Preparing Students for a Global World

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Intercultural and Intersectional Competencies in Education

Edited by

Carlise Womack-Wynne,
Gerald K. LeTendre and
Anthony C. Ogden

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The Batschelet Endowment also supports the maintenance of the Intercultural Communication Education Resource Library, where educators can find more support for integrating ICC into classrooms: https://batschelet.org/resources/

The Endowment was established in 2001 as the result of a gift from Harry Batschelet, a 1953 graduate of the College of Education and former vice president for financial development at the American National Red Cross.

INTRODUCTION

PREPARING LEADERS TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF A GLOBALIZED WORLD

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GERALD K. LETENDRE, PH.D. AND
ANTHONY C. OGDEN, PH.D.

Abstract

This introduction highlights the importance of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and Intersectional Competence in preparing educators and leaders to navigate the challenges of a globally interconnected and diverse world. It explores how these competencies can foster inclusivity, address societal polarization, and combat misinformation in education and beyond. The chapter introduces key frameworks, including the Stanford Model, to illustrate practical strategies for managing cultural and linguistic diversity. Additionally, it provides an overview of the book's chapters, which examine topics such as anti-DEI movements, culturally sustaining pedagogy, the integration of ICC into curricula, and the use of virtual technologies like Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). Together, these themes emphasize the role of ICC and intersectional competence in promoting equity, inclusivity, and democratic citizenship within educational leadership. This foundational chapter sets the stage for understanding how these tools can transform education in an increasingly polarized world.

Introduction

The United States is experiencing a period of intense political conflict. At the same time, there has been a resurgence of nationalist parties around the world. Far-right parties in Europe have made, and continue to make, remarkable gains. Politicians around the globe are calling on voters to

reassert their "national identity" while castigating immigrants. Our world is also seeing mass human migration on a scale not experienced since WWII. This huge movement of people is driven by political instability, climate change and ongoing global economic inequality. Now, more than ever, we need better ways to communicate with one another.

At the most basic level, nationalist politics undercut international exchange – the unhindered movement of goods, services, and people. They also diminish concerns for human rights. Despite the international efforts to collaborate on a "conservative" agenda, nationalist ideologies prioritize national identity, not international understanding and respectful exchange. At a time when we need to prepare our students for a global economy and a world that increasingly relies on AI, nationalist politics block teachers' ability to realistically prepare students.

In the U.S., we see a clear retreat from international engagement and a reaction against immigrants. There is growing concern over the rise of White Christian Nationalism. The texture of political confrontation and contestation has also changed: national political issues are being brought into local school board meetings as nationally-funded groups actively work to influence school board elections. Instead of debating how to fund a new gymnasium, school boards must now consider Critical Race Theory (CRT) bans, the discouragement of "woke" education, and what to do about student protests of the War in Gaza.

In our world today, it is more imperative than ever to support the function of schools to promote democracy and democratic citizenship. This includes being able to reason and make decisions when faced with faulty reasoning, misinformation, and outright propaganda. AI and social media have made our world a truly "networked society." In an instant, news from Gaza, China or Ukraine appears on our cell phones. This means that political propaganda and "deep fakes," are being exchanged on a global level. Promoting communication skills and improving communicative competence in school is essential for students. If we wish to have a robust, democratic citizenship, then students must have critical reasoning skills to navigate the onslaught of well-financed and sophisticated propaganda.

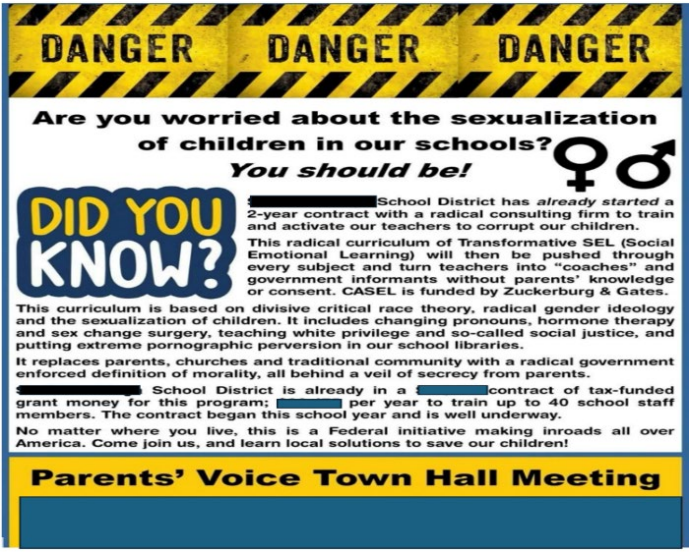
Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is a well-established set of practice-based communicative principles that is widely used in business, international affairs, political science and other disciplines. Both could greatly support school leaders as they deal with contentious politics and increasingly diverse populations. This book brings together leading

