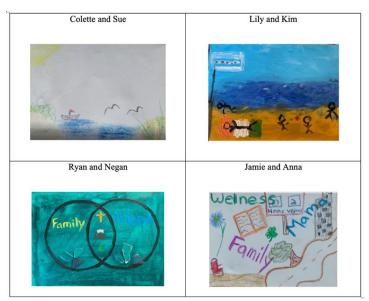

Figure 1: *Aesthetic Artifacts from Four Pairs*

Aesthetic Artifacts

Colette and Sue. A shared love of family, friends, and the beach is evident in the aesthetic artifact, as reflected in Colette and Sue's aesthetic artifact. Colette and Sue represented a place they love, the beach, and the goal of a peaceful and happy life. They collaborated on a visual representation of a place they love that encompassed their shared life goal of finding happiness and spending time with loved ones in a place they love.

Lily and Kim. Similarly, Lily and Kim included things they loved in the aesthetic artifact. They decided to illustrate a beach with three children playing because they both have three children and enjoy going to the beach with them. Also included was the city where Kim grew up and a representation of their shared heritage.

Ryan and Negan. When asked what they chose to illustrate in the aesthetic artifact, Ryan and Negan settled on their commonalities. They chose to do a Venn diagram to represent teaching. They included faith, heritage, and enjoyable activities. To differentiate themselves, Ryan wrote friends on her side, whereas, Negan wrote family. Throughout their professional development, Ryan indicated to Negan that friends played the role of the family in Ryan's life because she does not have much family. Negan, on the other hand, comes from a large family.

Jamie and Anna. Jamie and Anna discovered many commonalities, one commonality being that they both had experience teaching junior high English. Although they were raised in different states, they had ties to the same places. In addition, Jamie and Anna each had one son and a shared love of sports.

In addition, the first reflection journal asked inservice K-12 teacher participants to articulate what values they chose to represent in the aesthetic artifact. The artifact reflects their combined salient identities. In addition, participants answered whether they had similar values to their partners and why they chose these values as important.

Reflection Journal One

Colette and Sue. Colette and Sue mentioned the concept of love as a critical aspect of becoming acquainted with someone new. They described the importance of family, friends, and places to them and their similarities. Colette explained how she and her partner, Sue, decided on what to include in the aesthetic artifact, "We represented vacation, family, relaxing, and fun. We both work and must find how to balance working and spending time with family and friends." Sue stated, "We chose these because these are what is important to us."

Lily and Kim. Similarly, Lily and Kim included things they loved. In the journal, Lily wrote, "We chose our love for the beach, Chicago, and our shared heritage. We chose the things we love most about ourselves, family time." Kim concluded they chose their love of "our homes and where we are from, and how we view ourselves, and our families."

Ryan and Negan. When asked what values they represented, Ryan and Negan indicated they chose what they had in common and what they loved. Ryan wrote, "We chose to do a Venn diagram to represent teaching. We chose symbols that are both of us. We chose faith, heritage, the beach, and enjoying drinks with friends and family." Negan wrote, "We share the same views of what is important in our lives. We chose the most important commonalities between us as the middle of the diagram."

Jamie and Anna. Jamie and Anna discovered they had much in common

throughout their professional development. In the reflection journal, Jamie described these similarities. Jamie wrote:

> My partner and I are similar and seem to have a lot of values in common. We are mothers to one son, teachers, love the beach, and have links to similar places. We love our families and appreciate sports and our heritage.

Anna reiterated this sentiment: "My partner and I both made symbols or words about motherhood. We both drew symbols about where we are from and live. We drew books for teaching, finding health and happiness, ethnicity."

Finally, to discover what cultural knowledge inservice K-12 teacher participants found important, participants answered the first interview question and explained what aspects of their lives were included in the aesthetic artifact.

Interview Question One

Colette and Sue. Colette spoke about the aesthetic artifact. Colette stated, "This artifact represents me as a hard worker, mother, and my happiness. My partner is also a hard-working mother who loves her kids. It represents what makes us happy." Sue had a more simplistic answer to how the artifacts represent her and her partner. Sue explained that the aesthetic artifact "represents what is important to both of us."

Lily and Kim. Lily and Kim explained that they chose what was most important to each other as salient information to illustrate. Lily stated, "We chose the values and places that make us happy." Kim echoed this sentiment, "We chose our families, where we are from, and what makes us happy."

