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Educating invisibly: Immigrant teachers of color and their sense of belonging in New Jersey public schools

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**EDUCATING INVISIBLY: IMMIGRANT TEACHERS OF COLOR AND THEIR
SENSE OF BELONGING IN NEW JERSEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

by
Mirjam L. Biegen

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
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Dissertation Chair: Ane Turner Johnson, Ph.D.

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Dedications

This dissertation is dedicated to all immigrant teachers of color who work diligently to provide a sense of belonging to their students and make a difference in children's lives. Your contributions to the education of students matter!

To my cousin, Lapita Aihonya, who encouraged me to pursue my doctoral degree. Thank you Shiveli shaMutota for believing in me. Your encouragement has kept me motivated. To my Aunt Mirjam Hekandjo, and Uncle Sakeus Hekandjo, who instilled in me the value of education. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I would not have achieved success in life without your blessings. I love you all so very much!

To my husband, James, and my two beautiful daughters Neshani and Ndinelao, for being my compass during my doctoral journey. Thank you for your support and your understanding when my study kept me away from family events and responsibilities. To my precious grandchild, Raphina Natalie Ndeyapo, who I love very much. Thank you Ndeyapo for coming into my life. I am proud to be your Meekulu!

This dissertation is also dedicated to my father, Titus Kanime Mwanyangapo, and my mother, Peneyambeko Nehandu, from whom I learned the power of perseverance and adversity. Ondimuhole, vaholike vange! To my father-in-law, Francis Leo Xavier Biegen, who parted from this world before the completion of my dissertation. His memory and blessings carried me all the way through to the end.

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Throughout this study, I learned something about myself and the roles I hold: a mother, a wife, an immigrant, a woman of color, a teacher, a friend, and a researcher. Throughout my doctoral journey, I have never compromised my professional role. I continued to work diligently as a teacher and provided a sense of belonging to the third graders in my classroom. In an effort to use my sphere of influence, I asked questions that made people uncomfortable and some even questioned my purpose. Many labels were placed on me, but I refused to let them define me. I spoke. I was visible. I perceived the world around me differently. I looked at the world with the “critical eye” of a researcher and the outside views of an immigrant. I was resilient. I persevered. I have gained more knowledge of creating belongingness for others. However, the journey has only just begun!

Abstract

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2017-2018

Ane Turner Johnson, Ph.D.

Doctor of Education

The purpose of this qualitative, heuristic, phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color and explore their sense of invisibility and belongingness in the New Jersey public schools. The goal of this study was to understand their struggles and perseverance as they navigated America's education system. Additionally, this study aimed to understand the numerous obstacles immigrant teachers of color face due to cultural and language barriers. Eleven immigrant teachers of color employed as teachers in New Jersey public schools participated in this study. All eleven teachers have struggled with invisibility and lack of belongingness in their school contexts and daily practices. Five themes were uncovered during data analysis: (1) fitting in to belong, (2) discrimination and stereotyping, (3) proving oneself, (4) shoulder to lean on, and (5) resilience. These themes captured the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color in New Jersey public schools and helped provide a deeper understanding of visibility and belongingness.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The United States of America has become home to many immigrants who cross over its borders from around the world (Zavis, 2016). Among these immigrants are teachers of color. Some are professionally trained in their countries of origin. The increased immigrant population in the United States (U.S.) adds to an already diverse society. Despite American schools becoming more diverse, with many students of different races and ethnicities, American teachers do not reflect such a trend (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), the U.S. education system has a lack of teacher diversity to meet the needs of our diverse student demographics.

Another issue facing the U.S. education system is the underrepresentation of teachers of color in the classroom (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Sleeter & Milner, 2011; Partee, 2014). It would make sense that school districts hire more minority teachers to help meet the needs of minority students (Fliglio, 2017; Partelow, Spong, Brown, & Johnson, 2017). Research indicates that minority students need to have teachers that look like them, who they can identify with, and who can understand them (Dilworth, & Coleman, 2014). Echevarria, Powers, and Elliott (2004) resonated the same sentiment, asserting that educators who are cognizant of culturally appropriate behaviors could serve as classroom teachers and mentors for students, especially those with academic and behavioral problems.

Many teachers are leaving the profession not long after entering it. Recruiting and drawing upon more people of color could mitigate this problem (Sleeter & Milner,

2011). According to Broutian (2016), recruiting immigrant teachers will not only help diversify the U.S. teaching force, but also help promote diversity in schools and classrooms. However, the U.S. education system is not set up for immigrant teachers of color. The U.S. educational system was built from a foundation of Eurocentric attitudes and cultural value images, and still is (Kankava, 2013). These images are not healthy to immigrant teachers of color who often bring rich cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds to the classroom. Unfortunately, immigrant teachers of color may feel pressure to assimilate and comply with the norms of the Eurocentric cultural values (Guo, 2013; Kankava, 2013). Research reveals that at times, immigrant teachers of color contend with how they are perceived by their colleagues and administrators (Niyubahwe, Mukamurera, & Jutras, 2013). Such feelings of invisibility affect immigrant teachers' self-esteem and confidence to succeed professionally (Yee, 2008). Lack of self-esteem negatively affects the recruitment of diverse teachers to the profession as well as the ability to retain them (Schmitz, Nourse, & Ross, 2013).

Furthermore, many immigrant and minority teachers are victims of prejudice and discrimination by their colleagues, parents, students, and school administrators (MacDowell & Cammett, 2016). Ozbarlas (2008) and Yee (2008) confirmed that prejudice and discrimination toward immigrant teachers stems from a lack of understanding about immigrant teachers by the U.S. mainstream culture. In addition, immigrant teachers have to overcome many other obstacles related to teaching such as the teaching certification process, finding teaching jobs, and tackling the language and cultural barriers (Abramova, 2013). A challenge of adapting to a different language and culture causes a sense of alienation and isolation, which makes immigrant teachers feel

invisible.

Immigration in New Jersey

Immigration in the U.S. contributes to the changing demographic of the population in New Jersey. In 2013, New Jersey's population was estimated to be approaching nine million (New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2014). In 2017, New Jersey's population was 9.01 million people. In 2018 New Jersey's population rose to 9.03 million people. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2013), 1.9 million of New Jersey's 8.9 million people are immigrants. In 2015, the number of New Jersey immigrant population rose to two million. Treated as "outsiders," New Jersey immigrants are often "excluded from the circle of belonging, even though they often embodied the very values and characteristics that have come to be associated with America: optimism, inventiveness, hard work, and commitment to freedom and democracy" (Montalto, 2006, p. 54). Furthermore, there is little support in place for immigrants to deal with important issues. There is a need for a system that offers moral, emotional and social support to minimize isolation and disparity, and promote a sense of belonging for immigrants.

There are a few charities such as the Catholic Charities' program that provides the blessings of liberty to immigrants and offers English, as a Second Language, Training (NJ Department of Education, 2012). Providing language training for immigrants is critical because it has the potential to inspire them to join the teaching profession. However, lack of support for teachers of color (Vilson, 2016) may force immigrant teachers to quit teaching. Hence, there is a need to find way to keep and prevent teachers of color from leaving the profession (Machado, 2013).

Many immigrants come to the U.S. aspiring to be teachers and, in many cases, they possess teaching credentials and qualifications from their native lands (Abramova, 2011). However, immigrant teachers may find themselves discriminated against and feeling invisible in their environment. Furthermore, many immigrants get caught in the education bureaucracy with different rules and regulations that they must comply with as well as satisfying the gatekeepers of the teaching profession (Reid, Collins, & Singh, 2014). This includes getting their overseas credentials approved, redoing their teaching training, passing the standardized tests for a teaching certificate, and facing discrimination during the interview process (Lee, 2010; Niyubahwe, Mukamurera, & Jutras, 2013). It is important to mention that standardized tests for a teaching certificate may be unfair to immigrant teachers and people of color because they may not be culturally responsive to them (Lee, 2010). This could be a contributing factor to underrepresentation of minority teachers in the U.S. schools.

Since the United States is now engaging in proposed changes to its immigration policy, and is closing doors of opportunities for immigrants, one could argue that the new immigration policy could affect many immigrants in New Jersey who aspire to become teachers. This is an issue that needs to be addressed because New Jersey public schools need diverse teachers to serve the needs of diverse student body. Another obstacle that immigrant teachers face in New Jersey is the issue of teacher licensing and certification. To have a transcript from other countries evaluated, one has to contact agencies such as World Education Services: International Credential Evaluation, which are responsible for determining the credentials and equivalency of foreign education to the education here in the United States (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2015). However, this

process can be cumbersome and at times not reliable. This shows how hard it is for some immigrant teachers to satisfy gatekeepers and policy actors to be accepted as teachers in the American education system (Reid, Collins, & Singh, 2014).

My Initial Invisibility Story

The impetus for this study comes from my experiences with invisibility and lack of belonging as an immigrant teacher in the state of New Jersey. Additionally, it stems from my commitment and desires to champion social justice and diversity, and to advocate for everyone to receive equitable treatment, especially the “others” whose voices may be silenced and excluded in the American narratives. My story aims to bring awareness to the visibility challenges such as discrimination and prejudice, alienation, lack of belongingness, and isolation that immigrant teachers of color endure in the American school system. It is a story about “others,” the marginalized, and those who feel invisible and forgotten.

My invisibility story began in January of 2001 when I immigrated to the U.S. from Namibia, a country in southern Africa. I was a certified teacher in Namibia, and when I came to the U.S., I wanted to pursue teaching, a profession that I loved and held very dear to my heart. However, I soon realized that my dream of becoming a teacher in the U.S. might not be achieved due to cultural and language challenges, bureaucracy, the racially driven assumptions about the quality of my education, and feelings of invisibility.

In the fall of 2001, I decided to enroll at a university in New Jersey after I found out that the advanced education that I received in Namibia held little to no value in the United States. I was only awarded nine credits for my teacher training. As a student with an accent and a lack of English language skills, I was perceived as unintelligent. Some of

my professors assumed that I did not understand materials or the words they were saying to me. They repeated themselves several times or spoke slower and louder as if to help me understand what they were saying. Due to these treatments, I soon succumbed to the common assumptions about the limits of my intelligence and academic abilities. I quickly learned that my lack of English language proficiency was seen and considered as a deficit, and my intelligence was judged by it. I was informed that I could not continue my studies as an education major and I had to pick a different academic major. I was crushed. A few days later, the Education Department Chair called me into his office and told me that I could never be a teacher in the U.S. because students will not understand me and that parents will never want their children to be in my class. He also informed me that I would never pass the certification test (Praxis). As if to do me, and the teaching profession a favor, the Department Chair suggested that I major in nursing instead because I would make more money as a nurse and no one would judge me by the way I speak. Even after I told him that I was not giving up teaching nor was I interested in any other academic major, he continued to do everything in his power to discourage me. I felt that I did not belong to the university community.

To improve my accent, I was referred to the speech laboratory three times a week. I attended the lab after classes over the course of three months. Even though going to speech lab did not improve my accent, I did not give up. I sat there usually with tears in my eyes, which I tried to hide from everyone. The lab assistant somehow saw my tears and handed me a paper that indicated that I passed. I felt liberated. As I walked to the office of the Department Chair, I was overcome with a rush of emotions; one part anger, one part frustration, and the fear of the unknown, of what was yet to come but I

was determined. I decided to use that anger to fuel my drive to achieve my goals. I could not help but think of others who may have experienced the same ordeal. I thought of those impressionable people whose journey may have been derailed because of the factors I experienced.

On a positive note, these lived experiences allowed me to recognize both conscious and subconscious biases, prejudices, assumptions, and misconceptions that manifest within the educational experiences of our students. I could have easily had a different outcome, but I did not allow the label placed on me to define me. Most importantly, I did not allow it to stop me from pursuing my teaching career. Despite challenges, I am a proud immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey, hired by a wonderful principal who believes in me and my power to positively impact a diverse student body.

Problem Statement

Immigrants come to America, and some of them find themselves navigating the U.S. educational system in pursuit of teaching careers. However, immigrant teachers do not always feel welcomed or visible in the teaching profession that many consider a calling (Lee, 2010). Immigrant teachers encounter school systemic, structural challenges, and are subjected to institutional discrimination and prejudice (Brown, 2015; Lee, 2010). Such challenges lead immigrant teachers to feel invisible and have a low sense of belonging in the U.S. education system.

Invisibility, being and feeling invisible due to discrimination and racism, is a problem that many immigrant teachers face within U.S. educational system (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). Newton (2016) defined invisibility as a “social condition intimately intertwined with space, as a visual-spatial metaphor for misrecognition of bodies,

communities, and sociopolitical issues, as well as the occupation or appropriation of physical space” (p. 111). Research indicates that immigrant teachers occupy a space of invisibility. It further confirms that immigrant teachers lack a sense of a place and space that holds meaning to them (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). Having a sense of place and space matters to immigrant teachers because their contributions to student learning matters (Carrison, 2007). In addition, Kelchtermans (2005) and Santoro (2013) reported that teachers with immigrant backgrounds face challenges of unwelcoming school communities and feel undermined by a lack of recognition or sense of belonging in the teaching profession.

With a supportive and encouraging working environment, immigrant teachers would find success in the teaching profession (Schmidt, 2010). Therefore, it is vital that school administrators create an environment that is welcoming to immigrant teachers and offers them a smooth transition into the teaching profession. Such an environment will allow immigrant teachers to feel visible, have a sense of belonging in their school communities, and provide a platform for immigrant teachers to share their multicultural experiences and qualities with their school communities. This notion confirmed by Ragnarsdóttir (2010) argued that immigrant teachers need a supportive working environment, one that respected their diverse cultural differences and promoted diversity among staff. This is vital for teacher retention, especially among minority teachers and teachers of color.

Feelings of invisibility, and a lack of belongingness could negatively affect the recruitment and retention of teachers of color to the teaching profession. Some people may not be attracted to a profession where they know they are not valued. Therefore, a

change in school policies and practices is needed to counter the invisibility, foster immigrant teachers' sense of belonging and improve their self-efficacy. The work here seeks to explore and promote immigrant teachers of color and their experiences in diverse educational organizations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, heuristic, phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color and explore their sense of visibility and belongingness in the New Jersey public schools. The goal of this study was to understand their struggles and perseverance as they navigated America's education system. The study aimed to understand the numerous obstacles immigrant teachers of color faced due to cultural and language barriers. Understanding immigrant teachers of color's invisibility experiences may help improve the experience of future immigrant teachers. Moreover, it may also help meet the needs of our increasingly diverse New Jersey student population.

A qualitative research design, phenomenological approach, was used to explore how immigrant teachers of color describe and perceive their lived experiences of visibility and feeling of belongingness in New Jersey public schools (Moustakas, 1990). As an immigrant teacher of color employed in a New Jersey public school, heuristic methodology was a practical and efficient approach for me to study and explore my personal encounters and lived experiences of visibility and belongingness on a deeper level. Searching for the deeper meaning of the phenomena, making connections with other immigrant teachers of color, and making sense of invisibility experiences and belonging of immigrant teachers of color employed in New Jersey public schools was the

basis of this phenomenological inquiry. Interviews were the primary methods of data collection, consistent with heuristic design (Moustakas, 1990). To fully explore and capture the experiences of participants' perceptions and feelings of the phenomenon, personal documents such as journal entries, and diaries were used when necessary.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What is the experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey public schools?
2. How do immigrant teachers of color perceive and describe the experience of invisibility and feelings of belongingness in New Jersey public schools?

Definition of Terms

Discrimination. Brown (2015) defined discrimination as “harmful actions toward others because of their ethnicity, nationality, language ability, and accent, or immigration status”. It involves intolerance, prejudice, unfairness, inequity, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.

Invisibility. Newton (2016) defines invisibility as a “social condition intimately intertwined with space, as a visual-spatial metaphor for misrecognition of bodies, communities, and sociopolitical issues, as well as the occupation or appropriation of physical space” (p. 111).

Immigrant teacher of color. A teacher born outside the U.S., who identifies himself or herself as a person of color and is currently teaching in the U.S. schools.

Belongingness. For this study, belongingness is defined as a feeling of belonging and a desire to feel connected to others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Acculturation. An adjustment process one experiences when adjusting to a new culture (Berry, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

Student demographics in the United States are changing, but the education system has a lack of teacher diversity to meet the needs of our diverse student demographics (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). There are more diverse student bodies in U.S. schools. However, the teaching staff is not racially diverse. According to Boser (2014), teachers of color are not well represented in today's classrooms. Research tells us that immigrant teachers bring valuable cultural understanding and their commitment to student learning, among other qualities (Carrison, 2007). However, immigrant teachers may find themselves discriminated against due to language and cultural barriers, feel invisible in the teaching profession, and lack a sense of belonging in the school communities that they serve.

According to Simon and Goes (2011), "Phenomenology does not begin with a theory, but, instead, begins with a phenomenon under consideration" (p. 1). My personal experience with invisibility and belongingness as an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey public schools served as the foundation for this study. Furthermore, my experience with invisibility and belongingness in New Jersey public schools sensitized me as a researcher to the data collected, emerged concepts, and themes. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), "Our backgrounds and past experiences provide the mental capacity to respond to and receive the messages contained in data" and that "professional experience can enhance sensitivity" (p. 33). Therefore, "it makes sense, then, to draw upon those experiences to obtain insight into what our participants are describing"

(Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 80).

The theoretical framework for this qualitative phenomenological study was based on belongingness theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Baumeister and Leary (1995) defined belongingness as a fundamental human need to belong and form an interpersonal relationship with others. They suggested that there is a need for human beings to maintain closeness and social belonging because it provides security and promotes well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This theory suggests that maintaining a close bond with others prevents people from feeling lonely and distressed. This is vital for immigrant teachers of color who feel invisible and alienated from their school communities and who sometimes maybe the only teacher of color in their school.

Conversely, one can argue that organizational belongingness also matters because one may have a personal relationship with others but may not feel supported within or by the institution. The opposite could also be said because one can be bonded to an organization even without close personal connections within it. Therefore, fostering and promoting a sense of belonging will help promote success (Baldoni, 2017). Arguably, having a sense of belonging may promote acceptance from the mainstream, which is vital for immigrant teachers of color's wellbeing and happiness.

Social identity theory states that one's concept of self comes from the groups to which one belongs (Turner & Tajfel, 1986). Identity is a crucial part of social life. It is the understanding of who we are, how we perceive ourselves, how others perceive us, and traits that define us (McLean, 2005). Furthermore, identity is "shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts" (Tatum, 1997, p. 18). Social identity theory assumes that identity, culture, race, and

language are important to immigrant teachers' identity formation because it helps them understand themselves and find their place in the American society and educational system (Lee, 2010). This matters to immigrant teachers of color's sense of belonging.

It is important to note that social identity has implication for immigrant teachers of color as they are forced by circumstances to adapt and relate to their new American culture, and the pressure to assimilate. The idea of assimilating into American culture by abandoning your "other" self implies giving up ones' identity (Skerry, 2000). It is an assumption that everyone who is different should be changed to be more "American", a concept that ignores the fact that American cultural values are grounded in a White supremacy and heteropatriarchy capitalistic set of beliefs that have not made room for other ways of seeing the world (Kim, 2016; Vaught, 2011).

Numerous studies indicated that individuals with an integrated cultural and social identity had higher self-esteem compared to those who had a separated or marginalized cultural identity (Eyou, Adair, & Dixon, 2000). Additionally, pressure to assimilate into a dominant culture and renounce one's own ethnic identity may result in anger, depression, and violence (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). On the other hand, social identities are as much about systems of oppression as they are about the individual or psychological identity development. Conversely, social identity theory is a concept that challenges the core of ones' belief, identity, and the pride of who we as individuals (Korte, 2007).