scholars who do work related to ICC and intersectional competence and asks them to distill the best practices that educational leaders can use. It provides a clear, concise overview of the basic principles, and can help leaders think about how to apply these concepts in their schools and universities.

Context

Prior to the 2025 presidential elections in the U.S., there was a remarkable mobilization of political activity at the local level, especially at local school boards. During the COVID-19 pandemic, local school boards became the site of conflict over masking mandates. This local political mobilization around national issues proved to be quite effective. This led a number of state legislatures and governors to target "woke" ideology, by which they meant any reference to diversity, equity and inclusion as well as socio-emotional learning and other terms. By misrepresenting what schools were actually doing, these national campaigns disrupted and distorted local discussions about the values and purpose of education. Consequently, local school leaders now face a minefield of issues at each school board meeting, where outspoken groups are well-positioned to shut down any meetings where DEI and related issues were discussed.

Figure 1.1: Email Attachment Circulated in Pennsylvania in 2023



The email flier shown in Figure 1 confounds critical race theory, "radical gender ideology" and "pornographic perversion" into a word salad of hot-button terms that are likely to draw attention and significant reaction. News reports from this district show that teachers and district officials had to repeatedly educate the public on what Transformative SEL really was. As stated on their webpage, transformative SEL (tSEL) "facilitates critical examination of individual and contextual factors that contribute to inequities and collaborative solutions that lead to personal, community, and societal well-being." tSEL works to empower students and adults to address inequities they see in their schools and communities. Part of the available web material specifically promotes anti-racist strategies and identifies white supremacy as a negative force blocking equality. Such terms as "anti-racist" and "white supremacy" are now linked by the federal government with racially polarizing strategies Our school leaders need effective communication strategies to clearly articulate their schools' goals.

Almost every communicative act, it seems, has become politicized, as both liberal and conservative politicians accuse the other side of spreading untruths. Politicians, academics and social critics across the political spectrum argue that disinformation has seriously distorted our national discourse. In a series of presidential order, the Trump administration has singled out the use of terms like "diversity, equity and education" as terms that convey specific ideological values. Further, the Presidential Executive Order "RESTORING FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ENDING FEDERAL CENSORSHIP" states: *Over the last 4 years, the previous administration trampled free speech rights by censoring Americans' speech … Under the guise of combatting "misinformation," "disinformation," and "malinformation," the Federal Government infringed on the constitutionally protected speech rights of American citizens across the United States in a manner that advanced the Government's preferred narrative about significant matters of public debate. …"*

Scholars of international relations argue that disinformation forms one of the greatest threats to our society. But, how does one begin to address concerns about disinformation, when the very terms and concepts we may use are politicized? Educational leaders today need exemplary communication skills to navigate this political minefield. While ICC has traditionally been used to improve communication across cultural divides (e.g. between people of different national cultures, or different sub-cultures within a nation) we believe that it can be useful in today's educational environment. Political polarization has created a situation where communities seem almost to be divided into two different cultures, perhaps

even different interpretations of reality. Here, ICC can provide educational leaders with some basic tools to improve their ability to communicate to their teachers, students and the surrounding community.

Intercultural Communicative Competence

In today's society, developing ICC is essential for leaders who must effectively navigate diverse multiple cultural contexts in their daily work environments.[1] At the heart of ICC is communicative competence – the development of basic communication skills and abilities commonly used in promotion and negotiation.[2] ICC allows individuals to develop the ability to interact appropriately and effectively with people from different cultural, linguistic, religious and political backgrounds. It emphasizes strategies of understanding perspectives, values, and communication styles prior to making judgements about intent. ICC does not require unconditional "acceptance" of other people's actions or values. Rather, ICC tends to clarify one's own core values in relation to others.