Ryan and Negan. Ryan and Negan focused on commonalities in their answers to how the artifacts represent them and discussed the Aesthetic Artifact. Ryan explained:

> Well, that was very nerve-racking because I hate group work. I don't like relying on other people and I had a whole vision of what it would be which ended up being very similar. So, it was nice that what I saw in my head came together that way. But yeah, it was nice as we have a lot of things in common.

Negan did not voice uncomfortable feelings about the activity but opted to talk about similarities. Negan stated, "We are similar in many ways. The artifact represents our valued place to be with family and friends."

Jamie and Anna. Although Jamie and Anna did not create a Venn diagram like Ryan and Negan, they did organize their similarities and differences. Jamie explained, "We took our differences and put them on the outside. On the inside, we put all of our similarities." Anna stated, "I tried to get a sense of what she (Jamie) was like and then put it in the artifact. We are both moms - motherhood indicates our shared value in the family."

Emerged Themes for Teacher Participants' Cultural Knowledge

In conclusion, the eight inservice K-12 teacher participants stated that discovering what people love and are interested in is essential knowledge to gain when becoming acquainted. All eight participants wanted to know what their partners enjoyed doing, what they had in common, and what places were significant to them. For the first research question, two themes that emerged for attaining cultural knowledge perceived by the teacher participants were (1) identifying commonalities and (2) understanding how

the environment shaped them (see Table 1).

Perceptions of Self-Knowledge Attained from Professional Development

We utilized the integrated artifact, the second reflection journal, and interview questions two and three to answer research question two. First, inservice K-12 participants designed an artistic representation that attempted to capture the essence of their partner. Each inservice K-12 teacher participant was charged with assessing the value of the representation regarding their identities. Participants articulated their similarities and differences and what they discovered about themselves and their partners. All four pairs' integrated artifacts are shown in Figure 2.

Theme	Example Response
Identifying commonalities	"I tried to get a sense of what she (Jamie) was like and then put it in the artifact. We are both moms. Motherhood indicates our shared value in family." – Anna
	"We represented vacation, family, relaxing, and fun." – Colette
	"We chose faith, heritage, the beach, and enjoying drinks with friends and family." – Ryan
	"We share the same views of what is important in our lives. We chose the most important commonalities between us." – Negan
Understanding how the environment shaped them	"I realized that there are many places in the world, and each place probably shapes a person's identity just as where I live shaped mine" – Colette
	"Our homes and where we are from, and how we view ourselves, and our families." – Kim
	"…I feel the values, personality, and background of a person need to be represented…" – Sue

Table 1: Themes for Teacher Participants' Cultural Knowledge

Integrated Artifacts

Colette and Sue. While engaging with Sue, Colette learned that Sue's faith and family were paramount to her. Colette also discovered that Sue and her family frequently travel to different beaches in the summer. Colette chose a seascape, a place Sue loves, and the word "family." Sue also chose to paint a bucket for Colette. Sue learned that Colette's family was most important when she shared stories of an extensive family where cousins were like siblings. Spending time with her extended family was essential for Colette's happiness.

Lily and Kim. While completing activities with Kim, Lily learned that Chicago was critical to Kim. Kim grew up in the city and is raising her family there. Lily chose to create the Chicago flag out of beach glass for Kim. Kim opted to illustrate a place Lily loves in the integrated artifact. Lily told Kim she grew up on the beach and spends much time there with her children. Like Kim, Lily was also raising her children where she grew up. Kim included beach glass in the illustration because Lily likes to

find beach glass with her children.

Ryan and Negan. Ryan and Negan chose to represent what each person cherished in life. Ryan listened to Negan explain her family and friends' importance in her life. In addition, Negan explained how she loved going to the beach. Ryan created a beach setting for Negan to represent a place she loves to visit with her family. On the other hand, Ryan talked of her small family consisting of one sister and how friends filled Ryan's family role. With that understanding, Negan created something to remind Ryan of her friends and sister.

Jamie and Anna. When asked to describe what they included in their artwork for their partner, Jamie and Anna explained that they chose what means the most to their partner. Jamie remembered that Anna

constantly seeks calm and loves to be with her son. She chose to paint a picture frame blue and include only blue beach glass to inspire calm in Anna and for Anna to display a picture of her loved ones in the frame. Anna wanted to capture what Jamie loved as well as her personality. Anna chose to paint Jamie's initials and her son's initials. She included bright colors and the sun to represent Jamie's personality.