Although the theoretical framework for this study was based on belongingness theory, it is important to mention that racism victimizes and oppresses others; hence some may experience lack of visibility and belongingness. One who is racially different is

considered “other.” The “other” was socially constructed to oppress the “other”, obtain power, control, and to promote “whiteness” (Takaki, 2008). Moreover, Memmi, Appiah, and Martinot (2000) asserted that racism resides deep in the heart of United States society. It is the everyday experience of most people of color in the United States (Delgado, Stefancic & Liendo, 2012). Racism is the cause of racial injustice, prejudice, misery, despair, alienation, and discrimination that people of color are subjected to and encounter in America today (Gillborn, 2006). Because of racism, teachers of color may not develop a sense of belonging and may feel less than desirable within the mainstream society (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). Research has shown that when immigrants try to adjust, adapt, or assimilate into mainstream society, they are often faced with racial discrimination and prejudice (Farley & Alba 2002). This may force immigrants to identify with others who experienced the same discrimination and prejudice. From an immigrant teacher of color’s perspective, one can view the concept of racism through the eyes of Duggan’s (n.d), poem, “*Racism is Around Me Everywhere*”:

Of human ignorance I am almost in despair
For racism is around me everywhere
But like they say sheer ignorance is bliss
Just like Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

Some people carry their honour in a flag
And of their Nationality they brag
They feel superior and they differentiate
And against those who are different they discriminate.

So many people still judged by their race
For such there never ought to be a place
'A fair go' those untruthful words I do recall
There is no such a thing as a 'fair go for all'.

Though we live in a so-called democracy
Of racism we never will be free
They judge you by where you come from and the color of your skin

For many equality and respect seems impossible to win.

Yosso (2005) claimed that “when the ideology of racism is examined, and racist injuries are named, victims of racism can often find their voices” (p. 74). In this regard, immigrant teachers of color whose voices were silenced by ideology of racism can now be empowered to speak up and make their voices heard. Invisibility, racism, and the sense of alienation, and isolation need to be broken. It is therefore vital to examine forms of racism that are embedded in the American society because the success of all people of color requires a transformation of the inequitable educational system (Closson, 2010).

Today, educational inequality is manifested in our education system despite the notion that every child is entitled to a quality education. There are still discriminatory practices in schools, such as lowered academic expectations, which continue to deny equal educational opportunities for all students (MacLead, 2008). Therefore, the invisibility continues.

Delimitations

As with all qualitative research, there were some delimitations to be considered. The initial delimitation stemmed from the assumption that research participants would respond honestly to the questions being asked during the interview. Another limitation of this study was the research design. Heuristic phenomenology allowed me, the researcher, to be part of the research and incorporate my lived experiences into the research (Moustakas, 1990). Being part of the research could pose a bias dilemma because of my lived experiences and feelings of invisibility and sense of belongingness. To alleviate this limitation, I examined and managed my bias by being open-minded and not allowing my thinking to influence the research process. In addition, I made sure that I accurately

captured and interpreted the essence of my participants' lived experiences because bias could lead to misinterpretation of data and a biased conclusion (Brown, 2017; de Smith, 2015). To address this, Moustakas (1994) suggested that the researcher describes her own experience, relinquish biases, and look at the topic with a different perception before data collection. The last limitation of this study included the recruitment strategy of study participants. For example, snowballing strategy may draw immigrant teachers of color from the same country or find them mainly employed in certain school districts. To alleviate this limitation, diversity in participants and in their experiences was sought.

Significance of the Study

The goal of this qualitative, heuristic, phenomenological research was to describe the immigrant teachers of color's lived experiences of invisibility and lack of belonging. This study offered a new lens through which to understand the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color and challenges they encounter as they navigate in the New Jersey education system. It further offered immigrant teachers of color a plethora of information that would help them understand the challenges and prejudice that other immigrant teachers of color have encountered and maybe even continue to encounter in the U.S. public schools. This would offer emotional support to the immigrant teachers of color as they prepare for their teaching journey in the United States. Additionally, this study allowed immigrant teachers of color to realize that their contributions to the U.S. public schools and the qualities of cultural values that they brought to the teaching profession matter.

Through a phenomenological approach, my personal experience with lack of visibility and belongingness as an immigrant teacher of color in a New Jersey public

school served as the foundation for this study. I immersed myself in the lived experiences of other immigrant teachers of color and absorbed their feelings of invisibility and lack of belongingness in the New Jersey public schools. The findings supported my hypotheses, which were based on my lived experience of occupying a space of invisibility as an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey.

This heuristic study provided the opportunity to fully understand the institutional discrimination, prejudice, and the role it plays in the lives of immigrant teachers of color. Furthermore, this study allowed me to examine my own experiences of lack of visibility and belongingness as well as that of other immigrant teachers of color employed in New Jersey public schools. Conducting research with other immigrant teachers of color who had similar experiences validated what I had experienced and helped me look at my experience with a different, more perceptive lens. In addition, this study helped me see myself as part of a larger struggle that connected me to other immigrant teachers of color who experienced lack of visibility and belongingness. I believed that immersing myself fully in the study of qualitative research methods would further allow me to own my voice and help others understand my struggle and experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in the United States. The findings from this study may have implications for policy, practice, and research.

Policy

The results of this phenomenological study may influence policy in school hiring practices and diversifying teaching staff. Most importantly, the results may encourage school administrators to support immigrant teachers of color and create climates in which they can be successful.

Practice

This study would offer a new lens from which to understand the lived experiences of the visibility and belongingness as well as factors and challenges that immigrant teachers of color encounter as they navigate in the New Jersey education system. It would further offer immigrant teachers of color a plethora of information that would help them understand the challenges and prejudices other immigrant teachers of color have encountered and maybe even continue to encounter in the U.S. public schools. This may offer emotional support to the immigrant teachers of color as they prepare for their teaching journey in the United States. Additionally, this study may allow immigrant teachers of color to realize that their contributions to the U.S. public schools and the qualities of cultural values that they bring to the teaching profession matter and are valued.

For teachers, students, and parents who work with immigrant teachers, this study may increase their understanding of the lives of immigrant teachers of color and what they endure in New Jersey public schools. The assumption was that understanding the challenges of immigrant teachers of color would increase awareness of how the mainstream American society treats other people that are different from them. It may further change the minds and hearts of parents, students, teachers, and administrators about immigrants in general and how they view them. Most importantly, through this understanding and awareness, people may see that although immigrant teachers of color look and sound different from them, they are competent professionals who deserve respect, appreciation, and a seat at the table. Their visibility and sense of belongingness matters.

Research

More research is needed to raise awareness about how immigrant teachers of color are viewed and their contributions to student learning. To validate this study's results, future research on immigrant teachers of color and their lack of belongingness in the U.S. education system should be conducted through quantitative research method. Additionally, research on U.S. immigrant teachers with foreign accents and the impact their accents have on student learning should be conducted.

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduced the topic of the study, presented the problem statement, the purpose of the research, research questions, significance of the study, and the delimitations. Chapter Two provided the review of the literature regarding the challenges that immigrant teachers endure in public schools. Chapter Three established and detailed the methodology used in this study, which included participants' selection, data collection methods, instrumentation, data analysis, data trustworthiness, and finally, a description of the researcher's role, and ethical considerations of the study. Chapter Four provided the findings of the study, and Chapter Five concluded with the discussion of study implications and how they may impact immigrant teachers of color.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Since 2000, there has been an increase in the number of immigrant teachers since (Flores, 2011). However, research on immigrant teachers of color's experiences of invisibility and lack of belonging in the United States' educational system is slim. Most notably missing is the voice of immigrant teachers of color. Thus, it was important to document their experiences as they navigate the American education system. This includes immigrant teachers' contributions in a diverse cultural background. This chapter provided an in-depth review of literature that would postulate background in the subject area.

School Segregation and Integration

Prior to the United States Supreme Court's 1954 ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* ending school segregation (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014), teachers of color had poor working conditions. Before the court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Black teachers served the Black student population across the country. However, after the Supreme Court ruling, Black students were enrolled in the formerly White schools, and hence thousands of Black and Latino principals and teachers lost their jobs (Simon, Johnson, & Reinhorn, 2015; Rizga, 2016).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the nation introduced the teacher's certification examination, which had a very low passing rate for the Black and Latino teachers. As a result, Black women who had an interest in teaching went into other occupations. Only a small number of Black women chose to go into the teaching profession, which is not a surprise because women and minorities faced systemic discrimination: gender, race, bias,

and stereotypes (Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009). Previous studies indicated that Black women had to break the “concrete ceiling” due to “gendered racism”, the double jeopardy of being Black and female (Essed, 1991; Hackett, & Byars, 1996). This seems to suggest that Black women had to break barriers of isolation, oppression, perceptions, stereotypes, and inequality (Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2008). Given such compelling evidence of barriers that women and people of color encountered, it was important to understand that those marginalization barriers could result in feelings of isolation and exclusion.

Previous research has documented that many women schoolteachers in America were, and still are, White (Farinde, LeBlanc, & Otten, 2015; Grant & Murray, 1999; 2009). Currently, Black teachers in the United States public schools remain at seven percent of the teacher population while Black students are 16 percent of the student population (Boser, 2014; Dilworth & Coleman, 2014; Rizga, 2016). Research explained the need for recruiting teachers of color and for diversifying the teaching force (Villegas & Lucas, 2004). Lindsay and Hart’s (2017) study found that black students were more likely to learn more from black teachers and less likely to be suspended or disciplined by them. Furthermore, study found that racial pairing of teachers and students increased students’ performance in reading and math by three to four percent, especially Black students who were in racially segregated schools (Dee, 2005). Similar results were found for Hispanic students. It was observed that the teachers of color played a critical role in the social and ethnic integration among students in public schools (Maylor, 2009). Black students saw Black teachers as role models ((Maylor, 2009). This demonstrates the need to recruit teachers of color to help cater to the needs of students of color.

Dilworth and Coleman's (2014) review of teacher diversity emphasized the need for students of color to have teachers that resemble their own racial and ethnic heritage. They argued that minority students need to have teachers that look like them, that they could identify with, and teachers that could understand them (Dilworth, & Coleman, 2014). Echevarria, Powers, and Elliott (2004) resonated the same sentiment. They asserted that educators that are cognizant of "culturally appropriate behaviors" could serve as classroom teachers, mentors for students with academic and behavioral problems. In addition, they could also serve as "liaisons" between the school and the community (Echevarria et al., 2004, p. 23). Having a liaison that acts as a collaborator between the schools and homes would be beneficial to school districts. Interestingly, Achinstein and Ogawa (2011) and Dukes (2018) provided insight on why recruiting teachers of color was important. They asserted that teachers of color acted as role models to students of color and were committed to improving their educational opportunity. But most importantly, teachers of color could be change agents and champion social justice within their school communities.

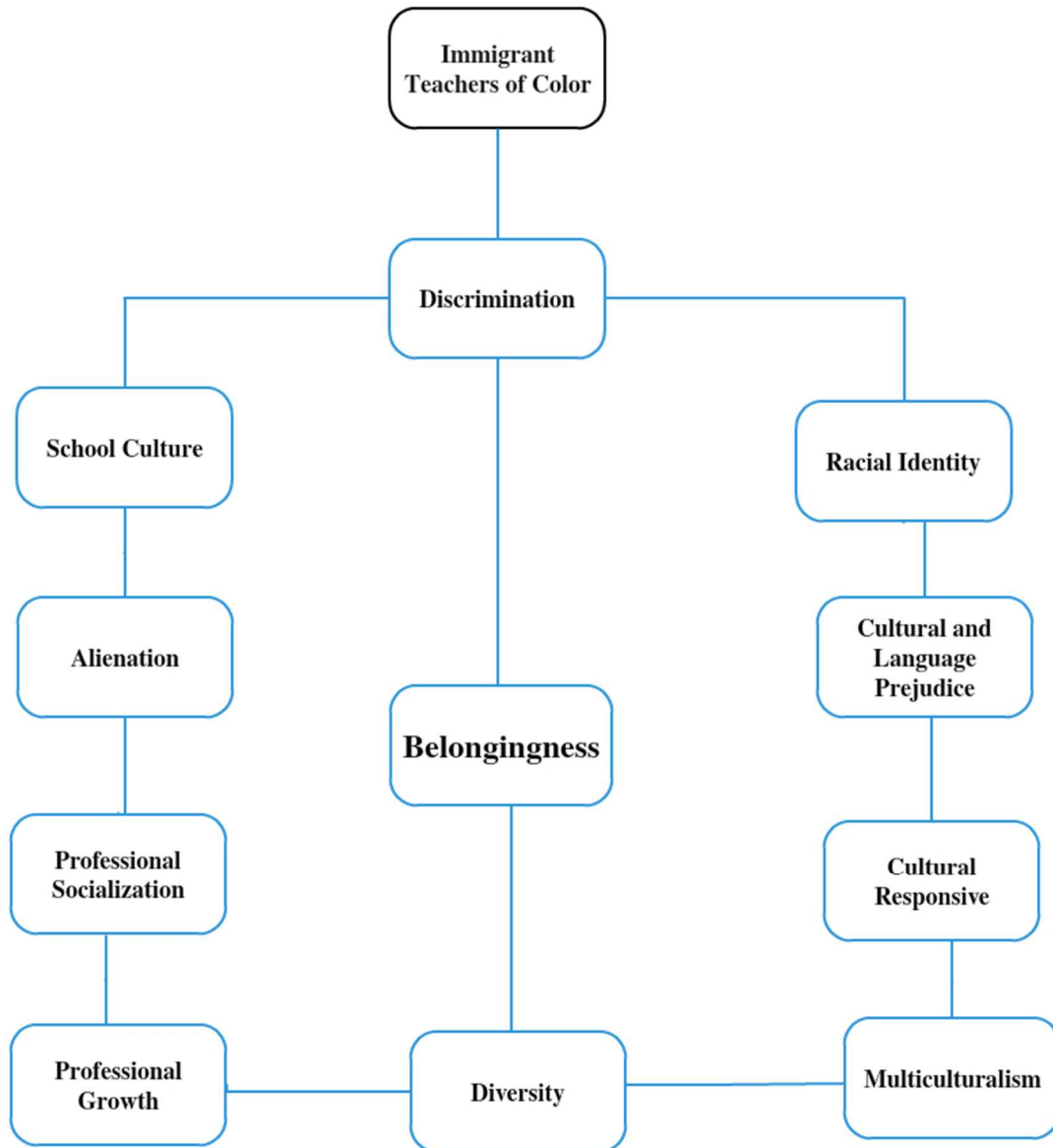


Figure 1. Concept Map

Life Experiences of the Immigrant Teachers

Numerous studies had been conducted on the life of immigrants in the U.S. and to explore the life experience of immigrant teachers as they practice teaching in both public and private schools (Farkas, 2003; Lee, 2010). Arun's (2008) study explored the life history of the first generation of immigrant teachers in South Asia and examined changes,

continuity, and evolution of teacher's pedagogies, global identities, and relationship in response to their professional, cultural, and geographic relocations. Arun's (2008) study of South Asian immigrant teachers in Canada found them to be capable, compassionate, and knowledgeable educators. Adapting to the new context, South Asian immigrant teachers in Canada demonstrated flexible and varied pedagogy describing the historic perception to their multicultural classrooms (Arun, 2008). After settling, immigrant teachers participated in the available opportunities to develop professionally and exhibited their leadership duties in their new schools.

Carrisson (2007) concentrated on the strength and qualities of the immigrant teachers in Canada. In her work, she studied life experiences of a group of seven bicultural and bilingual professional teachers as they transitioned from the support positions to classroom teaching positions. The findings of the study demonstrated the strength and the quality of the teachers in class, including advocacy for the students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. This serves as confirmation that immigrant teachers are capable of promoting a sense of wellbeing for minority students and adept at being culturally responsive teachers who connect with culturally diverse students (Edwards & Edick, 2013). Similarly, Jhagroo (2016) focused on challenges endured by immigrant teachers in New Zealand through the reflection of past experiences and highlighted the way those experiences shaped their professional and personal growth. The study revealed that prejudice was detrimental to immigrant teachers' identity, professional learning, and sense of being (Jhagroo, 2016). In short, while the studies were not identical in nature, they did share the underlying belief that it is important for immigrant teachers to have a sense of belonging to grow professionally.

Smyth and Kum (2010) studied the challenges and discrimination faced by refugee teachers as they attempted to re-enter the teaching profession in Scotland. They found that refugee teachers seeking asylum were the most affected by discrimination because of their immigration status. According to Smyth and Kum (2010), refugee teachers seeking asylum in Scotland were not permitted employment regardless of one's level of education. This forced refugee teachers to stay unemployed or secure a low paid job. The study highlighted barriers that refugee teachers experienced as they attempted to register for teaching credentials. Many refugee teachers were refused teaching credentials, which deprived Scotland of diversity and inclusion of its teaching staff (Smyth & Kum, 2010). Similarly, Lee (2010) posited that many immigrant teachers face similar challenges in the credential process in America and Canada. Many immigrant teachers in America and Canada are required and, in some cases, forced go back to school to redo their teaching training (Lee, 2010). This puts a financial burden on immigrant teachers. Another challenge is their lack of English proficiency making it more difficult for immigrant teachers to pass standardized tests to receive their teaching certification.

In contrast, Cunningham and Hargreaves (2007) presented findings on the perceptions of how minority ethnic teachers in England were motivated to join the teaching profession so that they could have a positive contribution to the education of minority ethnic students. The study found that minority teachers who were in England acted as role models to minority students, which inspired them to succeed in school. However, racism and discrimination deterred them from pursuing teaching jobs in other parts of the country, especially in higher achieving schools (Cunningham & Hargreaves,

2007). Such restrictions could deter minority ethnic teachers from pursuing the teaching profession, despite the need to recruit more teachers of color in England.

It is vital to mention that minority students, especially Black male students, need teachers who understand their home lives, can relate to their personal experiences, and are compassionate enough to believe in their potential (Bell, 2017; Warren, 2014). This seems to imply that immigrant teachers of color might help minority students make more meaning of their learning and academic success compared to non-immigrant teachers (Bell, 2017). The research appears to suggest that immigrant teachers of color could also promote the success of all students regardless of cultural or linguistic backgrounds. According to Krasnoff (2016), “teachers must be prepared with a thorough understanding of the specific cultures of the students they teach; how that culture affects student learning behaviors; and how they can change classroom interactions and instruction to embrace the differences” p. 1). With that understanding, all teachers are capable of promoting students’ learning regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

Recruitment of Teachers of Color

Hiring and recruiting teachers of color remains a challenge in America. Vaughan’s (2008) study on the practice of hiring teachers from cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the Texas public schools gave more focus to the title and role of human resource management, the methods used in attracting more candidates, and the formal statements of the intent to hire teachers from diverse backgrounds. The willingness and attitude of the school administrators to employ teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds played a significant role in the integration of the teaching profession (Vaughan, 2008). School administrators were required to apply the study findings to their hiring practices at

school. However, there is a need for teachers to become effective multicultural teachers in a polarized society to improve intergroup skills and diversity among the teaching force (Florence, 2011; McCalman, 2014; Vittrup, 2016; Peters, Stodolska, & Horolets, 2016). Immigrant teachers' socialization in the new nation can be faced with different challenges. Peters, Stodolska and Horolets (2016) believed that hiring teachers of color was essential in improving intergroup skills and diversifying the teaching force. This may help immigrant teachers who experience challenges in the adaptation to their school culture to feel a sense of belonging in their school communities. This supports Niyubahwe, Mukamurera, and Jutras's (2013) study, which highlighted obstacles faced by immigrant teachers in Canada, U.S., Australia, and Israel while trying to be employed as teachers. They further highlighted immigrant teachers' difficulties of professional integration into the school culture as well as integration into networks of other teachers at a school. This is why it is important to create a sense of belonging for such teachers. The immigrant teachers, therefore, have challenges in the adaptation to the new nation and culture.