Good negotiators know that to come up with a solution, they must endeavor to understand and relate to the goals and objectives of all parties to the negotiation. Often, we enter into communication with others with little awareness of what the other side wants, or even what our desired outcomes are. As globalization and international migration continues to impact our schools and universities, it is critical for educational leaders at all levels to develop the ability to navigate different communicative styles and negotiate solutions when values, motives and assumptions may clash. As Deardoff underscores in her extensive work on ICC, there are many practical strategies that educators can use to promote intercultural communicative competence for themselves, their staff and students.[3]

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[1] M. Castells, "Informationalism, Networks, and the Network Society: A Theoretical Blueprint," in *The Network Society: A Crosscultural Perspective*, ed. M. Castells (United Kingdom: Edward Elgar, 2004), 3–48.
[2] R. Fisher, W.L. Ury, and B. Patton, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving* (in: Penguin, 2011).
[3] D. Deardoff, *Manual for Developing Intercultural Competencies - Story Circles* (Paris: UNESCO, 2020).

An Example of ICC – The Stanford Model - Dr. Gerald LeTendre

My first exposure to ICC occurred at Stanford in the late 1980s. Working with George and Louise Spindler, I was introduced to a program of ICC that the Spindlers had developed specifically for Stanford undergraduates. At the time the Spindlers were developing this program (e.g. the late 1960s and early 1970s) Stanford's student body was mostly white and from wealthy backgrounds. This meant that despite having attended the "best" schools and having access to wonderful tutors and enrichment activities, students had very little exposure to cultures other than their own. Their ability to get outside their comfort zones was limited.

The Spindlers and their colleagues developed what they called "cultural therapy" – a systematic approach to transcultural sensitization designed to improve student ability to communicate across cultural lines. Their system helped students to engage in "…the very complex process of perceiving and interpreting culturally relevant material across cultural boundaries." They did this by a series of simple exposure to material they collected in Germany.

Using just ten photographs they had taken while working in rural Germany in the 1960s, the Spindlers created an effective approach to ICC training. One of the photos shows an elderly woman bent over tying grape vines in a vineyard. Students were asked to interpret what the people in these photos were thinking and feeling. Students often thought they were unhappy about grueling, back-breaking labor. Actually, the women in this community said that while their backs did sometimes ache, their biggest worry was getting too old to work in the vineyard. For the people of this community, physical labor was a positive aspect of life. Working in the vineyard sustained them. The fact that these women prized difficult physical labor was culturally foreign to the students at Stanford, who largely came from wealthy backgrounds. Comparing their responses with the responses of the actual subjects in the photos allowed students to begin to see how their own culture framed their understanding.

In working with students over the years, the Spindlers were able to identify the conditions that create transcultural misperceptions and help students to be better able to recognize their own cultural values. This is the bedrock of all the various ICC techniques – it is not some magical technique for "reading" other cultures, but a deeper, considered understanding of how our own cultural values shape our impressions and reactions. Engaging in these

activities helped students to sharpen their awareness of problems in intercultural communication.

As Ghamrawi, Shal, and Ghamrawi found, school leaders, even in areas with little cultural diversity in Northern Minnesota benefit from basic training in ICC.[4] Systematic training in ICC provides school leaders with broad communicative skills that can be applied to a wide range of situations. Fantini also shows that ICC is a developmental process.[5] He notes (p. 6) that developing ICC allows leaders to: (i) establish and maintain relationships; (ii) communicate with minimal loss or distortion; and (iii) collaborate in order to accomplish something of mutual interest or need. These key skills of ICC are developed through a process that involves developing "(i) awareness, (ii) attitudes, (iii) skills, and (iv) knowledge".[6]

Both Fantini and Deardoff emphasize the development of a willingness to explore new situations or ideas as key initial step in developing ICC.[7] Akin to intellectual curiosity, this attitude of willingness requires developing the ability to tolerate uncomfortableness with new situations. All people find new situations stressful as we do not yet know what is required of us or how to act. Systematically trying to enter new situations – for example attending a cultural or sporting event you have never attended – can help us begin to develop and expand our ability to move outside our comfort zones.