In addition, the second reflection journal asked inservice K-12 teacher participants to assess how well they captured their partner and how well their partner captured them. They explained what values they chose, what they feel is imperative to include in a representation of another, and how they decided what to include.

Figure 2: *Integrated Artifacts from Four Pairs*

Reflection Journal Two

Colette and Sue. Colette and Sue felt they did a good job capturing their partner and vice versa. In addition, Colette

displayed thoughtfulness in what she created for Sue. Colette wrote:

> She captured my fun-loving identity and my family. I feel I did a good job

of capturing my partner. She loves the beach, her family, and her job. I feel like you need to include what a person enjoys in a representation of them. I want them to have something that reminds them of what she thinks is special.

Sue had similar thoughts:

I feel like my partner captured my identity very well. I feel I captured my partner's identities well. I saw the values of faith, family, and peacefulness. I feel the values, personality, and background of a person need to be represented. I decided what to include for my partner by illustrating what she values most.

Lily and Kim. Reflecting on how well her partner captured her, Lily stated "She captured me very well." However, Lily was not confident of her artifact to Kim. Lily wrote, "I think I did well but did not fully capture her. I feel like a representation should include what they love, who they love, and what makes them happy." Kim felt that both she and Lily did a good job on the artifacts. Kim wrote:

I feel she (Lily) did very well. I identify as a Southside Chicagoan, and the Chicago flag is something that is highly recognizable. I think I captured her well because she identifies as someone who grew up on the beach. It is a big part of her life. You should include in a representation of someone their interests, most essential identities, and where they are from.

Ryan and Negan. Ryan felt validated through the experience. She felt that Negan listened well and did an excellent job of representing what was essential to her. Ryan noted:

I love how she [Negan] captured my

happy place. It made me feel heard. I hope she feels heard. The picture frame shows my heart and what I love. I don't think anything more could have been added. It is hard to decide what is important because it is different for everybody. What is important for one is different for another. Listening to everyone is the most important.

Negan chose to explain her choices in the reflection journal. Negan wrote:

With both of our representations of the beach, we captured the perceptions of peace and serenity that we both want and value. I made a picture frame with beach glass because my partner [Ryan] values friends – which are her family and the beach. The picture frame with beach glass so she can display her friends.

Jamie and Anna. Lastly, Jamie and Anna explained how well they and their partners captured identities, which values were represented, their insights, and new knowledge. Jamie expressed satisfaction with the artifacts. Jamie noted, "My partner [Anna] did a great job. The colors were bright, I think which represented my personality, as well as including my son and places I love. People should be represented by what means the most to them." Anna explained her thoughts in the following:

I believe she [Jamie] captured a big part of my identity which is being a mom to my son. I believe you should try and represent what makes a person tick or what motivates them by many different things. I included a little about my partner's locations and family. I drew a heart because I believe that is what makes her tick. It was also a bright picture which I believe represents her bright and

sunny personality.

Furthermore, the second interview question asked inservice K-12 teacher participants to explain what they learned about themselves and their partners. Seven of the inservice K-12 teacher participants discovered shared values with their partners.

Interview Question Two

Colette and Sue. Despite being raised in different places, Colette found she had much in common with Sue. Colette explained, "We have a lot in common because we have similar backgrounds. I don't like being asked to judge." Sue's answer said nothing about commonalities but talked about Colette. Sue stated. "I learned a lot about her background and personality."

Lily and Kim. Lily and Kim both spoke about shared values and commonalities. Lily stated, "I learned more about values. I learned about our values which go hand in hand with culture." Kim said, "I learned that we have a lot in common. I learned about how she defines herself and how I mainly define myself."

Ryan and Negan. When asked what she learned about herself and her partner, Ryan explained, "We are very similar - same backgrounds, biases, privileges being white women, and Catholic. Culturally, her family is much stronger." Negan, too, spoke about values but also referenced not making assumptions. Negan stated, "I learned that we have similar cultures and values. Neither of us made assumptions about the other."