Interestingly, as the number of students from varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds increases, the number of teachers of color has not increased (Boser, 2014; Gay, 2010; Santone, 2015). Lack of teacher diversity impedes student success (Graham, 2014). Therefore, the demand for teachers from different backgrounds also increases. In response to these trends, more consideration has been placed on the recruitment of teachers of color in the teaching profession (Smith-Collins & American Association of School Administrators, 2012). However, amplified effort needs to be given in hiring people of color in the teaching profession where there are substantial challenges in

practice. According to Simon, Johnson, and Reinhorn (2015), less than 40% of Latino and Black students are enrolled in universities and colleges, and fewer of the said percentage are expected to graduate. Additionally, only a small fraction may intend to pursue the teaching profession (Simon, Johnson, & Reinhorn, 2015).

It is important to note that to become a certified teacher in a public school in America, a teacher must pass a certification exam and obtain a teacher's license before she or he gets hired in the teaching profession. However, the majority of minority teachers do not pass this exam, with the passing rate remaining at 40% (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). However, those who pass the exam and enter into the teaching profession are often discouraged by the low salaries and the lack of additional incentives in the workplace for the services they offer (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2004). This could influence minority teachers' retention and turnover.

Discrimination

Discrimination is one of the causes of injustice, misery, despair, and alienation that some people of color are subjected to, and encounter in America today (Gillborn, 2006; Matthew, 2017). Due to discrimination, teachers of color may not develop a sense of belonging, therefore, they may feel less than desirable within the mainstream society (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). Research has shown that when immigrants try to adjust, adapt, or assimilate into mainstream society; they are often faced with racial discrimination and prejudice (Farley & Alba, 2002; James, 1997). For example, language and cultural barriers may prevent one from fitting in and be fully accepted into the mainstream society.

More recently, literature has emerged that offers contradictory findings of different career patterns between teachers of color and White teachers (Simon, Johnson, & Reinhorn, 2015). Latino and Black teachers are more likely to teach in highly impoverished or marginalized schools that enroll students from a specific race (Boser, 2014). However, unlike the White teachers who transfer to developed White schools, the Latino and Black teachers who switch schools are more likely to transfer to marginalized and hardship areas (Ingersoll & May, 2011). This seems to agree with Reeves and Rodriguez (2015) who asserted that many school systems remain highly segregated by race and economic status, which could contribute to low teacher retention. Previous studies have indicated that when public schools have difficulty retaining educators, they frequently struggle to fill the vacancy positions when they arise; this phenomenon has contributed much to a chronic turnover cycle (Ahmad & Boser, 2014; Johnson, 2006). Evaluating what the teachers of color endure during and after entering the teaching profession is a critical part of learning why many of them are prone to leave the teaching profession.

According to Ingersoll and May (2011), compared to their White peers, Black and Latino teachers are not satisfied with the positions they hold in the teaching profession. In general, Black and Latino teachers are clustered in marginalized schools with problematic working conditions compared to teachers in wealthier schools. In addition, the prevalence of unskilled and inexperienced school principals might substantially affect the duties of teachers of color. Ingersoll and May (2011) proposed that some aspects of the school leadership may be especially significant for the Black and Latino teachers. For example, the majority of teachers reported leaving their teaching jobs to avoid

principals and administrators that are neglectful, abusive, or arbitrary. Grissom and Keiser (2011) posited that the minority teachers might be prone to unfair treatment at their place of work, especially when the principals and administrators are White. For example, analyzing the results from a 2003 to 2004 staffing and school survey and the data of a 2004 and 2005 teacher follow-up survey, it was observed that schools with standardized pay rank, Black teachers earned less money compared to their White colleagues working in the same conditions. The study gives further insight into dissatisfaction among Black teachers and educators (Simon & Johnson, 2015).

In their study, Madsen and Mabokela (2014) found that White principals and administrators frequently assigned the students who are undisciplined to the teachers of color. They further found that the minority vice principals were more often charged with disciplinary responsibilities and suggested that they had to work harder than their White colleagues to prove their expertise. Madsen and Mabokela's (2014) study found that teachers of color related better to their peers who possess multicultural resources or capital. Yet, the Latino and Black teachers often reported that there were no such peers in the teaching profession. For example, a study done by Achinstein and Freitas (2010), which involved 21 teachers of color, found that the majority of them had deep concerns as to whether their peers shared the same attitudes on social justice. When the teachers in their research left schools, it was cited that the main stimuli were negative attitudes about or low expectations of students of color, absence for socially just teaching, or culturally unresponsiveness as a major reason for doing so. They cited lack of multicultural resources as the reason for developing the negative perceptions.

The effect of negative perceptions towards teachers or students of color within the organization is rarely documented. In a study of Black men, Bristol (2015) found that Black male teachers felt frustration, marginalization as professionals, social disconnection, and seclusion from the sole mission of the school. The study revealed that the Black male teachers in predominantly White schools felt like intruders in the schools. Additionally, Flores's (2011) study of California Latino teachers found that the Latino teachers who worked in the predominantly White schools felt like "racialized tokens" and frequently chose to self-segregate and self-discriminate in an effort of finding psychological safety and comfort. The term "racialized tokens" refers to the way race, gender, and class can shape and influence teachers of color's work experiences when they work with White colleagues, who are the majority in the workplace (Flores, 2011). Undoubtedly, the teachers of color's experiences in their schools may contribute to their demotivation and ultimately to their decisions to leave the teaching profession. In turn, this contributes to the challenges of hiring teachers of color.

Immigrant Teachers and Professional Socialization

Chou (2011) described professional socialization as a process of being accepted into organizational culture, group, or environment. This is vital for both interactions and building interpersonal relationships. However, research on immigrant teachers' professional socialization in a new educational environment is lacking. Therefore, researching immigrant teachers' experiences in the new educational system may enable adjustment of educational practices, school culture, and offer immigrant teachers of color a sense of belonging. Having a sense of belonging will enable immigrant teachers of color to become active members of their school communities. Lack of a sense of

belongingness or unable to fit in the mainstream school culture could create conflict experiences for immigrant teachers of color.

Cultural Bias and Language Prejudice

Research seems to agree that teachers of color are discriminated against due to cultural or language barriers (Ozbarlas, 2008; Yee, 2008). A study conducted by Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) found that faculty of color had to overcome challenges on the tenure track due to cultural differences and barriers. This caused a sense of alienation and isolation, which made them feel invisible. Hence, they advocated for “transformative efforts to ‘walk the walk’ of diversity” (p. 104). Although Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) study was on faculty of color, the alienation and isolation experienced by faculty of color could also affect immigrant teachers of color who may be struggling to find teaching jobs or tackling the language and cultural barriers in their school communities. To demonstrate this understanding, research tells us that school administrators are hesitant to hire immigrant teachers, especially if one has a foreign accent because they may deem them incompetent (Boyd, 2003, Nelson, Signorella, & Botti, 2016).

A study conducted by Gordon (1996) found that some immigrant teachers are denied teaching jobs because of their accent. Likewise, Schmidt (2010) pointed out that immigrant teachers often face discriminatory practices in the school systems. Hostility was reportedly shown toward immigrant teachers with strong accents. Speaking with a foreign accent appeared to imply that one had a language barrier, was unintelligent, and was treated as such by students, parents, fellow educators, and administrators (Deters, 2008).

Having a foreign name creates additional barriers to securing a teaching job “shattering their immigration dream: to be successful and welcomed to your new country” (Cho, 2014, p. 268). This indicates that immigrant teachers are discriminated against based on their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Further, Schmidt (2010) argued that discriminating against immigrant teachers goes against the idea of promoting diversity among teaching staff. Therefore, recruiting immigrant teachers of color may help with retention and diversify our schools and classrooms.

Cultural Responsive Teaching

Lee’s (2015) study focused on examining the qualities of immigrant teachers working in the U.S. public schools through personal narratives of their lived experiences. Immigrant teachers in the study demonstrated qualities such as the passion for teaching, a strong work ethic, and leadership skills. Other researchers seem to agree. For example, Cho (2014) posited that immigrant teachers bring “important cultural resources such as competencies, skills, attitudes, divergent knowledge, and alternative ways of thinking and knowing” (p. 262). However, many immigrant teachers are not seen as resources by their school districts (Cho, 2014). To remedy the cultural misunderstandings and disconnections, Florence (2011) suggested that change of views towards immigrant teachers is needed. Changing people’s mindsets regarding immigrant teachers could allow them to be welcomed in American schools and communities, thus feeling a sense of belonging in such places. The need to belong is essential to immigrant teachers’ professional efficacy because they contribute to student learning and development (Conway, Murphy, Rath, & Hall, 2009). Immigrant teachers need to be seen as visible and have a sense of belonging in their school communities because their contributions to

student learning matters (Amaro-Jiménez & Semingson, 2011; Carrison, 2007; Lee, 2015). Therefore, a change in school policies and practices is needed to counter the invisibility, foster immigrant teachers of color' sense of belonging and improve their self-efficacy.

There has been debate regarding dilemmas that some immigrant teachers face that could jeopardize the way they teach or their teaching capability, especially when teaching immigrant children and students of color. This appears to suggest that immigrant teachers of color may not feel empowered by their cultural and bilingual knowledge and experiences, particularly if their knowledge is not valued or encouraged by the schools, parents, and community (Adair, Tobin, & Arzubiaga, 2012). Despite a lack of consensus that exists on the point of immigrants' positive contributions, it is important to note that immigrant teachers may provide culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is utilizing students' cultural and prior experiences to make new learning more meaningful and effective for them (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Lee, 2015). This teaching benefits students, especially minority and students of color, immigrant students, and English Language Learners (ELLs). It assures students that the cultural experiences "funds of knowledge" they bring from home are valued in the classroom (Amaro-Jiménez & Semingson, 2011; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; 2006). In addition, it teaches them that cultural differences and language barriers do not stop anyone from reaching their potential or from pursuing a professional career.

Multiculturalism

Given the multicultural student population in the United States, there is a need to integrate and welcome immigrant teachers into mainstream schools to meet the needs of

our diverse students (Eubanks & Weaver, 1999). One way to meet the needs of our diverse students is through multiculturalism (Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuijten, 2015). Mishra, Devarakonda, and Kumar (2015) defined multiculturalism as a “concept that endorses diversity and dictates ways to respond to cultural and religious differences” (p. 284). Similarly, multiculturalism is a “co-existence of diverse cultures and is manifested in cultural and religious assumptions and values” (Chu, 2005, p1). Multiculturalism is how people behave, think, and perceive the world around them (Danker, 2003). Therefore, it is important to recognize and encourage racial differences (Apfelbaum, Grunberg, Halevy, & Kang, 2017). Takaki’s (2008) view on multiculturalism is an affirmation of what America stands for: opportunity, equality, and the realization of our dream. His perspective on multiculturalism is that it reunites America because it includes all American peoples, thus challenging the traditional master narrative of American history.

Takaki (2008) believed that multiculturalism was an understanding of who we are as Americans. He suggested that our history should be inclusive and recognize the diversity of our country because students benefit from seeing themselves as part of a multicultural heritage (Takaki, 2008). Similarly, Etzioni (1993) agreed that our list of “great books,” music, art, and other cultural mainstays do not give sufficient recognition to the achievements of other cultures and society. He suggested an approach that appealed to values shared by all. Etzioni (1993) believed that teaching cultural heritage through the many backgrounds that make up America would enrich everyone. McCawley (2005) posited, “Foreign teachers can enrich students' education by exposing

them to other cultures” (p. 6). Therefore, immigrant teachers of color need to be embraced in our schools because they have the potential to enrich our students’ learning.

Niyubahwe, Mukamurera, and Jutras (2013) stated that immigrant teachers possess linguistic and cultural skills and expertise that could benefit our diverse students. In addition, immigrant teachers have unique cultural experiences and values that could enrich our schools and help improve educational practices (Ragoonaden, Sivia, & Baxan, 2015). This seems to imply that immigrant teachers of color could serve as role models to diverse students, especially racial minority students. Immigrant teachers of color could also relate to students of color and their parents (Lee, 2010). This may provide them with a sense of belonging.

Research indicates that multicultural education meets the needs of culturally diverse students and embraces the rich cultures that they bring to school. Campbell (2004) asserted that “multicultural education should assist students as they learn and explore their changing identities” (p. 60). This seems to imply that students should feel comfortable with their cultural identity in the learning process. Additionally, multicultural teaching embraces diversity in schools and offers relevant and effective learning encounters for all students. It enables educators to be culturally responsive and cater to students’ academic needs and achievements (Gay, 2002). Catering for cultural diversity of all students may prevent educators from perceiving students’ cultural differences and language barriers as a sign of learning disability, even though those barriers may put them at a disadvantage. Furthermore, lack of background experiences can hinder students’ academic performances. Research insinuates that influences from initial cultural experiences shape students’ academic identity. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper

(2011) asserted, “Cultural influences affect how students and their families perceive, receive, respond to, categorize, and prioritize what is meaningful to them” (p. 76-77). Thus, recognizing and valuing what students bring to the table is critical to addressing inequality in our schools and classrooms. However, to best address the needs of diverse students, it is vital to understand their racial and ethnic identity development (Tatum, 2003).

Understanding how racial identity is developed will help educators embrace and promote a positive racial image of minority students (Quinton, 2013). Knowing students on a person level is similarly important because it will help educators identify with them and understand their cultural identities. Furthermore, educators need to encourage and support students’ racial, ethnic, and cultural similarities and differences so that teaching and learning would be meaningful (Derderian-Aghajanian, 2010). Meaningful teaching and learning can happen if educators create a safe learning environment for students because it gives them a reason to care about what they are learning, thus empowering and promoting the academic success of all students.

Understanding the Racial Identity Concept

According to Tatum (1997), “the concept of identity is a complex one, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts” (18). It is important for educators to understand the theory of racial and cultural identity concepts because students go through different developmental stages that shape the identity of who they are as individuals (Cross, 2009). Cross (2009) defined identity development as the primary process of development during childhood through adolescence, and into adulthood. One can conclude that racial identity is an internal

struggle concerning how a certain group of people see themselves versus how others see them. Singleton and Linton (2006) asserted that to meet the needs of minority students equitably, educators should embrace cultural differences and challenge their racial prejudices, assumptions, and stereotypes. Therefore, it is important that educators understand how racial identity is developed so that they can help promote a positive racial image of minority students. In addition, it helps educators' awareness of cultural stereotypes.

Furthermore, Aronson (2004) found that minority students were sensitive to the negative expectations about their races. They felt that they were always evaluated and judged. This could impact their self-esteem and affect their academic success.

Conversely, Tatum (1997) argued that the minority students' perceptions are shaped by the messages they receive from people around them. Some students may not apply themselves or put forth their best effort because they believe others expect them to fail. However, to some minority students, this could motivate them to do well and challenge the prejudices and assumptions that the dominant society puts on them. Having teachers of color could deter this from happening to minority students because many of them may identify with minority students.

Social Inequalities in Education

A lack of consensus exists on the point of belongingness for immigrant teachers of color in their new environments, especially those that are plagued by social inequalities and injustice. Social inequalities and injustice encompass treating people differently according to their race, status, and class (Blanchett, 2010; Macleod, 1995). Research seems to agree that the American education system does not provide equal opportunity

for all students (Maclead, 1995; Mettler, 2014; Mitchell & Salsbury, 2002; Samuels & ProQuest (Firm), 2018; 2017). Students are being discriminated against based on social status, race, gender, and ethnicity. This seems to situate students at a disadvantage and bear the burden of the inequality in the education system and disparities among the privileged students and the marginalized students (Takaki, 2008; Tractenberg, 2013). Takaki (2008) argued that racial discrimination is socially constructed and is still used by people in power to control the education of others based on race, status, and class because of lack of understanding when it comes to cultural differences. Reid and Weatherly (2004) confirmed this assertion. They acknowledged, “Exclusionary practices are inherently marginalizing and unjust” (Reid & Weatherly, p. 478). This could affect immigrant teachers’ sense of belonging due to their cultural differences and tarnish the idea of the “American Dream” – equal opportunity for everyone without limitation or restriction. Embracing and celebrating rich cultural diversity enables students and teachers from different backgrounds to develop a strong sense of identity, to feel accepted, respected, and valued (Quinton, 2013). It will further allow them to understand each other and respect each other’s diverse points of view, thus eliminating cultural stereotypes (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005).

Feelings of invisibility, alienation, and isolation need to end. It is therefore vital to examine forms of discrimination that are embedded in the American society. The success of all people of color requires a transformation of the inequitable educational system (Closson, 2010). Today, educational inequality is manifested in our education system despite the notion that every child is entitled to a quality education. There are still discriminatory practices in schools, such as racial and gender bias and prejudice, and

lowered academic expectations that continue to deny equal educational opportunities for all students and teachers (MacLead, 2008). Therefore, the invisibility continues.

School Culture and Belongingness

Some research suggests that the feeling of belongingness influences one's motivation and wellbeing. According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), the need to belong is vital to one's wellbeing and "human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (p. 497). It is, therefore, important to provide immigrant teachers with opportunities that would satisfy their sense of belongingness, so they can adjust to their school culture, which encompasses the shared assumptions, beliefs, values, and norms (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Dongjiao (2015) stressed, "values are the core and the soul of the school culture" (Dongjiao, 2015, p. 22). School culture shapes what unfolds in schools including creating belongingness (Habegger, 2008; Murphy, 2015; Murphy & Torre, 2014; Stein & Coburn, 2008). The school culture can be a barrier that obstructs the development of a strong sense of identity, which allows one to feel accepted, respected, and valued. Thus, Habegger (2008) and Dongjiao (2015) stressed the need for schools to create a culture of caring that builds a learning community allowing collaboration, continuous improvement, and commitment to teaching.

Additionally, Kirova (2001) suggested that a school should be a place for immigrant students to connect and belong. Perhaps immigrant teachers of color could benefit from being in a school community where they feel that they belong. For immigrant teachers of color to have a good school identity and a sense of belonging, school culture and climate should be inclusive and open to diversity.

Conclusion

The above literature review affirmed the many challenges that immigrant teachers of color faced in learning organizations and educational institutions. From work done, a majority of teachers of color felt that they were undervalued as professionals and treated in isolation, hence they were not satisfied in the teaching profession. Arguably, many teachers of color left the teaching profession for other careers. Therefore, a change in school policies and practices is needed to abolish invisibility, lack of belongingness, and discriminatory practices in our learning organizations and educational institutions. Creating belongingness, with or for, immigrant teachers who have been and continue to be marginalized may help foster their sense of belonging and improve their self-efficacy. The research questions designed for this study attempted to identify the experience of being an immigrant teacher of color and feeling of visibility and belongingness in New Jersey public schools.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, heuristic, phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color and explore their sense of visibility and belongingness in the New Jersey public schools. The goal of this study was to understand their struggles and perseverance as they navigated America's education system. Additionally, this study aimed to understand the numerous obstacles immigrant teachers of color faced due to cultural and language barriers. Understanding immigrant teachers of color's invisibility experiences may help improve the experiences of such teachers. Additionally, it may help meet the needs of our increasingly diverse New Jersey student population.