This ability to get outside our comfort zones then allows us to further develop an ability to consider other people's behaviors, values and beliefs without immediately labeling or categorizing them. This does not mean that we "accept" actions or values that conflict with our own moral orientations, but rather that we first try to comprehend others rather than compare them to our own internal value system. In doing so, we often realize that the assumptions we were making about the values driving an individuals' action were misperceptions – and we gain a better understanding of what is truly motivating people.

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[4] N. Ghamrawi, T. Shal, and N.A. Ghamrawi, *Exploring the Impact of AI on Teacher Leadership: Regressing or Expanding?* (Education and Information Technologies, 2023).
[5] A.E. Fantini, "Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Necessary Ability for All," 2021.
[6] Fantini.
[7] Deardoff, *Manual for Developing Intercultural Competencies - Story Circles*.

Developing the ability to consider and deeply reflect on other people's behaviors, values and beliefs increases our flexibility and responsiveness. It also increases our ability to communicate with others. This in turn increases our own sense of self-efficacy and confidence that we can successfully negotiate new circumstances.

An Example of Intercultural Identity in Practice - Dr. Carlise Wynne

As a new teacher in rural Georgia in 2000, I found myself teaching at a local high school in a community that was deeply divided by racial and economic castes. The town was small, charming, and heavily influenced by local land owners and merchants, as most small towns are. There was a small private school, established in 1967, shortly before the integration of the two segregated high schools in the Fall of 1970. The community never truly integrated. While unspoken, racial undercurrents were never far from the surface. The school had a "public" and "private" version of each celebration (Homecoming dances, Prom, etc.) where the school sponsored event was largely attended by the African American community and the private event was held off campus and attended by any members of the community who did not wish to participate in the school sponsored event (primarily the White students). This division was also apparent when students voted on a "White" and "Black" prom queen. The divisions in this community were so ingrained that to those from the community, it was old hat and unnoticed.

I began my teaching career in my early twenties, of the dominant culture (ethnically, linguistically, and religiously), and Southern. Many elements of my identity were such that I had never had to confront the existence of multiple realities, and would not have been able to see elements of privilege in my life - which in itself, is the very nature of that privilege. I certainly did not understand that there were multiple elements of my own identity that made my ability to see the world very different from the perspectives of my students. If you had asked me, I would have quickly told you that I don't see color – that is what all good Southern girls say, right? In that single dismissal of both my identity (and the history of its related legacy in this particular town) as well as the various identities of my students, I had set myself up to fail them. And fail them I did. I taught, I did everything I thought I should do to perform the functions of my role. Unfortunately, teaching is so much more than presenting material. Teaching, really teaching, involves connecting with students on a personal level, building

relationships with their families, and being an ingrained part of the local community. How could I have done any of those things effectively without "seeing" my students?

In the spring of my first year teaching, my administration brought in a professional development team from a specific consultant that was popular at the time. While their approach and ideology was flawed in itself, it did have the result of helping me see that I was failing my students when I did not see them as they exist. Without realizing it, in that professional development, my life changed. In that moment, I realized that I could not give my students the tools they needed to succeed in class, much less in their futures, without acknowledging all facets of my own identity, my intersectionality, and more importantly, theirs. I could not provide a culturally relevant curriculum that was sanitized of all cultural elements with the exception of the dominant culture. I could not prepare students to face a future in education or industry without preparing them first to navigate within the microcosm of our classroom society thorough a shared study of Social Studies and History. I set out to expand my own learning, enrolling in a Masters Program the following Fall at a Historically Black College. These experiences set the stage to allow me to explore the facets of my own identity, pushed me out of my comfort zone, and forced me to confront concepts of bias, privilege, and access. The lessons I learned during that period encourage me to continue to learn, grow, and explore today. Those students will never know the impact that they had on my life, how they, just by existing and allowing me to teach them, altered the very course of my life path. It is now my goal as an educator to help my students to explore their identities so that they can better understand and provide for the needs of the students in their future classrooms.