Jamie and Anna. Lastly, Jamie and Anna also spoke about what values they shared. Jamie said, "It was nice getting to know my partner and learning we shared a lot of values. Our similarities made communication easy." Anna echoed this by saying, "I learned that we have shared values and similarities in cultures."

Finally, the third interview question inquired whether inservice K-12 teacher participants felt they had grown through this experience. All participants cited new knowledge or a new realization.

Interview Question Three

Colette and Sue. Colette stated, "I realized that there are many places in the world, and each place probably shapes a person's identity just as where I live shaped mine." Sue's insight was more about her judgment of others. Sue stated, "I feel like I grew because now I realize how I first think of a person at first glance. I am more aware."

Lily and Kim. Lily spoke of differing perspectives. Lily exclaimed, "I feel like I learned more about how different people's perspectives are. For example, I was surprised at some people's descriptions because they were so unlike mine. I have to remember that everyone has a different interpretation of things." Kim's insights were similar:

> I realized that I do judge people based on their clothing, for example. I place people in a socioeconomic category without even knowing them. It's something I have done subconsciously… I have a different attitude now about how I approach someone.

Ryan and Negan. Ryan also noted an understanding of multiple perspectives, "Learning how people view the pictures and seeing how they see things is so different from how I see things. You grow by learning more about others and their perspectives." Negan recognized differing perspectives but added that finding common ground is still possible. Negan stated, "I grew to know that people have totally different views from mine, but that does not mean we don't have something in common."

Jamie and Anna. Finally, when asked about growth, Jamie said, "I learned to be open and honest. It felt easy to do these things with a total stranger." Anna also had insight into her behaviors and perceptions. She explained, "I learned that I make a lot of inferences based on my background and experiences. I guess about others. You have to understand others' perceptions."

Emerged Themes for Teacher Participants' Self-Knowledge

In conclusion, for self-knowledge, all eight participants could articulate what they learned about their partner's culture and how they grew from the experience. Inservice K-12 teacher participants articulated their values, remained open-minded to their partner's values, and could articulate cultural biases. For the second research question, two themes that emerged for attaining self-knowledge perceived by the teacher participants were (1) identifying one's values and principles and (2) recognizing cultural influences on biases (see Table 2).

Theme	Example Response
Identifying one's values and principles	"The picture frame shows my heart and what I love." – Ryan
	"I saw the values of faith, family, and peacefulness." – Sue
	"You should include in a representation of someone their interests, most important identities, and where they are from." – Kim
	"I feel like a representation should include what they love, who they love, and what makes them happy." – Lily
	"I learned that we have similar cultures and values." – Negan
Recognizing cultural influences on biases	"I grew to know that people have totally different views than me, but that does not mean we don't have something in common." – Negan
	"I feel like I grew because now I realize how I first think of a person at first glance. I am more aware." – Sue
	"I learned that I make a lot of inferences based on my background and experiences." – Anna

Table 2: *Themes for Teacher Participants' Self-Knowledge*

Discussion

Perceptions of Cultural Knowledge Attained from Professional Development

For the first research question, two themes that emerged for attaining cultural knowledge perceived by the teacher participants were (1) identifying commonalities and (2) understanding how the environment shaped them. For the first theme of cultural knowledge, teacher participants searched for commonalities with their partners throughout the professional development. Teacher participants sought to ascertain their shared values. For example, all eight inservice K-12 teacher participants in this study identified a love of beach-going as a commonality and felt comfortable sharing their personal preferences and interests. In addition, teacher participants felt that finding commonalities provided insights into their partner's personality and increased their potential for friendship

Intercultural Competence Professional Development   McClintock & Ku

formation.

 According to Sun and Taylor (2020), identifying commonalities builds connections and aids in friendship formation. Sun and Taylor (2020) conducted a randomized field experiment that tested the role things in common played in friendship formation on social media. The findings suggest that when participants thought they had something in common with someone, they were more likely to form a friendship with them and contact them on social media (Sun & Taylor, 2020). In addition, in a case study of a Muslim South African woman and a South African man of Afrikaner descent, Coetzee et al. (2019) disclosed that when both parties discovered a shared experience of marginalization, the commonality of marginalization helped strengthen their relationship.