A qualitative research design via a phenomenological approach was used to explore how immigrant teachers of color described and perceived their lived experiences of visibility and feeling of belongingness in New Jersey public schools (Moustakas, 1990). As an immigrant teacher of color employed in a New Jersey public school, heuristic methodology allowed me to explore my experience of invisibility and feeling of belongingness on a deeper level. It further allowed me to explore my personal encounters and lived experiences of feeling invisible and my belongingness as an immigrant, student teacher, and teacher of color in New Jersey public schools. Searching for the deeper meaning of the phenomena, making connections with other immigrant teachers of color, and making sense of invisibility experiences and belonging of immigrant teachers of color employed in the New Jersey public schools was the basis of

this phenomenological inquiry. Interviews were the primary method of data collection, consistent with heuristic design (Moustakas, 1990). To fully explore and capture the experiences of participants' perceptions and feelings of the phenomenon, personal documents such as journal entries and diaries were used when necessary.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What is the experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey public schools?
2. How do immigrant teachers of color perceive and describe the experience of invisibility and feeling of belongingness in New Jersey public schools?

Rationale for and Assumptions of a Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research aims to gather experience, understand the meaning of the experience, and gain a deep knowledge about a phenomenon under study (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). In qualitative research, the experience is at the center of the study.

According to Rossman and Rallis (2012), a researcher conducts the qualitative study and its aim is to learn about the phenomenon of the social world. Additionally, "practical wisdom is sought in the understanding of the nature of lived experience itself" (van Manen, 1997, p. 32). The researchers make meaning of their lived experiences and that of their research participants in an in-depth manner. Qualitative research takes place in the participants' natural setting and where the phenomenon under study has been experienced (Creswell, 2014).

Strategy of Inquiry

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to explore how immigrant teachers of color described and perceived the experience of invisibility and feeling of belongingness in New Jersey public schools. Phenomenology was used to investigate the following research question: What is the experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey public schools? Creswell (2013) stated that phenomenology explores the lived experiences of individuals, and its goal is to gain an understanding of the essence of a phenomenon. Patton (2002) confirmed that phenomenology investigates “essential meanings of individual experience” and describes the phenomena in question (p. 104). For this phenomenological inquiry, a heuristic methodology was employed to study the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color employed in the New Jersey public schools. A heuristic methodology allowed researchers to be participants in the study, explore personal encounters and lived experiences in order to deepen the knowledge of the phenomena in a qualitative research (Djuraskovic & Arthur 2010; Hiles, 2001; Moustakas, 1990). Furthermore, “From the beginning and throughout an investigation, heuristic research involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11). This was the intense involvement of the primary researcher.

As noted by Moustakas (1990), heuristic research processes include moments of meaning, understanding, and discovery that the researcher will hold and savor. Feelings, thoughts, and ideas that have been awakened will return again and again. A connection has been made that will remain forever unbroken, and that will serve as a reminder of a

lifelong process of knowing and being. (pp. 55-56). As an immigrant teacher of color employed in a New Jersey public school, heuristic methodology allowed me to explore my lived experience of invisibility and feeling of belongingness on a deeper level as an immigrant, student teacher, and teacher of color in New Jersey public schools. Searching for the deeper meaning of the phenomena, making connections with other immigrant teachers of color, and making sense of invisibility experiences and belonging of immigrant teachers of color employed in the New Jersey public schools was the basis of this phenomenological inquiry.

To elicit accurate information from this population, I must have personal knowledge of the factors and challenges that immigrant teachers of color encounter that could impede their sense of belonging in the New Jersey's education system. I planned to discover what the participants believed or perceived they had experienced. Moreover, invisibility must be understood from the context within which it was experienced. The context here was discovering meanings, feelings of personal experiences, and how researchers were transformed by those experiences as well as how experiences of their world were transformed. Moustakas (1990) expressed, "The primary investigator collected and analyzed all of the material—reflecting, sifting, exploring, judging its relevance or meaning, and ultimately elucidating the themes and essences that comprehensively, distinctively, and accurately depict the experience" (p. 32). Thus, the researcher uncovered meaning, accuracy, and wholeness of immigrant teachers of color's lived experiences in the New Jersey public schools.

Setting and Participants

The target population for this qualitative study was immigrant teachers of color in the State of New Jersey. This was important because the researcher had experienced the phenomena under investigation (invisibility and lack of belongingness) in New Jersey. The participants of this phenomenological inquiry were eleven immigrant teachers of color employed in New Jersey public schools. The criteria for selecting study participants were being an immigrant, identified as a person of color, and being employed as a New Jersey public school teacher. Pseudonyms were used for all participants to protect their identities and their place of work.

Sampling Strategy

For the sampling strategy, purposeful sampling was used to identify immigrant teachers of color who taught in New Jersey public schools. The reason for employing purposeful sampling was because it had the potential of providing information needed, thus lending credibility to the study. I then employed snowballing/chain-referral sampling whereby participants picked other immigrant teachers of color that they knew of to be part of the research study (Patton, 2015). The participants answered the research questions and provided me with findings of the phenomena under study. Patton (2015) stated that purposeful sampling could “yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge” (p. 276). In addition, validation was important to the qualitative research because it added credibility to a research study and yielded “high-quality” findings (Patton, 2002). Snowballing/chain-referral sampling enabled identification of people who were good interview participants. I contacted immigrant

teachers of color that I knew. I then asked them if they knew other immigrant teachers of color who taught in New Jersey public schools that they could refer to me.

Data Collection Methods

The researcher was the key instrument in data collection (Creswell, 2014). Data was collected from immigrant teachers of color employed in New Jersey public schools. Interaction with participants and data was collected through one-on-one, open-ended, and in-depth interviews with eleven participants and elicitation materials with explicit permission from the participants. The in-depth interviews were conducted in the form of dialogues. According to Moustakas (1990), “dialogue is the preferred approach in that it aims toward encouraging expression, elucidation, and disclosure of the experience being investigated” (p. 47). For this study, the researcher employed such a technique to elicit accurate and comprehensive depictions of the invisibility of immigrant teachers of color.

Additionally, Moustakas (1990) suggested that researchers supplement the interview data with personal documents such as journals and diaries that were used to supplement the interview data. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by a secondary source, the Rev Transcription Service. One-on-one interviewing as a research methodology and process was a powerful method to gain insights into how immigrant teachers of color experienced the lack of visibility and belongingness in the New Jersey’s public education system. Interacting directly with each interviewee was a meaningful way to observe non-verbal responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This was important because I might not have experienced or observed non-verbal communication with a different approach, such as using technology as an interviewing method. Another reason

why interviewing was appropriate for this research study was the fact that the interviewees/participants were able to ask for the clarification of questions. In addition, the researcher was able to ask for clarification of responses, probed of responses, and asked follow-up questions as needed (Moustakas, 1990; Patton, 2002). As emphasized by Rubin and Rubin (1995), this was “the art of hearing data” during the interview process. Rubin and Rubin (1995) argued that to find out what others feel about their world is better captured through qualitative interviewing. For study participants to feel comfortable, interviews took place in their natural settings.

As far as validity and rigor of heuristic research is concerned, Moustakas (1990) argued, “Since heuristic inquiry utilizes qualitative methodology in arriving at themes and essences of experience, validity in heuristics is not a quantitative measurement that can be determined by correlations or statistics” (p. 32). The researcher aimed to maintain trustworthiness of the study findings instead of referring to the validity and reliability that quantitative research uses to assess rigor. In this case, credibility was measured by the meanings produced by depictions of the invisibility and feelings of belongingness experiences of the immigrant teachers of color. To achieve a valid depiction of immigrant teachers of color’ experiences with invisibility and feelings of belongingness in New Jersey public schools, the researcher continually checked, assessed, and judged the significance of data (Moustakas, 1990). The limitations of this study included the recruitment strategy of study participants. For example, snowballing strategy drew three immigrant teachers of color from Jamaica and two from India.

Instrumentation

Graphic Elicitation

Before the interview process, participants were asked to complete the graphic elicitation as interview stimuli (Crilly, Blackwell, & Clarkson, 2006). Employing graphic elicitation allowed the researcher to obtain information that may not have been available from questioning alone (Umoquit, Dobrow, Lemieux-Charles, Ritvo, Urbach, & Wodchis, 2008). Graphic elicitation involved diagrams or pictures that researchers drew to depict the phenomena under study and acted as a reference point for discussion (Umoquit et al., 2008). Moreover, graphic elicitation was important because it helped stimulate the thought process and participants' minds for the interview process. Participants were handed a blank piece of paper and were asked to draw or write in details about their experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey. The researcher made meaning of how immigrant teachers of color perceived and described their experiences of invisibility and feeling of belongingness in New Jersey public schools by asking questions, probing participants to obtain detailed meanings, interpreting, describing, and analyzing data. This was important because the validation of heuristic research is measured by how accurately and comprehensively the phenomena, experiences, themes, and meanings are captured and depicted (Moustakas, 1990).

Interviews

Interviews took place in the participant's natural setting. In-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted as tools for data collection and analysis. Each interview was audio recorded with permission and transcribed word for word by an academic research transcription service, Rev. First, I asked the two main research questions: (a) what is the

experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey public schools? and (b) how do immigrant teachers of color perceive and describe the experience of invisibility and feeling of belongingness in New Jersey public schools? Secondly, I presented the follow-up interview questions, see Appendix D.

Table 1

Interview Protocol

Research Questions	Part of Protocol: Interview Questions
RQ1. What is the experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey public schools?	<p>1. How long have you been a teacher? What education and certifications did you have from your country of origin? How much of that was accepted here and what further education was necessary here to get a teacher certification?</p> <p>2. What challenges and successes did you experience during the process of becoming a teacher in New Jersey?</p> <p>3. Describe your experiences of being an immigrant teacher of color. What would you say is most significant about that experience? What would you say is the most challenging aspect of such experience?</p>

Table 1 (continued)

Interview Protocol

Research Questions	Part of Protocol: Interview Questions
<p>RQ2. How do immigrant teachers of color perceive and describe the experience of invisibility and feeling of belongingness in New Jersey public schools?</p>	<p>Describe your induction process at your school? What do you enjoy about being a teacher at your school and what do you find challenging?</p> <p>How do educational leaders (formal and informal) support you?</p> <p>6. How is your culture represented and respected within the school?</p> <p>7. Describe the nature of the work environment and the role that you play in organizational processes (decision-making, etc.).</p> <p>8. What qualities do you think immigrant teachers of color bring to their school communities?</p> <p>9. What factors contribute to the success of an immigrant teacher of color?</p> <p>10. As an immigrant teacher of color, how do you describe your sense of belonging to your school community?</p>

Data Analysis

This study employed a heuristic inquiry as a tool for data analysis. Creswell (2014) stated that a heuristic process of phenomenological data analysis enters methodology of reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings. Thematic approach was also used for data analysis (Guest, 2012). Thematic data analysis approach allowed me to familiarize myself with the data, generate initial codes from the data, sort the codes, search for themes, and identify and name the themes (Guest, 2012). To ensure the truth value of the data, I employed member checking strategy whereby I had an ongoing dialogue with the participants regarding my interpretations of their lived experiences with visibility and belongingness (Creswell, 2014). Similarly, I employed Moustakas's (1990) phases of heuristic data analysis encompass:

Initial Engagement

The researchers reach deep inside themselves and examine their lived experiences with the phenomena. Moustakas (1990) stated, "Within each researcher exists a topic, theme, problem, or question that represents a critical interest and area of search. The task of the initial engagement is to discover an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important social meanings and personal compelling implications. This initial engagement invites self-dialogue, an inner search to discover the topic and question. During this process, one encounters the self, one's autobiography, and significant relationships within a social context" (p. 27). This is the stage where a researcher discovers the meaning of the phenomenon from within (Moustakas, 1990). The need to discover the meaning of my invisibility and sense of belonging from within

happened when I was a college student and then a teacher in one of the New Jersey public schools. It was at that time that I found the need to revisit my experience of what it meant to be an immigrant teacher of color in a New Jersey public school. Therefore, I had to first explore my own experience of visibility and belongingness in order to understand the experiences of others.

Immersion

The researcher lives the experiences and understands them, which comes naturally (Moustakas, 1990). Moustakas (1990) stated: Once the question is discovered and its terms defined and clarified the researcher lives the question in waking, sleeping, and even dream states. Everything in his or her life becomes crystallized around the question. The immersion process enables the researcher to come to be on intimate terms with the question—to live it and grow in knowledge and understanding of it” (p. 28). It was not until I decided to pursue my doctoral degree that the need to study my lived experience of being an immigrant teacher of color emerged. It brought me back to the painful experience of feeling lost and unwanted as I pursued my teaching career in 2001. I could feel the pain of being told that teaching was not the career I wanted to pursue because of my accent. I was frightened, angry, and in despair when I was told that parents would not want their children in my class for that reason.

Furthermore, I became consciously aware of my painful knowledge of working in a school community where I felt I did not belong. The school community had become disconnected from my heart. I started working as a substitute teacher in three schools within the same district. It seemed, as I was the only Black substitute teacher that roamed among the three schools, the place where I felt I was not welcomed and was treated like

an outsider. If God forbid, I forgot to wear my identification card, I was confronted in a manner that brought tears to my eyes. I was also watched intensely as if I was incapable of following lesson plans. My view of the outside world changed dramatically. Indeed, my doctoral studies led me to discover the darkness, ugly, and joy of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey. It also led me to explore and discover what other immigrant teachers of color experienced and it is, indeed, satisfying knowing that another way of knowing exists.

Incubation

The researcher avoids or retreats from the experience of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1990). When interviews with my co-researchers, ten immigrant teachers of color in New Jersey public schools, were completed, I gave myself a week to rest and not think about the phenomenon under study. This was the time that I began to understand the experience of belongingness and visibility that my co-researchers and I have had. Our need to belong and be visible in our teaching profession and school communities was created to achieve wholeness of being and belongingness.

Illumination

The researcher modifies the known experience with the phenomena to accommodate the new knowledge, experience, interpretations, or new meanings (Moustakas, 1990). This process happens unconsciously and unplanned. It is more of an “aha” moment or experience and transforms the researcher on a deeper new level of understanding the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). Researching and exploring what other immigrant teachers of color have experienced has transformed my understanding of

my own lived experience of visibility and sense of belonging in the teaching profession to the new level.

Explication

The researcher reflects on new themes, meanings, and discovery (Moustakas, 1990). As a researcher, this phase allowed me to reflect on the new knowledge I gained from my research participants.

Creative Synthesis

The researcher analyzes data into patterns and relationships to envision the whole picture of the phenomena under study. Furthermore, the researcher explores new levels of understanding (Moustakas, 1990). The creative synthesis allowed me to fully see an entire picture of what it means to be an immigrant teacher of color in a New Jersey public school.

Moustakas (1990) posited, “From the beginning and throughout an investigation, heuristic research involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration” (p. 11). Self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery guided me as I searched for deeper meaning of the phenomenon in question.

Trustworthiness

To ensure that my work was trustworthy, I used Guba and Lincoln’s (1999) standards for measuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research. The standards are: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. I was in the truth of my research findings, genuinely captured my participants’ stories, and did not allow myself to be biased in any way. In addition, I sought honesty from my participants (Guba

& Lincoln, 1999). Data collection only involved participants who were willing to participate in the study and contribute to the body of knowledge. I then reached out to my study participants (member checking) to review my findings and provide clarifications or feedback.

Role of Researcher

Moustakas (1994) described the heuristic process in phenomenological analyses as being a process in which the researcher is immersed and involved in the world of experience. My personal experiences with invisibility and lack of belonging as an immigrant teacher of color teaching in a New Jersey public school played a role in this research. This research was part of my commitment and my desire to champion social justice and diversity, and to advocate for equitable treatment, especially the “others”, whose voices may be silenced and excluded in the American narratives. My story aimed to bring awareness to the invisibility challenges such as discrimination and prejudice, alienation, lack of belongingness, and isolation that immigrant teachers of color endure in the American school system. It was a story about “others”, the marginalized, and those who may feel invisible and forgotten. It was also a story that would inspire policy change and inform educational practices so that the needs of our diverse students could be met.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in research are critical. Carrying out qualitative research requires an investigator to strive to abide by professional ethical standards and take into consideration research participants’ safety. I carried out my research professionally with honesty and integrity. Furthermore, I acted in a trustworthy and responsible manner by

ensuring that my participants were not harmed in any way during the research process. This included treating my participants with respect and being straight forward with them (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Additionally, I ensured that I provided the participants with the purpose of the study and gained all necessary permissions to conduct the research. Through the consent form, participants were made aware of the study purpose and goals, as well as details of how data would be collected and interpreted (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003). In addition, participants were briefed on how their data collected would contribute to the study.

I adhered to the ethical aspects of all research protocols, such as the Institutional Review Board (IRB), as stipulated by my institution. This included following written procedures for conducting research and reporting findings. Finally, I ensure the protection of the confidentiality of all my research participants. To maintain anonymity and make participants comfortable, their real names and places of work were not used or disclosed. Confidentiality of participants was maintained through the use of aliases. This was clearly stated prior to signing the consent form and conducting interviews. Most importantly, participation in this research study was voluntary. Participants chose whether or not to they felt comfortable to participate.

I had completed the Collaboration Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), human subjects training program. I had also submitted an electronic IRB application. This included research protocols, consent forms, and other necessary information. Throughout the research process, I openly disclosed the purpose of my research and made every effort to respect the research participants and their well-being (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Conclusion

Chapter Three focused on the methodology used in this study. The purpose of the study and the research questions were reiterated in this chapter. It also encompassed discussion of the researcher's decision to use a heuristic phenomenological study to understand the immigrant teachers of color' experiences with invisibility and their feelings of belongingness in New Jersey public schools. Chapter Four presents the data collected and the resulting interpretation and analysis of the data of this phenomenological qualitative study.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this qualitative, heuristic, phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color and explore their sense of visibility and belongingness in the New Jersey public schools. The goal of this study was to understand their struggles and perseverance as they navigated America's education system. The study also aimed to understand the numerous obstacles immigrant teachers of color faced due to cultural and language barriers. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What is the experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey public schools?
2. How do immigrant teachers of color perceive and describe the experience of invisibility and feelings of belongingness in New Jersey public schools?

Eleven immigrant teachers of color serving in New Jersey public schools were asked to participate in this study. All eleven immigrant teachers of color have struggled with their visibility in the school context and lack of belongingness in their daily practices.

Additionally, my own experiences are included in the findings. This chapter provides the background information of the eleven participants based on interviews and a synthesis of the findings.

Douglass and Moustakas (as cited in Hiles, 2001) defined heuristic research as a search for the discovery of meaning and essence in significant human experience.

Understanding the meaning of the participants' lived experience of the phenomenon was the basis of this phenomenological data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, depicting the

essence of what it means to be an immigrant teacher of color in the New Jersey public schools is discussed in this chapter.

According to Moustakas (1990), what is important to the process of heuristic analysis is the “comprehensive knowledge of all materials for each participant and for the group of participants collectively” (p. 49). This involves researchers immersing inside the data and reaching deep inside themselves to examine their lived experiences with the phenomenon. Furthermore, it involves avoiding or retreating from the experience of the phenomenon under study. The process of organizing and analyzing the heuristic data took me weeks before themes emerged. This was in line with Moustakas’s (1990) process of heuristic data analysis for themes and depictions of the experience and phenomenon under study, which could take months to be completed.

Methodological Changes

In chapter 3, I stated that I would use data from graphic elicitation, diaries, and personal journals. However, those were not used during data collection because they did not provide useful data. Furthermore, I used thematic data analysis to supplement Moustakas’s (1990) analysis. A thematic approach was useful for data analysis because it allowed me to portray my findings in a meaningful way.