As my career progressed, and I eventually moved into post-secondary education, I had the opportunity to begin to work in international settings. These experiences began with taking teacher candidates to Belize on a faculty led education abroad program. Over the course of the next two decades of work in that country, as well as others in the Middle East, Central and South East Asia, and Eastern Europe, I have repeatedly had to evaluate and reevaluate perceptions of who I am as an American, a woman, an educator, a mother, an academic, and a citizen of the world. Those experiences have helped me to crystalize who I am and how I see myself within the larger scope of our global society. Some of the most transformative moments of my life involve being forced out of my comfort zone and being compelled to examine my own understandings - of myself and of the world. Global competences, including intercultural competence

and intercultural communication became increasingly important to my own development. I now strive to bring those elements into the classroom so that my own students begin to examine who they are and how they see themselves within society. Additionally, in this highly connected and highly globalized world, they must be more reflective than I was at their age. Critical to their success as future educators will be their ability to identify and respond to the needs of their own students within the context of both the classroom and society. Preparing future educators to navigate social and cultural bounds is as critical to their ability to be effective as the content that they will teach.

An Example of Intercultural and Intersectional Identity in Practice - Dr. Anthony C. Ogden

I grew up in rural Kentucky, a first-generation college student with little exposure to the world beyond my hometown. I was also gay, though I had yet to fully explore what that meant for me. My understanding of life was shaped by the familiar—small-town values, tight-knit communities, and limited perspectives on difference.

That all changed in 1989 when, following my advisor's recommendation, I accepted a teaching position in Japan shortly after graduation. I knew nothing about Japan—its language, culture, or people. The idea of moving halfway across the world to a place so foreign to me was both exhilarating and terrifying.

I was assigned to a tiny village in western Japan, where I quickly realized I stood out in ways I never had before. With blond hair, light blue eyes, and fair skin, I was a novelty. People stared. Strangers touched my hair. Some took my photo without asking. And yet, much to my surprise, I loved it. Every day was an adventure—new customs to learn, a rich history to uncover, and my first steps toward understanding a new language. Perhaps most importantly, Japan offered me something I had never experienced before: the space to explore my sexuality. Away from the familiar expectations of home, I began to understand myself in new ways.

I stayed in Japan for several years, eventually moving to Tokyo, where I found myself leading a major education abroad center for American university students. Now, it was my job to help others navigate the complexities of cultural adaptation. My team was entirely Japanese, and I made a conscious decision that non-essential communication in the office would be in Japanese, even for students just beginning to learn the language.

This wasn't just about immersion—it was about respect. Too often, students would bypass the Japanese staff and come directly to me for assistance, assuming I was the one who could best address their concerns. I wanted them to engage with the culture and the people around them, rather than expecting Japan to adapt to them.

Then, one semester, a young African American male student joined our program. He was intelligent, charismatic, and already an advanced speaker of Japanese—someone I assumed would thrive in this environment. Midway through the semester, he came to my office carrying a large stack of Japanese language textbooks and notebooks. He told me he was leaving the program.

"I don't understand why Japanese people hate me," he said.

He described how, on crowded trains, the seat next to him often remained empty, or people would move away when he sat down. Strangers assumed he was an athlete. When he shopped, he felt watched, as if suspected of theft. When he went out with friends, he felt hypersexualized.

I was shocked. I had believed that, as a minority in the U.S., he would have developed coping strategies for dealing with stereotypes abroad. I had underestimated how different forms of discrimination manifest in different cultural contexts—and how isolating that can be. For him, the experience was not just difficult; it was unbearable. Despite my efforts to support him, he was resolute in his decision to leave.

I failed this student.

For all my own experiences navigating identity, I had not fully prepared for his. His departure forced me to confront my own blind spots. I had been so focused on encouraging students to immerse themselves in Japanese culture that I hadn't created enough space for them to process the ways their own identities would be perceived and challenged. It was a lesson in humility and a turning point in how I approached international education.

Intercultural experiences are not just about language proficiency or cultural adaptation; they are about the deeply personal ways in which identity is shaped and reshaped by the world around us. My time in Japan taught me that. And it is a lesson I carry with me to this day.

Intersectional Competence

The emergency of the concept of Intersectionality in the 1970s originally aimed at identifying and dismantling overlapping systems of oppression within already marginalized groups, such as black lesbian women. Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term in the late 1980's and expanded on the work, bringing the original ideology into mainstream discourse. The application of the term is broader now, and applied in education, health care, and academic research to assist researchers and scholars with examining structures of oppression and how to create equitable systems of change. This is particularly important in education where access to an "equal" education is not always equitable. The use of the term intersectionality in this volume will be both in keeping with the original construct as Crenshaw envisioned, but also applied to the larger context and coupled with the concept of intercultural competence in order to provide a framework on which to study various elements of the intersection of identify and culture within the education system. The purpose of this shared space approach in examining perspectives on education given the current state of global and national political and societal trends is to provide a toolkit for educators to better understand themselves and the students in their care.