 For the second theme of cultural knowledge, teacher participants in this study acknowledged that their perspectives were shaped by their environment, and knowing where someone is from can help them understand their perspective. These findings support the importance of changing one's environment to expose oneself to different perspectives (Choi & Bae, 2022). Understanding how one's environment affects a person's perspective is one component of intercultural competence. For instance, Mu and Yu (2023) conducted research on Chinese university students immersed in a business English class utilizing the intercultural language teaching approach. The Chinese university students discovered an enriched cultural knowledge, including their environment's effect on their outlooks. The current study's findings concur with Mu and Yu's study.

Perceptions of Self-Knowledge Attained from Professional Development

 For the second research question, two themes that emerged for attaining cultural knowledge perceived by the teacher participants were (1) identifying one's values and principles and (2) recognizing cultural influences on biases. For the first theme of self-knowledge, identifying one's values and principles was very important to the teacher participants in this study. Teacher participants felt that knowing their and their partner's values helped them form relationships and discover the essence of one another. All eight teacher participants in this study readily voiced their values and principles and sought to understand how these shaped their perspectives. Teacher participants' ability to articulate their values and principles may also result from the reflective exercises embedded in the curriculum. Indeed, research in intercultural competence supports the idea that those engaged in growing intercultural competence must be able to examine their principles and attitudes toward other groups (Dao et al., 2017; Feng, 2016).

 For the second theme of self-knowledge, teacher participants in this study identified how their culture influenced their perspectives and biases. They realized how they make initial judgments of people based on cultural and social norms. In short, they developed a more conscious and flexible approach to meeting new people. In addition, they became aware of how their culture and background impact their judgment of people.

 Part of overcoming cultural barriers and decreasing biases is understanding how one's culture influences one's biases (Strotmann & Kunschak, 2022). To improve intercultural training in higher education, Strotmann and Kunschak found that students and staff in Spain developed intercultural competence by acknowledging the influence culture has on bias. They discovered that when people recognize the influence culture

has on bias, they are more likely to exhibit the knowledge, skills, and behaviors indicative of an interculturally competent person. The current study's findings suggested that the teacher participants were mindful of culture's influences on their biases and the importance of continually reflecting upon these biases.

Recommendations for Teacher Training and Professional Development

We provided three recommendations to help teacher education programs improve intercultural competence professional development for educators. First, the most central implication is that including intercultural competence professional development with immersive experiences and identification and reflection upon one's culture, biases, and perspectives would enhance teachers' ability to engage with diverse populations. An interculturally competent teacher may move beyond culturally responsive teaching by communicating with diverse populations in a way that evokes trust and respect. Creating an atmosphere of trust and respect encourages a cooperative and productive school environment conducive to academic and personal growth.

Second, this study shows inservice K-12 teacher participants' openness and willingness to discuss, explore, reflect, learn, and apply understandings to diverse perspectives. Openness is a necessary attitude to grow interculturally competent. Teacher education programs could seize on this opportunity to engage teachers in experiences that foster their intercultural competence. Enriching teachers' experiences with new cultures and perspectives may improve teachers' ability to communicate, connect with, and appreciate diverse cultural perspectives.

Finally, Intercultural Competence for Educators professional development presents a practical approach to training interculturally competent educators. Given the diverse cultural identities in the United States, Intercultural Competence for Educators professional development can engage teachers with people with different cultural, religious, political, linguistic, racial, gender, nationalities, or sexual identities. Like pre-service educators completing student teaching and putting theory into practice, teacher education programs should offer professional development opportunities that allow teachers to grow interculturally competent. We consider increasing teachers' intercultural competence essential for creating positive educational environments.

Limitations and Future Research

There are three limitations to this phenomenological qualitative study. First, the Intercultural Competence for Educators professional development limited intercultural exchanges of the inservice K-12 teacher participants with other participants. Due to time constraints and the curriculum utilized, participants were restricted concerning the depth of exploration of self and others. Second, although the demographics of the inservice K-12 teacher participants reflect national teacher demographics, the lack of ethnic and gender diversity among participants limits the ability to contextualize and generalize the findings.

In terms of future research, there are two ways future research in intercultural competence may benefit the field of education. First, future research on how interculturally competent educators promote inclusivity in the classroom and community would benefit teacher education programs. Second, further studies could also investigate how interculturally competent educators promote inclusivity and make decisions in the classroom and community.

Such research would aid teacher preparation programs in forming educators equipped to address diverse classroom populations.

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Intercultural Competence Professional Development   McClintock & Ku