Table 2

Characteristics of Participants

Participants	Gender	Grade Level /Subject Taught	Country of Origin	Geographic Location
Señor P	M	ESL	Venezuela	Central NJ
Anasua	F	ESL	India	Northern NJ
Sandra	F	4	Jamaica	Southern NJ
Simone	F	K	Jamaica	Northern NJ
Reggae Teacher	F	Spanish	Jamaica	Northern NJ
Ambreen	F	ESL	Pakistan	Northern NJ
Sri	F	ESL	India	Northern NJ
Kalu	F	2	Kenya	Central NJ
Kay	F	Pre-K	Zimbabwe	Southern NJ
Aline	F	K	Haiti	Northern NJ
Mirjam	F	3	Namibia	Southern NJ

Participants' Descriptions

My fellow immigrant teachers of color and co-researchers investigated what it means to be an immigrant teacher of color in a New Jersey public school. Below is a brief description of each participant as it relates to their gender, country of origin, grade level or subject taught, and geographical locations.

Señor P

Señor P is an immigrant teacher from Venezuela. He considered himself a product of multiculturalism. His mother was of Puerto Rican-Venezuelan descent, while his father was of Italian descent. Although Señor P possessed a business marketing degree from Venezuela and worked in the business world, he wanted to become a teacher. After arriving in America, he completed the Alternate Route Teaching Certification Program, a non-traditional teacher preparation program, and earned his K-5 certification in ESL bilingual education. He also earned a master's degree in bilingual education. Señor P had seven years of teaching experience in an urban school district located in central New Jersey.

Anasua

Anasua is an immigrant teacher from India. She held a master's degree in archeology and Indian history from India and had been a high school history teacher there. When Anasua's husband's job moved them to New Jersey, it opened up a new chapter for her. She used that opportunity to go back to school and earned her second master's degree in English as a Second Language (ESL). Anasua has been a bilingual teacher for 11 years in an urban school district in northern New Jersey.

Sandra

Sandra is an immigrant teacher from Jamaica. She left Jamaica after graduating from high school. Sandra worked entry-level jobs in corporate America, while enrolled in job training courses. She attended community college in America and earned an associate degree in Humanities/Social Science. After graduating, Sandra enrolled in a four-year university and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education with

a Special Education Endorsement K-5, and English literature. Sandra has been teaching for six years and has served full-time and tenured in an urban school district in northern New Jersey.

Simone

Simone is an immigrant teacher from Jamaica. She was 13 years old when she came to the United States of America and was placed in the eighth grade. She obtained her teaching certifications here. Simone was encouraged by the New Jersey Department of Education to become an American citizen within three years of having her teaching license and certification. She was told that if she did not become a citizen, the State of New Jersey would revoke her certification after its expiration date. Simone has been teaching for 15 years in an urban school district in southern New Jersey.

Reggae Teacher

Reggae Teacher is an immigrant from Jamaica who was certified to teach Spanish and English as a Second Language in Jamaica. Her Spanish certification from Jamaica was accepted to teach middle school but not high school in America. Reggae Teacher decided to go back to school and completed 21 credits to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) through the Alternate Route Teaching Certification Program. Reggae Teacher has approximately 20 years of teaching experience in an urban school district in northern New Jersey.

Ambreen

Ambreen is an immigrant teacher from Pakistan. She has 20 years of experience, teaching in both Pakistani and American schools. After completing two years of college in Pakistan, she worked as an elementary art teacher. Later, she completed a graduate

degree in South Asian History. Ambreen followed her husband (a new job) to New Jersey. After arriving, she enrolled in a Master of Arts in Teaching Program at a university in New Jersey. All of her teaching credentials she obtained from a college and university in Pakistan were accepted here. Ambreen has been a teacher for eight years in an urban school district in northern New Jersey.

Sri

Sri is an immigrant teacher from India. She came to America in 1982. Although Sri had a master's degree in Education from India, which was accepted by the State of New Jersey, she further earned a master's degree in Bilingual Education in the United States to ensure that she had proper qualifications. Sri taught fourth-grade for nine years and fifth-grade for 10 years as a bilingual teacher and taught for six years as an English as a Second Language teacher in an urban school district in northern New Jersey.

Kalu

Kalu is an immigrant teacher from Kenya. She came to America as a young adult. Although Kalu had a teaching degree from Kenya, she earned an additional teaching degree in Early Childhood Education and became certified to teach in New Jersey. Additionally, Kalu earned a master's degree in Early Childhood Education. She taught first grade for three years and is currently a fourth-grade teacher with 11 years of experience in an urban school district in central New Jersey.

Kay

Kay is an immigrant teacher from Zimbabwe. She came to America with a high school diploma and was required to earn a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) to qualify for college. Kay studied and earned a degree in Tourism and Hospitality

Management. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree and a master's degree in Early Childhood Education. Before becoming a teacher, Kay volunteered at the Convention and Visitors Bureau. Additionally, she worked in a hotel performing managerial duties. Although tourism and hospitality were her passion, she could not stay longer because of a hiring freeze. Kay decided to pursue teaching, and after she completed her master's degree, she became a substitute teacher and a counselor. Currently, Kay is a Pre-K teacher in a rural school district in southern New Jersey.

Aline

Aline is an immigrant teacher from Haiti. She came to America at 16 years old. After she graduated from high school, she received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Later, she obtained a Pre-K through 3rd-grade certification. Additionally, she earned a master's degree in Early Childhood Education. She has 17 years of experience teaching in an urban school district in northern New Jersey.

Mirjam

I am an immigrant teacher from Namibia. I immigrated to America in 2001, certified to teach elementary (K-5) and social science (Grades 5-10) in Namibia. When I came to the United States of America, I went back to school to become certified as a teacher in New Jersey. Only nine credits were awarded for my teacher training in Namibia. I earned a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Psychology, master's degree in Reading and Mathematics, and I am currently a doctoral candidate at Rowan University. I am currently in my ninth year of teaching in a rural school district in southern New Jersey.

Findings

Several significant findings emerged through the process of the heuristic data analysis, intended to discover the experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in the New Jersey public schools. The thematic approach was used to analyze interview data and identifying themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, 2012). Five themes were developed that captured the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color, their visibility, and sense of belonging in the New Jersey public schools. The five themes were: (1) fitting in to belong, (2) discrimination and stereotyping, (3) proving oneself, (4) shoulder to lean on, and (5) resilience. Each theme is discussed separately and supported with quotes from interview transcripts. Data is provided that elucidates the themes further.

Factors Impacting Belongingness

Fitting In To Belong

There are commonalities in the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color. First, the immigrant teachers of color interviewed for this study collectively expressed the challenge of trying to fit in with American society. To participants, fitting in to belong did not mean changing their identity, but to be included and to feel that they belonged in their school communities. Coming from different cultures, immigrant teachers of color expressed how their cultural differences, identities, and languages set them apart from other teachers. Many immigrant teachers of color interviewed expressed how cultural difference made fitting in challenging.

You know socially you're not part of the fabric. The biggest problem is...you don't fit in. I started as a substitute teacher. It's very difficult to break into the

system because it's just predominantly White, even though the school district has a very large Indian student population. It is just the daily red tape. Every day you're picking up and you're trying to go with the system, trying to kind of fit in. So, I think that's the biggest challenge because you're always on your toes. You're always on your guard. You're not born into the system. You aren't part of them. You're almost an alien, always. (Anasua)

Anasua highlighted a challenge of trying to fit into the system, which many immigrant teachers of color in this study considered as a contributing factor to their sense of belonging. Thus, they try hard to make themselves fit in.

The findings show that some of the participants felt that fitting in was a matter of personal choice, even though they had a desire to be embraced and have a sense of belonging in their school communities.

The administrators and some staff members at my school appear to be ignorant about the fact that I have similar qualifications and experiences or that I can contribute to vital areas of the school. People used to ask me a lot of questions to figure out my educational background. Some acted as if I am from Mars while the African-Americans and some Hispanics were warm, helpful and friendly. I have come to terms with the fact that most of my colleagues will never embrace me as equal or valuable, but my sense of belonging isn't dependent on their opinions, but on the impact that I make on my students' growth and development. I socialize with those who embrace me, and I stay away from those who don't. (Reggae Teacher)

Reggae Teacher indicated that fitting in is not what drives her. To Reggae Teacher, fitting in is about contributing to students' growth and development and less about what other people think of her and what she brings to the school community.

Cultural misunderstanding. Participants noted that cultural misunderstanding affected how others viewed them, which could affect their chance of becoming employed as teachers or fitting in. The cultural misunderstanding was described by some participants as one of the reasons it took them longer to secure teaching jobs. Some immigrant teachers attributed the challenge of finding a teaching job due to their ethnic and racial characteristics and identities, and other assumptions regarding English proficiency.

I was faced with many difficulties in finding a teaching job. I think many employers were worried that my accent could get in the way of teaching young children. I'll never forget my first day working with children; they were all so fascinated with my voice and ethnic background. It totally helped me gain my confidence in my accent and I now know that there's no reason for it to hold me back. (Kalu)

Although this participant perceived having an accent as a contributing factor for her lack of fitting in and the difficulties of securing a teaching job, she seemed to be confident and content with her accent because of the way her students reacted to it and how they were fascinated by her ethnic background.

Other immigrant teachers of color in this study perceived the challenge of fitting in due to resistance from their coworkers, causing them to feel like outsiders. Their

perception of feeling like outsiders enhanced the understanding of their visibility and sense of belonging.

Being a part of the multiculturalism makes me feel like an outsider because I cannot relate to the mentality of what categories one falls under. Well, the biggest challenge that I had is that although the administrators fully embrace what I do, I don't have the authority to bring about change. I have their permission to bring my magical touch but, I do get resistance from the teachers in the union. This year for Hispanic Heritage Month, I was in charge of my building and somebody filed a complaint against me. I always give people the benefit of the doubt. She was racist, you know, but I don't think that her core was racist. I don't think she knows any better. But when I would come into her classroom to get her involved in the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration, she was very reluctant to the point that she actually went to the union to prevent me from coming in. Then what I found at that point, was that the administration couldn't really do anything about it. They continued to embrace the celebration, but they told me that maybe I'm getting too, you know... I'm getting too excited. I'm getting too passionate. And we have to be careful. Think about it, we always have to find that fine line.

(Señor P)

The story of this participant highlights the challenge of finding a fine line to fitting in. The above excerpts seem to indicate that immigrant teachers of color are perceived as too passionate about advocating for diversity and social justice.

Not fully integrating immigrant teachers of color into the school community supported participants' feelings of both lack of visibility and belongingness, hence the need to fit in.

My culture is not represented as my principal insists that she isn't running a school that focuses on any specific culture. Therefore, we don't celebrate cultures. I am one of five immigrant teachers at my school, but the only one from my country. I feel invaluable because I am not American by birth, disrespected by students and staff, exempted from committees, and underutilized as I am always asked to substitute whenever my colleagues are absent. (Reggae Teacher)

The findings seemed to suggest that the desire to fit in originated from the idea that being an immigrant teacher of color was viewed as different and unwelcomed. The sense of belonging was absent, ignored; hence the participants explained that they felt isolated.

I wanted to work at an elementary school. Teachers in that school were never used to seeing an Indian teacher at all. So, they looked at me like some foreign object had landed here, but I was comfortable in my own skin, and I knew that I will have to work with my students very hard to make my place in the school.

But I was not welcomed by half of the teachers. (Sri)

Other immigrant teachers of color perceived fitting in with competence and work ethics, which many participants equated to the feeling of being unwelcomed or unwanted in their school community. Hence, they do not feel a sense of belonging.

As an immigrant teacher of color who had just started teaching, I had felt that my American colleagues thought that I was less competent based on the feedback that I received. During grade level meetings, others' suggestions would be more

acceptable than my suggestions. This would be done in a subtle way. The most important aspect of that experience is that people really think that you are not intelligent enough to understand the meaning of their comments and gestures. I would say the most challenging of that experience is to conduct yourself in a professional manner and not allowing yourself to be affected by others' perception of yourself. (Aline)

Similarly, I (Mirjam) stated:

I don't always feel a sense of belonging in my school community, nor do I feel comfortable with some of my colleagues because of how they treat me, both consciously or unconsciously. For example, the way I was treated by many of my colleagues when I first started made me think that my presence threatened them; hence, I was looked upon as an intruder. I endured ignorant and rude comments, and still do. Some people also doubted me, and my credentials were questioned. I was perceived as someone who couldn't contribute to decision-making. I had to prove that I was worthy of my spot in the educational system. Even though I am now quite close with some of my colleagues, there is always a thought in the back of my mind that is constantly reminding me of the evident differences between us. Now that I have found my voice, I am not afraid to question things or question people's actions because I believe in social justice.

Participants' descriptions appeared to reveal the challenges of trying to fit in or break into a system that is viewed unwelcoming to immigrant teachers of color. They demonstrated through their experiences that they wanted to be included and feel that they belonged in their school communities.

Accepting oneself. The need to fit in, from one participant's view, was not to change the perspectives of others, but to socialize with those who embraced differences. Other immigrant teachers of color appreciated the fact that they were different and that it is completely acceptable to be different.

One day I feel that when people recognize our strengths and our unique talents, then I feel like I am on the same page as they are. But I think it's so important that we understand that we are different, we are unique. But thank God that you are a different type of American, so the moment that I think that other people realize that, the monolingual students, the monolingual teachers... that would be the day when I feel that we're in a good place. And I would feel that I am part of a movement. But it just depends. When people feel threatened by your differences, by the level of your analytical levels, those are the days when they make you feel like you're an outsider. When they are unfamiliar with your language and with your vision, that's the day that they make you feel like you don't belong. (Señor P)

This participant described the challenge of fitting in as a result of people feeling threatened by his differences, hence he felt like an outsider.

Other participants perceived their culture being underrepresented in their school communities, yet they still felt confident and hopeful. Some perceived the lack of fitting in as an opportunity to embrace other cultures and also as an impetus for advocating for diversity and social justice.

My culture is not obviously represented in my school. However, as an immigrant, I naturally embrace diversity. First, I immerse myself in the American culture. I

live it fully in order to understand it. By respecting, understanding, and teaching the American culture with ease, it made it easier for me to bring my culture, along with every other culture that is represented in my classroom. I am proud of my culture and who I am, and as such, I take the position that all people should embrace and love their individual culture, while being opening to learning about other cultures. Because I feel so passionate about my position, I am credited by the administration for highlighting our 69% Hispanic population's culture and mine. (Sandra)

Here, Sandra highlighted the importance of flexibility, embracing one's culture, and accepting people who were different because diversity matters.

Discrimination and Stereotyping

Participants perceived being different as an opportunity for others to discriminate against them, put them in a box, and make assumptions and/or have misconceptions about them. Additionally, they perceived unfair treatment directed toward them as discrimination; hence, they felt stereotyped or stigmatized.

The moment one sees your face, it's like ... so, say I come from India, so pretty much I get a lot of questions, just curiosity about Indians. Like, 'Oh, did you have an arranged marriage?' I'm like no ... I did not. Sometimes people would say, 'Oh, you speak English pretty well'. In a sense, you are almost put in a box and stereotyped, but I think that once people get to know you, and once you make that effort to let them know you, I think it goes away, but there is definitely stereotyping. (Anasua)

This participant perceived being put in a box as a result of others being curious about her, hence she believed that giving others a chance to get to know you could help curb stereotyping and ignorance.

Some immigrant teachers of color felt that the American society stereotyped them and put them in a box because they were different and did not fit the norm. Señor P explained, “I would like for people who stereotype immigrants to put themselves in our shoes so that they know the struggles we deal with and what it feels like to not be the norm. Hopefully, that would provide them with enormous opportunities to learn and grow.” Despite the feeling of being stereotyped, this participant believed that once people put themselves in immigrant teachers’ shoes they will understand their struggles and what it is like to be different.

There was a consensus among immigrant teachers of color of how they perceived discrimination. Many felt that they were discriminated against and stereotyped because of their accents. Sri contended, “I felt they could just tell by my accent even on the phone that I am from a different country and wonder how I will be able to teach the regular American student.” Other immigrant teachers of color appeared to not allow their accents and lack of belonging to get in their way of fulfilling their teaching jobs and success. Reggae Teacher emphasized, “Personally, my drive to succeed and excel as an educator contributes to my success. I utilize the challenges and setbacks as a means of proving my doubters wrong and focusing on my goals and objectives.” Setbacks did not appear to discourage immigrant teachers of color; hence, they forged forward and stuck to the purpose of what initially brought them to the teaching profession.

In this study, immigrant teachers of color expressed the need for people to recognize the challenges they experienced in their daily professional practices. They believed that what mattered to them is that people acknowledge their differences and respect them as teachers and human beings.

There were times when I felt dumb. When I went to university to earn my ESL bilingual certification, I was the only immigrant teacher and older. Everybody else was young, usually White girls. When we had to break into groups nobody wanted to work with me because they felt that I was dumb and unintelligent because I had an accent. But then I have gotten away with things because I have an accent. I can't change the fact that I have an accent. And I cannot change the way that people see me or feel about me because I have an accent. I cannot change that. But I can change what I do in those situations. In Venezuela, having an accent is equated to being multilingual, so to us if somebody has an accent is a sign of surviving, and thinking outside the box. So, coming to a new land and embracing new things is really hard for me but I learned to react in a positive way. (Señor P)

This immigrant teacher of color believed that his accent influenced how he was perceived and considered as unintelligent, even though he learned the English language in six months. He pointed out an interesting difference of how accent is equated to being dumb and unintelligent in America versus accent being equated to survival skills and intelligent in his country of origin. Hence, he believed that reacting positively to situations was the one thing he had control over.

Prejudice. Other participants felt differently about discrimination and the challenges they faced as immigrant teachers of color. Some felt that being an immigrant teacher of color went beyond this.

The challenges of being a foreigner were cloaked in the obvious fact that I am a woman of color. I believe people see my color before they realize that I am an immigrant. Once they realize that I am an immigrant from Jamaica, they say, ‘But you don’t sound Jamaican.’ On many occasions, I have had to explain that I am first a Jamaican, a Black woman, and then a naturalized citizen of the United States. I further explain that I do not need to fit nicely in the categories created by the United States. To say I am an African-American would mean that I am denying my Jamaican heritage. The most significant part of this experience is encountering people, time and time again, who simply believe that foreigners or immigrants do not speak or understand the English language. Sometimes, out of frustration, I tell them, ‘Not only do I speak and understand English, I speak British English’, which is slightly different from American English. As such, I may say things differently, but by no means does it mean that I am a nitwit.
(Sandra).

Sandra amplified the struggle of discrimination surrounding many immigrant teachers of color in this study with the perception of being viewed as different and perhaps not representing where she came from accurately due to her accent.

Some immigrant teachers of color felt less than desirable within their school communities because they were perceived as incompetent due to their cultural

differences. They felt that the labels put them in a box, which served as a sign of discrimination.

I have also experienced being prejudiced due to social and cultural differences. I felt discriminated because my school community made me feel as though my work wasn't good enough, my classroom wasn't setup good enough, or that my kids were not disciplined enough. Even though the majority of parents showed their appreciation, there were some who were skeptical of having their kids placed in my class because I was black and African. One time my boss was reminding all the teachers to update their profiles, education-wise, and she said that she was aware that no one had or was doing a master's degree. She was shocked when I let her know that I had completed my master's degree. I have always been a humble person who does not brag, which has got something to do with my culture as well. (Kay)

Although this participant felt prejudice was the root of their views that others were incompetent, she refused to allow people make her feel less desired because of the support she received from the parents. Other participants had similar views:

Being an immigrant teacher of color in my school district, my points of view are never respected by my colleagues. I may raise a good point about a topic under discussion, but nobody validates what I have to say. However, if someone else or let's say a White teacher brings up the same point, then it becomes valid.

Sometimes my fellow educators make gestures or gossip about me as if I am stupid to hear what they are saying or understand their gestures. (Kalu)

This participant showed the danger of the assumptions that many immigrant teachers of color fell under due to preconceived stereotypes associated with them. Stereotypes made it difficult for immigrant teachers of color in this study to feel appreciated and fully confident in their teaching abilities. Although many times their peers stereotyped subconsciously, they ultimately had discriminatory factors, as it often made them feel as if they were not equal to or belonged in their communities. It is clear that immigrant teachers of color in this study wanted discriminatory practices to end. They wanted to be accepted, visible, and have a sense of belonging.