Implications

In the early 1990s, scholars began to predict the consequences of population growth, political instability and climate change on human society. The news in recent years – horrifying stories of boatloads of refugees capsizing in the Mediterranean Sea – has shown us that we are now dealing with the impacts of these larger, global changes. In 2015 at Keleti Station in Budapest volunteers provided a food, clothing and tents for refugees fleeing the Syrian and Afghanistan conflicts. Shortly after large numbers of migrants had flooded over the borders of Hungary, Bulgaria and other central European nations, the barricades began to be erected. From the 1980s the trend in Europe had been to reduce barriers. Now, in 2025, we see the resurrection of border controls, right-wing parties are growing in power, and nationalist rhetoric is common. Nations in Europe, and around the world, are struggling with how to handle the crisis of mass human migration. In the U.S., the administration has begun a process of mass deportation of illegal immigrants. Our world is seeing a reversal of the globalization trends and increasingly being re-divided along national lines

ICC is not a panacea. The forces driving our current conflicts are too complex and intermeshed to allow a simple solution. The 2024 conflicts on U.S. campuses around the Israeli-Hamas war are just one example of the myriad ways that conflict in one area of the world spills out into another. But, for a principal, college administrator or school board member, improving school or university members ICC will provide some tools to deal with the conflicts and miscommunications that arise. Improved ICC gives school leaders perspectives on how to deal with hostile rhetoric and how to engage with groups that have seemingly irreconcilable social or religious value conflicts. While ICC cannot solve the problems that schools and universities face, it can be a major tool for improving communication in an era where communication is so often contentious and acrimonious.

Book Structure

The chapters in this book provide an in-depth exploration of intersectional and intercultural competence (ICC), offering both theoretical insights and practical applications tailored to educational leaders navigating diverse and complex contexts. Each chapter draws on foundational theories and empirical research, equipping readers with strategies to foster inclusivity, equity, and global engagement in educational settings.

In **Chapter 1**, Joshua Cuevas, Jason Miller, and Bryan Dawson examine the anti-DEI movements in the U.S., highlighting how misconceptions about Critical Race Theory (CRT) in K-12 and higher education have fueled direct attacks on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. They discuss how legislation in numerous states seeks to limit DEI support in educational institutions, potentially infringing on First Amendment rights and disproportionately affecting already at-risk students. The authors explore the psychological traits common among DEI opponents, including authoritarianism, binary and conspiratorial thinking, extreme right-wing ideologies, religious extremism, susceptibility to misinformation, and prejudice—typically targeting individuals based on race, gender identity, and sexual orientation. In contrast, they present research showing that individuals with analytic cognitive styles, cognitive flexibility, and open-minded thinking are less likely to exhibit these traits and more likely to support DEI principles. The chapter concludes by exploring how intercultural competence (ICC) can positively influence cognition and provides strategies to promote inclusivity through thoughtful engagement with DEI issues.

In **Chapter 2,** Annmarie Jackson, Cristina Washell, Sarah Williams, and Sanjuana Rodriguez explore how cultural and linguistic identities can serve as powerful tools for fostering inclusive education. They outline strategies for educators, administrators, and teacher educators to develop intercultural competencies in themselves and encourage these skills in their students. Beginning with reflections on their own cultural identities, the authors draw on Paulo Freire's concept of critical self-reflection to emphasize that understanding one's cultural identity is essential for effectively engaging with others from diverse backgrounds.[8] Using specific examples from their work with preservice teachers, they highlight key moments that shaped stronger intercultural competencies and provide practical insights for addressing cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom. The chapter concludes with implications for teacher educators and school leaders, offering actionable ways to build on students' cultural and linguistic identities as vehicles for creating inclusive and engaging learning environments.