Proving Oneself

According to the participants in this study, each agreed that they faced adversity and the lack of professional support. Some immigrant teachers of color in this study discussed the feeling of having to prove themselves. Other immigrant teachers of color shared the way in which their existence was ignored, treated differently, and offered less support because of their physical characteristics. Reggae Teacher agreed, “My work environment is tense. We are watched continuously on cameras, so the atmosphere is always tense. Also, the segregation of races is quite evident as some races get all the support they need, and others don’t.” Most immigrant teachers of color in this study felt that racial segregation dictated who gets support and who does not. Sandra shared:

On many occasions, my presence was overlooked. I could be in a room and had a sense of being ignored until I spoke. Usually when I speak, after much observation, I try to represent myself and my interest with caution. While I am not fearful in any way, I always feel as though I must be clear and concise for fear of not being taken seriously. For example, when I reported for my first day of

student teaching, my cooperating teacher stated, ‘When I heard that you are from Jamaica, I thought you couldn’t speak English, but you speak English nicely.

You also seem to know a lot about America.’ My first impression of my cooperating teacher was lukewarm at best, so I easily ignored her. My successes during the process of becoming a teacher in New Jersey became experiences of having to always prove myself. Once my professors/supervisors realized that I was fully capable of being in their institutions, I gained the respect of many.

This participant equated being put in a box because her presence and sense of being were ignored. Interestingly, she acknowledged that proving herself led to her success and helped her gain respect in her school community.

Lack of support and the constant need of proving themselves resonated among all immigrant teachers of color in this study. Some immigrant teachers of color expressed how they suffered silently due to lack of support by their school leaders, even though they were knowledgeable. Reggae Teacher contended, “Despite being young, I have a wealth of experience teaching in several countries and at various levels, but my experiences are varied and applicable. However, my principal undermines even my ESL strategies for improving students’ skills, although they are research-based that are taught at PDs.” Many immigrant teachers of color echoed similar feelings. Anasua shared, “We (immigrant teachers) work really hard to prove ourselves. So, I think those are really strong qualities we have.” Other participants expressed their lack of support from their school leaders. Reggae Teacher expressed, “My principal only utilizes me when they require coverage for ‘tough’ classes. They do not interact with me much unless they need my professional input.” This participant considered her school leaders’ action unfair

because she felt that they took advantage of her when it was convenient to them.

Immigrant teachers of color in this study described that their superiors often utilized the participants' strengths in a way that only benefited them, and not the participants.

Proving themselves is an example of adversity and the lack of professional support they expressed.

A Shoulder to Lean On

Although the participants expressed their dissatisfaction of how they were treated by the predominant society, they felt that they became a "shoulder" for students and parents of color when support was needed because they could relate to them. Anasua stressed, "My biggest strength is that I am multilingual and a bilingual teacher, so I can speak to my students in their native language. I feel I can identify and connect with them. I can connect with immigrant parents too. Parents feel comfortable coming in and talking to me." Anasua posited that, often, parents did not speak English, so they reached out to her. Ambreen contended, "There were a few Muslim high school students that I saw who used to struggle with identity and integration with whitewash American culture. They used to congregate around me more and we had created our own club to hang out after school." The participants expressed the important role they play in their students' education because of the diversity they bring to their school community.

A captivating finding that resonated with many immigrant teachers of color who participated in this study was their ability to build a personal connection with students of color.

The biggest quality I see is that my students in the whole school feel very happy seeing me. Just my look is very comforting to them. It gives them a sense of

belonging that there is a teacher who looks like them. Before I came into the school... like 10 years ago, immigrant kids were not eating food they brought from home. They were hiding it because they were afraid of being teased by other kids. But since I came, they open their food proudly, and eat it. I found a way to connect with them. I used to go tease them in the cafeteria, 'If you're not eating your food, I will eat all of it.' So now they just joke, 'She's coming, and she'll eat our food. We better eat it.' Recently, an immigrant student was sent back to Ecuador because of new immigration policies. Her whole family is dependent on me. I believe that my student will come back because she is a citizen of the earth. She was born here, and I told her before she left that once she becomes an adult, she'll come back to County College and I'll take care of her.

(Sri)

This participant displayed a special connection with students of color and exhibits empathy toward them. Sri was able to connect and interact with students of color in a way that other teachers may not be able to. This shows that immigrant teachers often work together with students of color to help each other feel a sense of acceptance and belonging.

Similarly, other participants in this study perceived lack of teacher diversity as a challenge for students of color.

A lot of my peers are not teachers of color. So, the students are not being represented by the staff. Eighty percent of our student population is Hispanic, but there are only two teachers that speak Spanish. So, I think that's where the

disconnection is. And unfortunately, I feel like you almost have to be one of them to feel their pain and to feel their challenges. (Señor P)

This participant stressed the need for teacher diversity to break the disconnection among students and teachers.

Unique connections. Other participants felt that working with minority parents solidified their sense of belonging. Thus, immigrant teachers of color perceived themselves as a shoulder for students and parents of color to lean on because they could connect and identify with them.

Most of these parents show their appreciation for what I do on a daily basis. I can see in their eyes that they are happy that I am in this school because they identify with me. There will always be a few that remind you of your color and immigration status, but for the reasons mentioned above, I have a genuine sense of belonging in my school. (Sandra)

Through the participant 's responses, it appeared as though the immigrant teachers of color could empathize with the immigrant parents because many of their experiences were similar. Simone concurred, “When I meet Jamaican parents, I let them know I’m Jamaican, too and I’m watching out for your child. When I hear an accent, I introduce myself to them and let them know I’m also from the Islands. We bond on that.” This participant appeared to suggest that students and parents of color relate to her because of the “bond”, which could help them feel a sense of belonging in their school community.

Immigrant teachers of color in this study agreed that growing up in a different world had given them a wider vision and practical thinking skills that maximized their view of the world, qualities that may benefit students of color.

Growing up in Venezuela, I look at a problem with multiple lenses and solutions. It helps me find my voice and place in a culture that is not, unfortunately, inviting to a degree. It also provided me with opportunities to grow as an individual. Having to learn a new language has actually equipped me with better spelling skills, both in English and my own language. My vocabulary has improved in Spanish because I had to learn English. It just makes me a well-rounded individual that is ready for the global society that we face. (Señor P)

Sandra noted:

Immigrant teachers of color bring a plethora of qualities to their school communities. They have an insatiable appetite for learning and a different level of expectation regarding respect and discipline. Immigrant teachers of color focus on education being a priority. They raise the bar and encourage students to rise to the higher level. There is also a greater sense of compassion and empathy for students who have lower socio-economic backgrounds or for students from the disenfranchised groups. They understand the various factors that play a role in students' success or failure. Immigrant teachers have a different foundation in education that puts them in a unique position. Many have more than one system of educational skill set, which allows them to see the world through different lenses. Because immigrant teachers of color have more to prove, I believe they enter the profession armed with a skill set that surpasses some of their colleagues. I, for one, take the time to learn more about other people's culture in order to meet the needs of my curious students. When my students ask questions, I should have some idea to help feed their curiosity and keep things alive in my classroom.

I (Mirjam) concurred:

Growing up in Namibia under the apartheid of the South African government gave me a different perspective that allowed me to understand the value of education. The quality of education and allowed subjects in the apartheid education system was very limited. That experience ignited my passion for learning, tolerance, and compassion. It also allowed me to recognize a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity, understand the challenges that students of color may endure, and relate to families with different dynamics regardless of racial backgrounds.

These participants perceived that being immigrant teachers of color contributed to the positive relationships that they had with their students and parents because of their unique qualities and contributions they bring to their school communities.

Being a voice and protector. Moreover, participants perceived themselves as a great addition to their school communities. They further stressed that building positive relationships with students, especially students of color, were vital because they understood them and acted as their forefront of protection. To demonstrate this understanding, Aline, Reggae Teacher, and Simone shared their thoughts:

Immigrant teachers of color bring to their school communities background experiences that can help the school staff to have a better understanding of the students that are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

Immigrant teachers can be seen as role models for students with the cultural/linguistic background. They can be a voice for immigrant students and their parents within the school. Immigrant teachers of color can be successful if

they feel accepted and respected for who they are and not being perceived as an incompetent. (Aline)

Simone noted:

I feel I'm a great addition to this community because it's a diverse community and there are lots of immigrants. For me, I feel at home. I put myself in a community with people who are just like me. And I did that intentionally. Because I don't want children, immigrant children, to ever feel like how I felt. For me, when I first came to this country, I was bullied. In 8th grade and all through high school because of my accent. To this day, I'm 46 years old, I still have that after effect of the bullying that happened for five years. Because of that, I chose to be in a setting, if there are immigrant children, that I can understand them, and I can be a forefront of protection. That's why I choose to work around African Americans students because I don't want anybody else from another country to go through what I went through. It was horrible. For me, I think, I'm just this person that's looking out for the kids from other countries. I'm surprised I didn't become an ESL teacher. But, I'm just always looking out. When I spot an immigrant ... and we get them here at my school, in particular. This is a big immigrant community. We get Africans. We get a lot of Liberian kids, a lot of Jamaican kids, and a lot of Nigerian kids. Once I spot them, and I know them, I want them to feel comfortable being here because I don't want them to ever go through what I went through. I cried every single day. I wanted to kill myself. Honestly, I wanted to die. The sad part is that it was my own people. It was students of color that were bullying me and teasing me. I was like, 'Wait, you're supposed to be my friends'.

The White kids liked me. They were the ones who embraced me, who were my friends, and who did things with me.

Simone expressed an interesting view of why she considered herself a great addition to her school community. She perceived the pain and anguish she felt when she was bullied as an immigrant student. Hence, she felt the desire to protect and defend students of color.

In essence, it appeared that immigrant teachers of color in this study placed the safety of their students at the forefront and the compassion they showed toward students seems to give them a sense of belonging.

As an immigrant teacher of color, I always feel a sense of belonging when I notice the difference that I am making in my students. If I have happy children that are grasping my lessons and are also contributing in the classroom rules and organization, then I feel like I belong in my school community. It motivates me more to continue making a difference in the young leaders of tomorrow. My students of color always feel a sense of belonging around me because I let them know that they are beautiful, intelligent, and that they matter. (Kay)

This immigrant teacher of color appeared to have a mindfulness of what it meant to be discriminated against to a deeper sense of responsibility to protect others. Kalu contended, “I look out for students of color who seem to be struggling to fit in, or who are labeled as troublemakers by my fellow teachers. It appears as some of my colleagues pay more attention to students of color and ignore troublesome White students.” The sense of responsibility was sensed when the participants vowed to help others find their sense of belonging, hence they perceived themselves as a shoulder for students to lean on.

It became clear that immigrant teachers of color in this study played a role in their students' sense of belonging. They, therefore, wanted to have a sense of visibility and belongingness in their school communities because of their contributions and commitment to student learning and development.

Resilience

The study participants showed an ability to adapt to challenges in the face of social and professional struggles, which some considered as a contributing factor to their sense of belongingness.

Being an educator is a matter of being. It's not a matter of a job. Take opportunities throughout the school day and lend a helping hand to those who need it the most. I'm involved in so many after-school activities. I have so many teachable moments. I take those opportunities that are related to life experiences- ...and are relevant to learning. I challenge my students to apply what they are learning to help them navigate the challenges that they may face. (Señor P)

This participant exemplified resilience in a unique approach. He stressed that he is a person first and then an educator. Helping others in need seems to help him deal with the adversity of being an immigrant teacher of color.

Despite adversity, the willingness to learn and grow was embodied by many immigrant teachers of color in this study. Reggae Teacher asserted, "Personally, my drive to succeed and excel as an educator contributes to my success. I utilize the challenges and setbacks as a means of proving my doubters wrong and focusing on my goals and objectives." Reggae Teacher appeared to consider her positive and flexible

attitudes, and work ethic to her success. Unfortunately, some immigrant teachers in this study endured hardships; yet they did not give up.

Getting adjusted in a new country with new ways of education wasn't easy.

Pakistani education system relies on high stakes testing at the end of the year and there was no paper writing involved. So, researching and writing papers along with presenting it in front of the whole class were the most difficult thing I had experienced in my initial months of being in the graduate program. Later student teaching was another big challenge as the supervising teacher used to make fun of my accent in the class. It was so bad that I had to request my university to switch the school as it was very difficult to sustain, and my mentor supported me. After completing the degree and license requirements, finding the job as a minority in a non-science subject was a huge challenge and it still is. But somehow, I also managed in my initial years. Actually, my Pakistani teaching experience was also considered towards my pay scale. Now that I have experience in teaching internationally and in America, I get the advantage of an accented teacher who has a subject matter expertise, and who can also teach American history. So, this makes me a one of a kind educator. (Ambreen)

Ambreen described her experience of being an immigrant in an education system that is different from her country of origin. Although she found it challenging securing a teaching job, she persevered. In addition, her teaching experience and subject matter expertise helped her excel.

Like Ambreen, many immigrant teachers of color in this study attributed their resilience to adapting and overcoming their challenges to equipping themselves with knowledge and wisdom.

I see my success because of the best top knowledge and different teaching strategies I possess. I was able to tackle different problems that immigrant students were having. It gave me a sense of purpose. When I first started teaching, I felt that this was my community. I felt that way for the first five or six years, but then this Caucasian teacher who became the supervisor gave me a little bit hard time. For a few years, I felt like I didn't belong there. But I was insistent that this was my place and I'm the true role model for these students. (Sri)

Sri demonstrated the power of perseverance, purpose, and passion. Despite the challenges she faced in her school community, Sri was persistent to stay because believed that students needed her.

Empowerment. Resiliency enabled some immigrant teachers of color in this study to feel empowered, work hard, and gain their sense of belonging in their school communities. Ambreen contended, "My bosses have always been nice to me as I never go to my classes unprepared. I believe I am one of the lucky colored teachers who just got her way with very few hardships." Immigrant teachers of color' willingness to learn and their resilience appeared to bolster their self-confidence and self-esteem. Further, their leadership contributions to their school community gave them a sense of belonging.

I receive much support from my informal staff by means of collaboration on anything that I need. My administration supports me by continually providing opportunities for growth and leadership in our school. I was encouraged to pursue

further studies to apply for the role of principal or vice principal. I was acknowledged at a board meeting for the work I do with our students. I was also nominated for the Governor's Educator Award. The school/administration is always looking for leaders among us to take on different responsibilities. It is a level playing field for all staff members. I enjoy the camaraderie of the teaching staff. I enjoy teaching and making a difference in the lives of all students. I find the home/school connection to be the most challenging part of being in my school. Parents of today are very different, and sometimes these differences make the experience of teaching very difficult. I have also met a few people who did not let the fact that I am an immigrant teacher of color stand in the way. As a matter of fact, being a woman of color may have helped me more than I know. My principal, a Caucasian, is from Mississippi, and she taught in Bronx, NY for 10 years. She strongly believes that students of color should have teachers of color in the classroom. She shared an article with me, which was a study entitled, 'Black Students More Likely to Graduate if They Have One Black Teacher.' When she shared it with me, I told her I was aware of the study and that I agreed with most of its findings. She then told me that most people (teachers of color) would be offended if she brought this to their attention. I certainly wasn't, and she knew I wouldn't be. My curricular coordinator, which I mentioned earlier, also a Caucasian, was impressed with my teaching style and helped me to feel safe and secure in my school community. My current superintendent also appreciates me and shows his support at every opportunity. Another reason that solidifies my sense of belonging is working with my students' parents. Most of

these parents show their appreciation for what I do on a daily basis. I can see in their eyes that they are happy that I am in this school because they identify with me. There will always be a few that remind you of your color and immigration status, but for the reasons mentioned previously, I have a genuine sense of belonging in my school. (Sandra)

Interestingly, Sandra did not contribute resilience to her sense of belonging, but she contributed hard work to her sense of belonging.

Other participants shared that same sentiment and longed for immigrant teachers of color to be treated with greater respect because of the sacrifices they made as they tried to achieve the “American dream”.

Think of all the things that we had to sacrifice to achieve our American dream. I think that American people have lost the notion of the American dream. We have it pressing in our minds, hearts, and souls. And I even think that we are here to remind them what this nation was created for and that it is the American dream that we want to achieve. We are never going to be like them. They should just embrace our differences, just like we do. I never want my kids to feel less important because they are different. I always tell them that they are a different type of American, but they are American nonetheless. (Señor P)

In this study, immigrant teachers of color believed that challenges were designed to push them, help them find their purpose, and show that their resilience may contribute to change how others view them. Further, each of the five themes offer insights into understanding the overall experiences of being an immigrant teacher of color in the New Jersey public schools. There was a varied range of experiences from participants

regarding a sense of belonging in their school communities. Some appreciated the sense of visibility and belongingness that their school leaders created for them, while others felt a sense of cultural discrimination, isolation, and frustration. Immigrant teachers of color in this study had a desire for a sense of belonging and to be treated with respect because they, too, matter.

Summary

The participants in this study described what it meant to be an immigrant teacher of color in the New Jersey public schools. The immigrant teachers of color detailed their lived experiences of challenges that affected their visibility and sense of belonging. In this study: fitting in to belong; discrimination and stereotype; proving oneself; being a shoulder to lean on; and resilience was all prevalent in the lives of immigrant teachers of color. Collectively, immigrant teachers of color believe that their sense of visibility and belongingness was not respected; hence, they felt isolated in a system that was not set up for them.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative, heuristic, phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color and explore their sense of invisibility and belongingness in New Jersey public schools. The goal of this study was to understand their struggles and perseverance as they navigated America's education system. Additionally, this study aimed to recognize the numerous obstacles immigrant teachers of color faced due to cultural and language barriers. The two research questions that guided this study were: (a) what is the experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey public schools? (b) how do immigrant teachers of color perceive and describe the experiences of invisibility and feelings of belongingness in New Jersey public schools?

A phenomenological qualitative approach was used for this study. Employing heuristic phenomenology allowed me, the researcher, to be part of the research and incorporate my lived experience into the study (Moustakas, 1990). Through a phenomenological approach, my personal experience with invisibility and lack of belonging as an immigrant teacher in New Jersey public schools served as the foundation for this study. I immersed myself in the lived experiences of other immigrant teachers of color and learned of their feelings of invisibility and lack of belongingness in the New Jersey public schools. Through this study, I gained perspective on what it meant to be an immigrant teacher of color in a New Jersey public school. I also gained perspective of the significant role the visibility and sense of belongingness played in the lives of immigrant teachers of color and their wellbeing.

In this chapter, the study findings reviewed in Chapter Four, and their implications, are interpreted in the context of the research questions. The newly identified information was examined and connected to literature and firsthand knowledge. Five themes emerged and were developed from the study findings through the process of the heuristic data analysis, intended to discover the experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey public schools. The five themes that captured the lived experiences, visibility, and sense of belonging of immigrant teachers of color in the New Jersey public schools were: (1) fitting in to belong, (2) discrimination and stereotyping, (3) proving oneself, (4) a shoulder to lean on, and (5) resilience. Ultimately, this chapter will conclude with a summary of study findings and their implications for practice, policy, leadership, and recommendations for further research.

Discussion and Findings

Fitting In To Belong

The first research question investigated the experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey public schools. It was discovered that immigrant teachers of color in this study collectively expressed the challenge of trying to fit into American society. For participants, fitting in did not mean changing their identities, but to be included, and to feel that they belonged to their school communities. Consequently, cultural differences made fitting in a challenge. Immigrant teachers of color in this study stated that cultural differences, identities, and languages set them apart from other teachers. For example, Anasua described how she had difficulty breaking into the system that was predominantly White. She described how it felt like a daily, “red tape”, making her feel like an alien, leaving her feeling perpetually nervous and hyper-aware of being

different. These findings directly coincided with the findings of Florence (2011), who found that cultural misunderstandings and disconnections made foreign trained teachers feel like aliens, being judged and labeled as the “other.” This supports the need for immigrant teachers in this study to have a sense of belonging and to feel included in their school communities.

McCalman (2014) advocated for equipping U.S. teachers with skills that would enable them to face and tackle challenges of multicultural classrooms, such as meeting the needs of students that are culturally different from them and bridging the cultural gap and disconnections in the U.S. classrooms and schools. For example, Señor P noted that in his school community, the disconnections were that students were not being represented by the staff in his school community: 80% of their student population was Hispanic but there were only two teachers who spoke Spanish. Similarly, Vittrup (2016) stressed the need to train teachers of any racial background on multicultural issues to foster proper connections and interactions with the U.S. diverse student population. This study’s findings showed that immigrant teachers of color were able to address students’ needs because they could identify and connect with them., which could potentially contribute to teachers’ feelings of belongingness in a predominantly White schooling context.

Cultural misunderstanding. The second research question investigated how immigrant teachers of color perceived and described the experience of invisibility and feelings of belongingness in New Jersey public schools. Collectively, immigrant teachers of color in this study explained that cultural misunderstanding affected how others viewed them and the assumptions people made regarding their English proficiency. They

declared that they faced resistance from their co-workers; hence, they felt like outsiders. For example, Señor P went to his colleague's classroom to get her involved in the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration, but the colleague instead went to the teachers' union in order to prevent him from involving her. Furthermore, immigrant teachers of color in this study believed that they did not fully integrate into the school community because they could not find a "fine line" to fitting in. They acknowledged that the lack of belongingness must be addressed. For example, Señor P was organizing the Hispanic Heritage Month events at his school but was told that he was getting "too excited" and "too passionate" about it. He stated, "We have to be careful." Although this participant felt that his passion could be misinterpreted as an agenda, he did share that he needed to expose his cultural contributions to his peers on a daily basis. These findings connect to Essed's (1991) study that showed racial and ethnic conflict through oppression and exclusion in the U.S. and Netherlands of college-educated Black women. College-educated Black women's marginalization experiences could be equated with some of the participants' experiences of being excluded in decision-making and feelings of isolation in their workplaces. Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight's (2008) study discovered the "double jeopardy" of being Black and female in the United States. In their study, African American women had to break barriers of isolation, oppression, perceptions, stereotypes, and inequality; thus, it is important to understand that marginalization could result in feelings of isolation and exclusion. Subsequently, fitting in to belong can emerge as a personal choice to counter/challenge that marginalization (Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2008). The notion of personal choice as a push back on exclusion and isolation also emerged in this study: Reggae Teacher indicated that fitting in was not what drove

her, but her contribution to students' growth and development, and thus, she cared less about what other people thought of her and more about her students' success.

This study revealed the desire of immigrant teachers of color to be part of their school culture and they vowed to advocate for diversity and social justice. Lacking a sense of belongingness or being unable to fit into the mainstream school culture created experiences of conflict for many of the immigrant teachers of color who participated in this study. Kirova (2001) explored the missing school culture of acceptance and belongingness for immigrant students in Canada and the United States. She suggested that a school should be a place for students to connect with their teachers and feel a sense of belonging. Based on how immigrant teachers of color in this study perceived and described the experience of invisibility and feelings of belongingness in New Jersey public schools, school should also be a place for immigrant teachers of color to relate to other teachers, form connections, and have a sense of belonging. However, the study's participants struggled with belongingness because of this missing culture. Participants noted that those connections could shape a school culture of togetherness that would allow for collaboration, consequently strengthening and satisfying immigrant teachers' sense of belongingness to their schools.

In this study, participants noted that being an immigrant teacher of color, experiences of being stereotyped, prejudiced against, and labeled as incompetent were challenges they faced related to their cultural differences from the mainstream White school context. These made them feel isolated and alienated. Similarly, a study conducted by Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) found that faculty of color had to overcome challenges on the tenure track due to cultural differences and barriers. This caused a

sense of alienation and isolation, hence, they advocated for “transformative efforts to ‘walk the walk’ of diversity” (p. 104). To demonstrate this understanding, Garrison-Wade et al. (2012) stressed:

As faculty, we ask our students to be culturally responsive by inquiring about their students/clients of colors’ cultural experiences without stereotyping; we talk the diversity talk. It is in this same manner that we respectfully invite higher education administrators to be culturally responsive to their faculty, staff, and students of color. We believe this is a step in walking the diversity talk in institutions of higher education. (p. 109).

In this study, Señor P felt isolated when his classmates in college refused to complete group work with him during group work because they felt that he was unintelligent due to his accent. When the participant sought to include programming into school activities to highlight his culture (and it should be noted, that of his students), he experienced push back by his colleagues. Such alienation and isolation could very well affect efforts to retain high quality teachers – “[t]wo-thirds of leavers depart before retirement age, most because of dissatisfaction with aspects of their teaching conditions” (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016, p. 3) – who may also be immigrants that bring much needed skills and knowledge to predominantly White schooling contexts.

Discrimination and Stereotyping

The second research question asked how immigrant teachers of color perceived and described the experience of invisibility and feelings of belongingness in New Jersey public schools. Immigrant teachers of color in this study described how their cultural differences enabled others to discriminate against them, put them in a “box”, and make

assumptions and/or have misconceptions about them. For example, Sandra described the challenges of being a foreigner and a woman of color. She believed that people saw her color before they realized she was an immigrant. Another participant, Anasua, said that she was asked if she had an arranged marriage because she was Indian. Additionally, immigrant teachers of color in this study felt stereotyped or stigmatized because of their accent. For example, Sri described how she felt that people could tell by her accent even on the phone that she was from a different country and wondered how she would be able to teach American students. Participant Kay described how she has also experienced being prejudiced due to social and cultural differences. She felt she was discriminated against because her school community made her feel as though her work was not good enough, her classroom was not properly setup, or that her students were not disciplined enough. Related to this, Chávez and Guido-DiBrito's (1999) study on minority and international adult learners found that different discrimination experiences were brought by students to the learning environment, often based on how they were treated by teachers and peers due to their racial and ethnic identities. They further expressed that minority and international adult learners endured invisibility and stereotyping in educational settings, such as being perceived as less than desirable within the mainstream society because of their minority statuses. While not directly about immigrant teachers of color, this literature seems to suggest that feelings of discrimination and stereotyping due to cultural differences, racial identity, and accent are common experiences among a considerable number of immigrants, and clearly has implications for their learning experiences.

Immigrant teachers of color in this study believed that language and cultural barriers prevented them from fitting in and acclimating into their school culture. Participant, Reggae Teacher, described how she was always asked to substitute whenever her colleagues were absent. She felt this was the “price she paid” because of her cultural difference within the school community. This participant’s story demonstrated an example of the discriminatory struggles many immigrant teachers of color endure in their school communities due to discrimination and stereotyping. This study’s findings suggest that there is the need to strike a delicate balance of making everyone feel American while also feeling proud of their unique culture and contributions to Americana. To this, Bostch (1994) noted that inclusiveness matters because all people are entitled to their own culture and cultural pride. Providing immigrant teachers with opportunities that satisfy their sense of belongingness would likely help them adjust to their school culture and make them feel that they are part of a team. Having a sense of belonging in their school communities would allow them to challenge and question school discriminatory practices and cultural and racial biases when they observe it. A sense of belonging would also eliminate the need for immigrant teachers of color to conform to the “whitewash” American culture in order to be accepted.

Participant, Señor P, described how he was discriminated against because he was an immigrant and was considered incompetent and dumb, even though, according to him, he learned the English language in six months. This study extends the literature that asserts that an ability to speak two languages, or to be multilingual, should be considered a strength (Martínez, 2018) or a survival skill and as a sign of intelligence. Señor P further stated that immigrant teachers of color should be considered as an asset for America

because they bring in different cultural perspectives associated with their language abilities, countering the discrimination they experience because of their differences. Indeed, research shows that bi and multilingual teachers bring considerable resources to the teaching and learning process, often employing students' funds of knowledge to connect learning to students' experiences outside of school (Conteh, Copeland, & Creese, 2014).

Prejudice. Coinciding with discrimination and stereotyping was the experience of prejudice described by many immigrant teachers of color in this study. This study's findings revealed that some immigrant teachers of color felt that the American society stereotyped them and put them in a "box" because they were different, had accents, and did not fit the norm. Señor P described how he believed his accent influenced how he was perceived. He alleged that his colleagues equated his accent to being unintelligent. He further described that he felt prejudiced against because people did not understand his cultural differences. Related to this, Yee 's (2008) study of three multilingual and multicultural immigrant teachers who were certified teachers in the U.S. public schools found that they faced and dealt with discrimination, stereotype, and prejudice challenges, that stemmed from a lack of understanding about their cultural differences. This finding also corresponded with Boyd (2003), Nelson, Signorella, and Botti's (2016) who found that U.S. undergraduates with "non-indigenous, accented speech" faced prejudice and discrimination and those with foreign accents were deemed incompetent. Therefore, it makes sense that immigrant teachers of color in this study were perceived and deemed incompetent by their colleagues because of their foreign accents. While not directly about immigrant teachers of color, this study seems to suggest that feelings of

discrimination and stereotyping, due to foreign accents, are common experiences among all immigrants and could impact their sense of visibility and belongingness. Schmidt (2010) found that immigrant teachers in Canada faced systemic discrimination, which was a major obstacle to their sense of belonging in the Canadian K-12 education systems. Speaking with a foreign accent appeared to imply that one had a language barrier and was incompetent; consequently, students, parents, fellow educators, and administrators treated them as such. For example, Kay described how some parents were skeptical of having their kids placed in her class because she was black and African. This finding indicates that immigrant teachers are often discriminated against based on their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, consistent with literature that has highlighted prejudice as “fear of stranger” (“Prejudice,” 2017), which is a challenge that many immigrants may experience and could affect their sense of belonging.

In order for immigrant teachers of color to have a sense of visibility and belongingness, they need to be accepted and feel that they are part of their school communities. Jhagroo’s (2016) study found that immigrant teachers’ past experiences with stereotypes and prejudice in New Zealand schools shaped their professional and personal growth. They described that prejudice was detrimental to their identity, professional learning, and sense of being because perceptions of the work environment affected their career advancement. Reggae Teacher described how her principal was prejudice against her and undermined her ESL strategies for improving students’ skills, although she believed they were research-based. Such treatment from a school leader could undermine a teacher’s ability to grow professionally and develop a sense of belonging.

Participants described how they were discriminated against by their colleagues and principals and made to believe that they did not matter. For example, Reggae Teacher, described how her principal only utilized her when they required coverage for “tough” classes. The prejudice theme confirms the literature that indicates that teachers of color are frequently assigned to teach undisciplined students (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014) because many of them are perceived as disciplinarians or because the school has given up on such students. Prejudice was one of the obstacles highlighted by many immigrant teachers of color in this study and it prevented many of them from having a sense of belonging in their school communities. This corroborated the literature that asserts that discriminating against immigrant teachers goes against the idea of promoting diversity amongst teaching staff (Schmidt, 2010). Conceivably, recruiting immigrant teachers of color would help diversify schools and classrooms. Collectively, immigrant teachers of color in this study believed that what mattered to them was that people acknowledged their differences and respected them as professionals and human beings.

Proving Oneself

Based on the research question about how immigrant teachers of color perceived and described the experience of invisibility and feelings of belongingness in New Jersey public schools, the participants described that they faced adversity and a lack of professional support. Some immigrant teachers of color in this study conveyed the feeling of having to prove themselves, as it was discovered that lack of support from school personnel and the constant need of proving themselves was found to be disheartening. For instance, Anasua described how she worked really hard to prove herself. Additionally, Reggae Teacher described how she suffered silently due to a lack

of support by her school leaders and was overlooked, even though she was knowledgeable. Participants also acknowledged that their colleagues did not collaborate with them. For example, Sandra described that on many occasions, her presence was overlooked, and she tried to represent herself and her interests with caution. She felt as though she must be clear and concise for fear of not being taken seriously. Habegger (2008) explained that there is need for schools to create a culture of caring that builds a learning community allowing collaboration, continuous improvement, and commitment to teaching. The underlying conclusion is that collaboration and continuous improvement is vital to immigrant teachers of color because it provides them with a sense of belonging that may help them grow professionally.

Immigrant teachers of color in this study described the lack of support from school personnel; hence they felt they had to prove themselves. This seems to suggest that immigrant teachers of color are not always treated as part of a team but are rather questioned about their “suitability” to teach (Cho, 2014). Some may not feel visible or seen as resources by their school districts. Señor P described the challenge of having to prove himself, even though he felt that he contributed to his school community’s sense of multiculturalism. Proving oneself is a sign of feeling invisible and a lack of belonging, which could stem from ignorance and misunderstanding (Apfelbaum, Grunberg, Halevy & Kang, 2017). It is, therefore, important to recognize and encourage racial differences because it may foster a culture of inclusivity within teachers of color and immigrant teachers.

To remedy the cultural misunderstandings and disconnections, Florence (2011) suggested that a change in views towards immigrant teachers is needed. Furthermore, the

need to belong is essential to immigrant teachers' professional efficacy because they contribute to student learning and development. Carrison's (2007) study on bilingual immigrant teachers found that they enter the teaching profession equipped with a cultural understanding that informs their practices. Although the study was not on immigrant teachers of color, it highlighted the need to validate immigrant teachers of color's contribution to student learning. Therefore, immigrant teachers need to be seen as visible and have a sense of belonging in their school communities because their contributions to student learning matters.

Proving oneself could affect immigrant teachers of color who may be struggling to gain a sense of belonging and adjust to their school communities. To this, a study done by Moores and Popadiuk (2011) on international students in Canada found that they faced challenges adjusting to their new educational system and studying in a second language. Immigrant teachers of color in this study expressed similar challenges while navigating the New Jersey education system. Although I learned English in Namibia as a subject, I understood it more than I could speak it when I came to the United States. Due to the language barrier, I had to prove I was worthy of my spot in the educational system. For example, my credentials and teaching ability were questioned and doubted, and I struggled to adjust to my school community. Sandra described the lack of belongingness that many immigrant teachers experience, despite the fact that each person viewed the world through a different lens. Sandra, interestingly, acknowledged that having to prove herself led to her success and helped her gain respect in her school community. However, this may not necessarily be the case for some immigrant teachers of color. Having to constantly prove themselves could hinder immigrant teachers of color's ability

and energy to fully contribute to their school community because of fear of not being taken seriously. Therefore, providing a sense of visibility and belongingness to immigrant teachers of color could counter the need to prove themselves in order to be viewed as contributing members of their school communities.

A Shoulder to Lean On

The second research question asked how immigrant teachers of color perceived and described the experience of invisibility and feelings of belongingness in New Jersey public schools. Immigrant teachers of color in this study described the experience of invisibility and feelings of belongingness in New Jersey public schools as dissatisfactory due to how they were treated by their colleagues in the school community. Despite feelings of dissatisfactory treatment by the predominant society, participants in this study felt that they became a shoulder for students and parents of color to lean on when support was needed because they could relate to them. For example, Anasua pointed out her strength of being multilingual. Being a multilingual teacher allowed her to identify and connect with her students and their parents. She described how parents felt comfortable reaching out and talking to her because they spoke the same native language. Similarly, Ambreen described how a few Muslim high school students struggled with identity and integration with “whitewash” American culture and how they used to congregate around her because they felt comfortable with her. She further described how they, Ambreen and her students, created their own club to hang out after school. This seems to highlight the cultural skills and expertise that immigrant teachers of color possess and use in their own unique way to benefit diverse students. In addition, immigrant teachers have distinctive cultural experiences and values that could enrich schools and improve

educational practices. This finding contributes to literature that stresses the need for educators to be sensitive to others and develop a sense of acceptance for differences and perspectives in educational contexts (Ragoonaden, Sivia, & Baxan's, 2015). Therefore, immigrant teachers of color enrich students' learning in diverse and non-diverse schooling contexts.

Unique connections. The first research question investigated the experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey public schools. It was discovered that immigrant teachers of color in this study had unique connections with minority students and students of color and their parents. For example, Sandra described how parents of color appreciated her and were happy that she was in the school community because they identified with her. This is an example of what literature stresses, a teacher who seems to understand the cultures of her students and parents, and who embraces her students' differences and their learning needs (Krasnoff, 2016).

Dilworth and Coleman's (2014) review of teacher diversity emphasized the need for students of color to have teachers that resemble their own racial and ethnic heritage. Therefore, students of color need to have teachers that look like them, who they could identify with, and who could understand them (Dilworth, & Coleman, 2014). A participant described how being an immigrant and teacher of color gave her students a sense of belonging because they knew that there was a teacher who looked like them. These findings extend the work done by Maylor (2009) who found that Black students saw Black teachers as role models. This demonstrates the need to recruit teachers of color to help cater to the needs of diverse students and expose all students to other cultures. Building positive connections, relationships, and providing a sense of belonging

to minority students and students of color who may be struggling with identity is vital. Immigrant teachers of color in this study displayed positive connections with students of color and exhibited empathy toward them. However, the gap in literature exists regarding parity between teachers and students of color from different ethnic heritages.

In this study, it was discovered that immigrant teachers of color related and formed a bond with students and parents of color because of their ability to recognize a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity, understand the challenges that students of color may endure, and relate to families with different dynamics. This finding is consistent with Landor et al. (2013) who found that people of color related better to each other and to people from different family dynamics because of racial messages they received from their parents. This was done to protect them from the realities of racism. Some immigrant teachers of color in this study contributed their ability to relate well to students and parents of color because of their own cultural awareness, developed through their experiences in their countries of origin. To this, Niyubahwe, Mukamurera, and Jutras (2013) added that immigrant teachers possess linguistic and cultural skills and expertise that could benefit diverse students. The findings suggested that immigrant teachers of color have the potential to serve as role models to diverse students and provide them with a sense of belonging.

Being a voice and protector. Apart from being a shoulder for students of color and parents to lean on, it was discovered that immigrant teachers of color became a voice for students and a protector of students' wellbeing; they acted as students' forefront of protection by providing them with social and emotional support. For example, Simone narrated her experiences of being bullied because she was different. She described her

desire to protect and defend minority students, show them compassion, and give them a sense of belonging. Collectively, immigrant teachers of color in this study agreed that they had a responsibility to students of color and their parents and vowed to help others find their sense of belonging. These findings were consistent with Arun's (2008) study of South Asian immigrant teachers in Canada who were found to be capable, compassionate, and knowledgeable educators. Many of the participants in this study have shown compassion in their unique ways, whether it was toward students or parents.

Resilience

The second research question asked about how immigrant teachers of color perceived and described the experience of invisibility and feelings of belongingness in New Jersey public schools. It was discovered that some immigrant teachers of color had to pursue additional teaching credentials in the U.S. despite being quite accomplished in their native countries. Four participants described how they had to go back to school in order to be certified to teach in New Jersey. Perhaps, participants' resilience contributed to their ability to overcome adversity, lack of visibility, and obstacles they have encountered in their school communities and professional practices; hence they were sensitive to their students' safety and needs. These findings contribute to a body of literature that highlight students and teachers' resilience triumph over daily adversities, suffering and despair (Casanova, 2012; Clarà, 2017; Gu & Day, 2011;2013; Mansfield et al., 2016; Scott, 2004; Vance, Pendergast, & Garvis, 2015).