In **Chapter 3**, Mildred Boveda, Lindsey M. Pike, Elizabeth A. Ruiz, and Christina S. Gilhuber focus on the concept of intersectional competence as a framework for advancing collaboration and inclusivity in educational contexts. Grounded in Black feminist theory, the chapter highlights how intersectionality can serve as a powerful tool for understanding and addressing the complexities of identity and oppression in education. The authors provide a synthesis of literature on intersectional competence, tracing its development since Boveda's introduction of the construc.t[9] Using examples from university-based teacher education programs, they illustrate how intersectional competence can be applied in practice. The chapter concludes with recommendations for implementing intersectional competence in intercultural exchanges and educational collaborations.

Chapter 4, authored by Kayla M. Johnson, transitions the focus to higher education, exploring the relationship between intercultural competence, educational equity, and education abroad experiences for marginalized students. Johnson examines systemic barriers that these students face,

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[8] P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (New York, N.Y: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1970).

[9] M. Boveda, "Beyond Special and General Education as Identity Markers: The Development and Validation of an Instrument to Measure Preservice Teachers' Understanding of the Effects of Intersecting Sociocultural Identities," *FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations*, 2016, https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/etd/2998.

including deficit narratives and cultural incongruence, and emphasizes the importance of fostering asset-based perspectives. The chapter advocates for educational approaches that promote empathy, self-reflection, and a positive self-concept among marginalized students, empowering them to engage more fully with their home and host cultures. Johnson provides actionable recommendations for creating inclusive education abroad programs that enhance students' intercultural competence and global engagement.

In **Chapter 5**, Allison J. Bailey, Ashley Schulte, and Sara Kim investigate the intentional integration of intercultural competence into university curricula. They examine the evolving expectations of today's students, who increasingly demand experiential, career-relevant, and multimodal learning opportunities. The chapter addresses barriers to incorporating ICC in higher education, including faculty resistance and the challenges of teaching diverse classrooms. The authors propose strategies for faculty professional development and curriculum redesign, emphasizing the importance of cross-cultural community building, technological innovations, and adapting teaching methods to meet the needs of both undergraduate and graduate students.

Technology has radically re-shaped how education is delivered around the world.

In **Chapter 6**, Joseph Levitan explores the integration of intercultural competence (ICC) into culturally grounded online and virtual instruction, addressing persistent challenges in implementing culturally responsive and sustaining education. Despite long standing calls for such approaches (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2023; Paris, 2012, 2021), schools often struggle to align materials with curricular standards, develop intercultural teaching competencies, and meet the needs of diverse classrooms. Levitan draws on a large-scale identity-responsive digital learning project in Andean Peru, where since 2020, 19 schools and 418 teachers have engaged in a district-wide curricular change initiative. The chapter, grounded in identity-responsive and culturally sustaining curriculum design provides a step-by-step guide for using digital "teachnologies" to create inclusive, competency-based learning materials.[10] By mapping curricula, incorporating community voices, and blending digital and place-based learning, Levitan demonstrates how these methods can transform classrooms. Practical examples offer a

[10] J. Levitan and K.M. Johnson, "Salir Adelante: Collaboratively Developing Culturally-Grounded Curriculum with Marginalized Communities," *American Journal of Education* 126, no. 2 (2020): 195–230.

blueprint for educators seeking to foster culturally aligned and impactful learning environments.

Finally, in **Chapter 7**, Keiko Ikeda examines the intersection of virtual technologies, intercultural competence, and global collaboration within the framework of "Society 5.0." This chapter explores the transformative potential of COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) Virtual Exchange, which bridges geographical and cultural divides through virtual collaboration. Ikeda highlights how COIL fosters global mindsets, intercultural understanding, and cross-cultural engagement, envisioning a future where virtual exchange becomes a cornerstone of education in the digital age. The chapter emphasizes the importance of integrating technological advancements and intercultural collaboration to prepare students for the complexities of a globally interconnected world.

Together, these chapters provide a rich and multifaceted exploration of the theories, strategies, and practices that underpin intersectional and intercultural competence. By addressing both theoretical and practical dimensions, this book equips educational leaders with the tools and insights needed to create inclusive, equitable, and globally connected learning environments that meet the challenges of contemporary education.

Conclusion

Political conflict around immigrant and international issues has only intensified in the time since this mansucript was sent to the publisher. The mobilization of federal agents, and the threat of federal troops, harkens back to the most intense years of the Vietnam War protests. Polarization, and even mass protests, are not new to American society, but we must now accept that we live in a globalized world where information can be shared almost instantaneously across national borders. Sadly, such globalism has not reduced ethnic, religious or political tensions. Instead we see a hardening of positions – a rejection of both political compromise and real societal dialog.