This study's findings revealed immigrant teachers of color's ability to adapt to challenges in the face of social and professional struggles. They described resilience as a contributing factor to their sense of belongingness. Some participants exemplified

resilience in a unique approach, explaining that they are people first and then educators. It was revealed that assisting others helped them cope with adversity of being an immigrant teacher of color. For example, Señor P described that being an educator is a matter of “being” and not a matter of “job.” He further stated that he took every opportunity throughout the school day to lend a helping hand to those who need it most. Despite adversity, many immigrant teachers of color in this study embodied resilience and willingness to learn and grow. For example, Reggae Teacher described how her drive to succeed and excel as an educator contributed to her success. She further explained that she utilized the challenges and setbacks as a means of proving her doubters wrong and focusing on her goals and objectives. Others endured hardships, yet they attributed their resilience to adapting and overcoming their challenges to equipping themselves with knowledge and wisdom, and demonstrated the power of perseverance, purpose, and passion. Casanova (2012) explored the resilience of a Mexican Maya immigrant teacher who grew as an immigrant student through eighth to twelfth grade to become a teacher in the United States while overcoming daily adversities of racism and challenges of stigmatization and discrimination. She was told to go back to Mexico, which caused her to have a low self-confidence, low self-esteem, and became depressed; yet she sustained her educational purpose and excelled to become a teacher (Casanova, 2012; Gu & Day, 2011;2013).

This seems to suggest that resilience can help people cope well with adversity and learn from it. Furthermore, resilience helps teachers sustain commitment and maintain their motivations to excel (Mansfield et al., 2016). Setbacks did not permanently discourage the immigrant teachers of color in this study because they forged ahead and

remained focused on the purpose that initially brought them to the teaching profession. Clearly, adversity helped many immigrant teachers of color in this study to persevere and continue educating and providing a sense of belonging for their students.

Empowerment. It was discovered that resiliency enabled some immigrant teachers of color in this study to feel empowered, work hard, and gain their sense of belonging in their school communities. Additionally, their willingness to learn bolstered their self-confidence and self-esteem. This finding extends the literature of Baumeister and Leary (1995) who contended that a feeling of belongingness influences one's motivation and wellbeing. Three of the participants in this study firmly believed that their leadership contributions to their school communities gave them a sense of belonging. To this, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) had indicated that a sense of belonging to the school community is positively related to motivation and job satisfaction. Even though some immigrant teachers in this study expressed job dissatisfaction, they felt empowered by their leadership contributions to work hard and create their sense of belonging. Furthermore, literature suggests that teacher leadership provides vision and direction to teachers (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Hence, some immigrant teachers of color in this study showed leadership and hard work that contributed to their sense of belonging because they overcame invisibility challenges and adversity.

Implications

Findings from this study add to the body of knowledge on factors associated with the sense of visibility and belongingness. This study provided some insights for teacher education, policy makers, and educational leaders to further understand the experiences,

struggles, and challenges immigrant teachers of color endure in the New Jersey public education.

Practice

Based on the stories of immigrant teachers of color's obstacles and challenges with visibility and belongingness, it is important for teacher education to bring cultural diversity awareness to all teacher educators in order to promote a sense of belonging to teachers, students, and parents of color in their workplaces. Findings in this study indicated that immigrant teachers of color's roles are important because they bring new cultural perspectives, experiences, and possibility to teaching and learning.

Additionally, study findings indicated that immigrant teachers of color provided a sense of belonging to students and brought a unique and diverse cultural understanding that benefitted all students in their school communities. Despite their diverse cultural understanding and resilience, many immigrant teachers in this study felt that they were discriminated, stereotyped, and never fully included in their school communities. In spite of their lack of belongingness and visibility, immigrant teachers in this study persevered and overcame their adversities. Exposing teacher educators to cultural diversity awareness and sensitivity in teacher education institutions may help enhance cultural understanding among them; thus, it may allow teachers of color to develop, and have a sense of belonging in their workplaces. The findings of this study advocate that creating a sense of visibility and belongingness for immigrant teachers of color could help in the retention of such teachers.

Results from this study provide support to the impact that the lack of visibility and sense of belongingness has on immigrant teachers of color. This study has the potential

to create belongingness, with or for, immigrant teachers of color and teachers of color, in general, who have been, and may continue to be marginalized. All students and staff can reap benefits from teacher diversity. It is, therefore, suggested that school communities promote equal treatment for all people without judgments, thus making U.S. schools and classrooms a place where social and cultural diversity is valued and celebrated, and where social justice prevails. Creating a pipeline that encourages people of color and immigrants to go into teaching can do this. Diversifying the teaching force may help bridge the gap between teachers and students' racial demographic that presently exists in the U.S. schools.

Policy

Facilitating immigrants' inclusion and cultural recognition into the dominant society is vital to their sense of belonging. Fostering a school climate of caring and trusting is similarly important. This study found that some immigrant teachers of color felt a sense of discrimination in teacher education because some of their peers and superiors alienated them and refused to work and collaborate with them. Currently, New Jersey schools train their employees on diversity in order to help curb discriminatory treatments within schools. However, this study's findings uncovered discriminatory practices that immigrant teachers of color endure that hinder their sense of visibility and belongingness. Therefore, diversity trainings should be monitored, possibly modified, and effective follow up is needed.

Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that New Jersey teacher-preparation programs and school districts address diversity content, assess knowledge, and diversity implementation. Furthermore, multicultural reform is needed to integrate

school curricula that address victimization and oppression issues in order to combat misconceptions and stereotypes of “others” in institutions of learning. Most importantly, diversity and equity audits should be implemented to ensure that school districts hire teachers of color and diversify teacher workforce.

Leadership

This study’s findings contribute to the perception that belongingness and visibility can be shaped by the connection that immigrant teachers of color have with the school communities. Leveraging diversity within school communities requires leadership for social justice. Therefore, the researcher calls for educational leaders to leverage diversity and create belongingness for teachers of color and immigrant teachers in order to promote their professional growth. Hiring and recruiting teachers of color may help diversifying the teaching population.

However, to embrace the benefit of diversity, inclusive leadership is key. Inclusive leadership enables social justice awareness and helps deal with injustice that prevails in the education system and communities. It creates a sense of belonging for all. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) stressed:

Exercising leadership is a way of giving meaning to your life by contributing to the lives of others. At its best, leadership is a labor of love. Opportunities for these labors cross your path every day, though we appreciate through the scar tissue of our own experiences that seizing these opportunities takes heart (p. 223).

Perhaps educational leaders may also contribute to the lives of immigrant teachers and teachers of color in their school communities as a way of giving meaning to their lives. They may be able to better assess the challenges and obstacles that teachers of color and

immigrant teachers experienced in their school communities. Most importantly, leaders are recommended to create a culture of togetherness and collaboration to reduce the feelings of invisibility for such teachers. Therefore, adjustment of educational practices and school culture may enable interactions and offer opportunities to build interpersonal relationships that offer immigrant teachers of color a sense of belonging. Having a sense of visibility and belonging may enable immigrant teachers of color to become active members of their school communities.

Research

There were limitations in this study. One limitation was the fact that ten of the eleven participants were females. Study findings were representative of gender disparities and may not represent the stories and voices of male immigrant teachers of color in the New Jersey public schools. This limitation offers future opportunities to further expand this study in order to determine if gender would offer additional data on the experiences of immigrant teachers of color's sense of visibility and belongingness in New Jersey public schools. Another limitation was lack of literature on immigrant teachers of color. To bridge this gap, this study could be replicated using a larger sample from immigrant teachers of all races, ethnicities, and social backgrounds. Additionally, conducting a study that is inclusive of immigrant teachers of all races may uncover additional findings.

Why Should We Care?

Findings from this study add to the body of knowledge on factors associated with the sense of visibility and belongingness. Many challenges, obstacles, and possibilities exist in providing a sense of visibility and belongingness to immigrant teachers of color.

Educational leaders should care about the belongingness of their teachers (Anderson & Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2010), but to address the study's findings, leaders should consider the following views of the participants:

1. Immigrant teachers of color bring a plethora of qualities to their school communities. Many have an insatiable appetite for learning and a different level of expectation regarding respect and discipline.
2. Many immigrant teachers of color focus on education being a priority. They raise the bar and encourage students to rise to the higher level.
3. Many immigrant teachers of color have a greater sense of compassion and empathy for students. They understand the various factors that play a role in students' success or failure.
4. Many immigrant teachers have a different foundation in education that puts them in a unique position. Many have more than one system or educational skill set, which allows them to see the world through different lenses. They enter the profession armed with multiple skill sets.
5. Many immigrant teachers recognize a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity, understand the challenges that students of color may endure, and relate to families with different dynamics.
6. Many immigrant teachers of color bring to their school communities background experiences that can help the school staff have a better understanding of students that are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

7. Many immigrant teachers can act as role models for students with cultural/linguistic backgrounds. They can be a voice for immigrant students and their parents within the school.
8. Many immigrant teachers can act as role models for all students, some who have never experienced working with a teacher culturally different from them.
9. Many immigrant teachers bring discipline, passion for education, a wide range of experiences, ability to contribute significantly to their schools, and the drive to succeed at whatever they do in the educational setting.
10. Many immigrant teachers add value to education as they share cultural knowledge and teach students the value of embracing education.

Therefore, a change in views towards immigrant teachers of color is needed to remedy the cultural misunderstandings and disconnections (Florence, 2011).

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative, heuristic, phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color and explore their sense of visibility and belongingness in the New Jersey public schools. The goal of this study was to understand their struggles and perseverance as they navigated America's education system. Additionally, this study aimed to understand the numerous obstacles immigrant teachers of color faced due to cultural and language barriers. The two research questions that guided this study were: (1) what is the experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey public schools? (2) How do immigrant teachers of color perceive and describe the experience of invisibility and feeling of belongingness in New Jersey public schools?

Collectively, the immigrant teachers of color had both similarities and differences with regard to explaining their experiences of visibility and feelings of belongingness as teachers in New Jersey public schools. The stories which participants shared demonstrated their struggles and perseverance as they navigated New Jersey's education system. As a review, the five themes that captured the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color, their visibility, and sense of belonging in the New Jersey public schools were: (1) fitting in to belong, (2) discrimination and stereotyping, (3) proving oneself, (4) shoulder to lean on, and (5) resilience.

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Appendix A

Consent to Take Part in a Research Study

Title of Study: Educating Invisibly: Immigrant Teachers of Color and their Sense of Belonging in New Jersey Public Schools

Principal Investigator: Dr. Ane Turner Johnson

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you to decide whether you wish to volunteer for this research study. It will help you to understand what the study is about and what will happen in the course of the study. If you have questions at any time during the research study, you should feel free to ask them and should expect to be given answers that you completely understand. After all of your questions have been answered, if you still wish to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this informed consent form.

The Principal Investigator, Dr. Ane Johnson, or Mirjam Biegen will also be asked to sign this informed consent. You will be given a copy of the signed consent form to keep. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by volunteering for this research study or by signing this consent form.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this qualitative, heuristic, phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of immigrant teachers of color and explore their sense of visibility and belongingness in the New Jersey public schools, in order to understand their struggles, and perseverance as they navigate America's education system. The study aims to understand the numerous obstacles immigrant teachers of color face due to cultural and language barriers.

Why have you been asked to take part in this study?

The requirements for participation is being an immigrant, identify yourself as a person of color, and being employed in the state of New Jersey as a teacher. You met all the requirements and you have agreed to participate in this study.

Who may take part in this study? And who may not?

The only people who are taking part in this study are immigrants born in other countries, identifying themselves as people of color, and being employed in the state of New Jersey as teachers in public schools.

How many subjects will be enrolled in the study?

The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study are between 10 to 15.

How long will my participation in this study take?

The duration of the individual's participation in the study is between 45 to 60 minutes.

Where will the study take place?

The study will take place in your natural setting, a place of your choice so that you can feel comfortable.

What will you be asked to do if you take part in this research study?

Prior to the interview process, you will be asked to complete a graphic elicitation (to draw or write in details about your experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey) to be used as interview stimuli. You will then be interviewed in the form of dialogues. Interviews will be audio recorded with your permission.

What are the risks and/or discomforts you might experience if you take part in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study. All efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in order to protect your identities and your place of work.

Are there any benefits for you if you choose to take part in this research study?

It is possible that you might receive no direct personal benefit from taking part in this study. However, your participation may help us understand the challenges of immigrant teachers of color. In addition, the benefits of taking part in this study is that this study will offer immigrant teachers of color a plethora of information that would help them understand the challenges and prejudice that other immigrant teachers of color have encountered in the U.S. public schools. This will offer emotional support to the immigrant teachers of color as they prepare for their teaching journey in the New Jersey.

What are your alternatives if you don't want to take part in this study?

There are no alternative treatments available. Your alternative is not to take part in this study.

How will you know if new information is learned that may affect whether you are willing to stay in this research study?

During the course of the study, you will be updated about any new information that may affect whether you are willing to continue taking part in the study. If new information is learned that may affect you, you will be contacted.

Will you be paid to take part in this study?

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

How will information about you be kept private or confidential?

All efforts will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential by using alias instead of your real names and keeping the information secured on a password protected computer. However, information may be provided if required by law.

What will happen if you are injured during this study?

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study.

What will happen if you do not wish to take part in the study or if you later decide not to stay in the study?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, or you may change your mind at any time. If you do not want to enter the study or decide to stop participating, you may do so without penalty.

What are your rights if you decide to take part in this research study?

You have the right to ask questions about any part of the study at any time. You should not sign this form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have been given answers to all of your questions. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you can call:

Office of Research Compliance (856) 256-4078– Glassboro/CMSRU

Who can you call if you have any questions?

You may contact Dr. Ane Turner Johnson at 856-256-4500 x3818 or johnsona@rowan.edu if you have questions about your rights as a research subject. Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not be penalized if you refuse to participate or decide to stop.

If you agree to participate, you must be given a signed copy of this document and a written summary of the research. You should not sign this form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have been given answers to all of your questions

Agreement to Participate in the Study

I have read this entire form, or it has been read to me, and I believe that I understand what has been discussed. All of my questions about this form or this study have been answered.

Subject Name: _____

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator Obtaining Consent:

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the full contents of the study including all of the information contained in this consent form. All questions of the research subject have been accurately answered.

Researcher Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Audio Addendum to Consent Form

You have already agreed to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Ane Turner Johnson. We are asking for your permission to allow us to audiotape as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for analysis by the research team.

The recording(s) will include identifiers such as the number of years of experience, title of role, and description of responsibilities within your role. Your name will not be audio-recorded.

The recording(s) will be stored in a locked file cabinet and linked with a code to subjects' identity in the form of a pseudonym. The recording(s) will be destroyed upon completion of the study procedures.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

AGREEMENT TO BE AUDIO RECORDED

I have read this entire form, or it has been read to me, and I believe that I understand what has been discussed. All of my questions about this form or this study have been answered.

Subject Name: _____

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator Obtaining Consent:

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the full contents of the study including all of the information contained in this consent form. All questions of the research subject have been accurately answered.

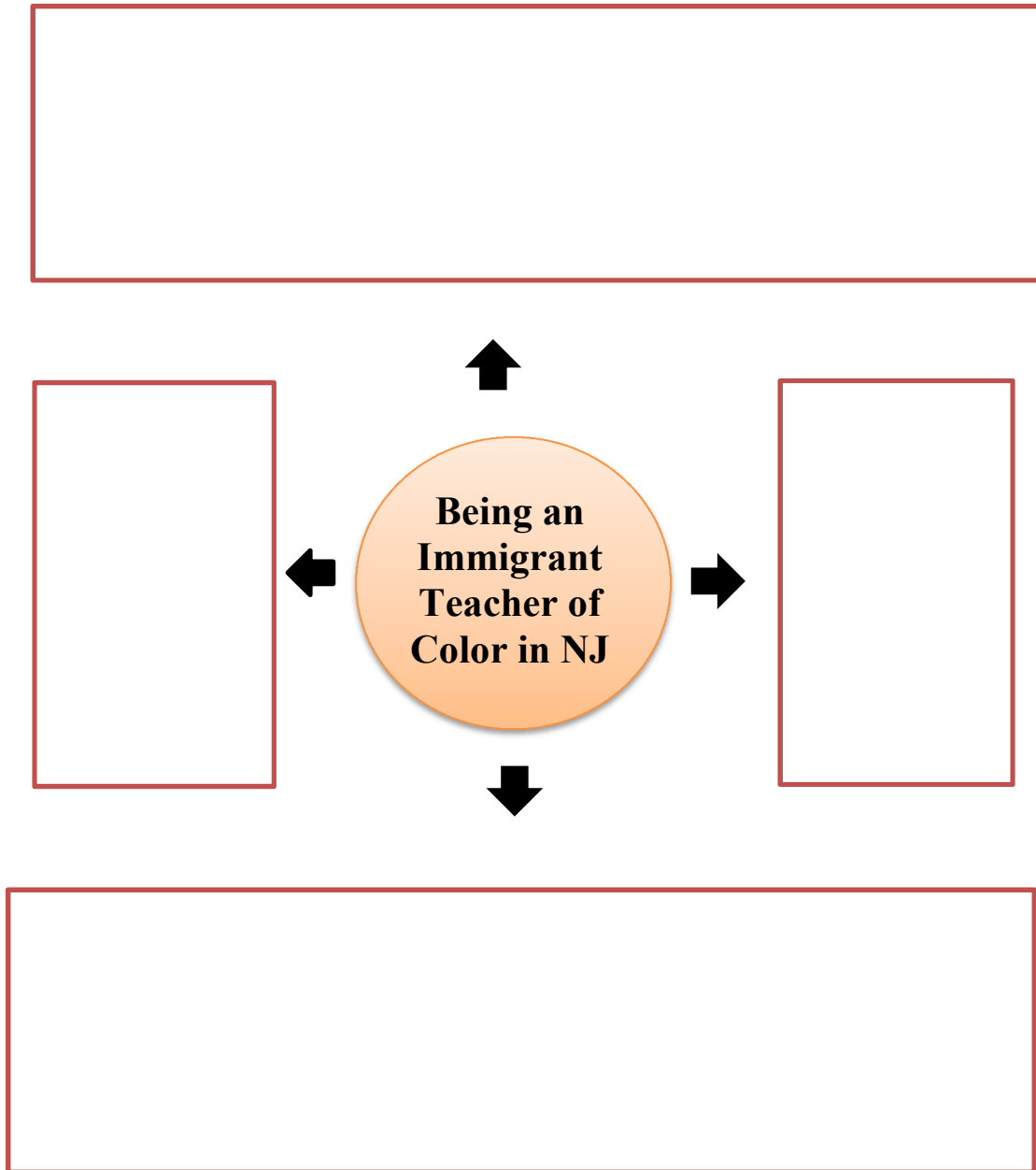
Researcher Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Graphic Elicitation Protocol

Please use the chart below to brainstorm ideas about your experience of being an immigrant teacher of color in New Jersey. You can do so by writing words, sentences, or drawing pictures.



Appendix D

Interview Protocol

1. How long have you been a teacher? What education and certifications did you have from your country of origin? How much of that was accepted here and what further education was necessary here to get a teacher certification?
2. What challenges and successes did you experience during the process of becoming a teacher in New Jersey?
3. Describe your experiences of being an immigrant teacher of color. What would you say is most significant about that experience? What would you say is the most challenging aspect of such experience?
4. Describe your induction process at your school? What do you enjoy about being a teacher at your school and what do you find challenging?
5. How do educational leaders (formal and informal) support you?
6. How is your culture represented and respected within the school?
7. Describe the nature of the work environment and the role that you play in organizational processes (decision-making, etc.).
8. What qualities do you think immigrant teachers of color bring to their school communities?
9. What factors contribute to the success of an immigrant teacher of color?
10. As an immigrant teacher of color, how do you describe your sense of belonging in your school community?