Effective communication skills are of utmost importance for school leaders, particularly those involved in crisis management and conflict resolution. School leaders at all levels must navigate the challenging task of promoting conversations surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion, all while dealing with regional or federal restrictions on certain topics within schools. Intercultural Communication Competence has been effectively developed by many different disciplines in ways that allow individuals to deal with

cultural miscommunication. Along the way, it has shown promise in equipping leaders with the skills necessary to drive change in the face of deep-rooted political conflicts. We hope that the knowledge provided in these chapters can enable leaders to navigate diverse cultural contexts and acknowledge the intersections of different identities and forms of discrimination.

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CHAPTER ONE

POLARIZATION OF DEI IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

In recent years there have been attempts to undermine public education as the outcry over Critical Race Theory morphed into attacks on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives despite benefits that cross-cultural interactions have for all students, as predicted by Intergroup Contact Theory. Research shows characteristics such as authoritarianism and religious fundamentalism are related to hostility towards DEI in education. Individual psychological traits such as information processing ability, cognitive flexibility, and cognitive style may play a role in opposition to DEI. Dual Process Theory suggests an intuitive cognitive style, as opposed to reflective/analytic thinking, is associated with tendencies to believe and spread disinformation and antipathy towards DEI principles. Educational interventions designed to increase reflective thinking, such as paradoxical questioning, intercultural learning, and debiasing training, may have benefits in reducing prejudice and encourage an analytic approach to processing novel information, particularly in regard to DEI and cross-cultural interactions.

Introduction

The last two decades in the U.S. have seen unprecedented changes in perceptions of public education. For example, there is declining support across the U.S. for universities among conservative Republicans, of which

76% believe that higher education has a negative impact on the country[1]. In 2020, a new topic of concern, Critical Race Theory (CRT), became a central political issue in campaigns across the country[2]. Tumult followed as some citizens became convinced that the tenets of CRT were being taught in public schools and universities. Backlash and subsequent attacks from the far-right political spectrum have subsequently had detrimental effects on education[3] in regard to the hiring and retention of teachers[4] and basic academic freedoms[5].

The realization that CRT is not a component of K-12 public education or teacher education resulted in a shift from political vitriol against CRT to attacks on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts that had been aimed at improving educational outcomes for all students for decades. Whereas right-wing attacks on higher education had been a cause for concern for some time[6], new tactics were organized in ways that had not been seen before[7]. Politically motivated citizens protested, fueled by the rhetoric of conservative pundits and politicians, at times attempting to take control of school boards in order to mandate the content of the curriculum.

Laws were enacted to limit the topics teachers can include in their lessons regarding DEI[8]. Upwards of 100 bills across 17 states were proposed to censor teaching practices, which represent unprecedented attacks on human rights and democratic ideals[9]. Since 2021, 15 states have passed laws intended to limit teaching specifically on race and gender issues[10], and 25

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[1] Dunn and Cerda, "Anti-Corporate Sentiment in U.S. Is Now Widespread in Both Parties."
[2] Cuevas, "The Authoritarian Threat to Public Education: Attacks on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Undermine Teaching and Learning."
[3] Fund, "Critical Race Theory: Frequently Asked Questions."
[4] Natanson, "Never Seen It This Bad: America Faces Catastrophic Teacher Shortage"; Nittle, "The National Teacher Shortage Is Growing. In Florida, Controversial Laws Are Making It Worse."
[5] Kezar and Culver, "Leadership Provocation: Silence Is Complicity."
[6] Cuevas, "A New Reality: The Far right's Use of Cyber-Harassment against Academics"; Cuevas, "Addressing the Crisis in Education: External Threats, Embracing Cognitive Science, and the Need for a More Engaged Citizenry."
[7] Pace, "Learning to Teach Controversial Issues: A Path Forward."
[8] Ray and Gibbons, "Why Are States Banning Critical Race Theory? Brooking Institute"; Sawchuk, "What Is Critical Race Theory and Why Is It under Attack?"
[9] Pace, "Learning to Teach Controversial Issues: A Path Forward."
[10] Kelderman, "The Plan to Dismantle DEI."

more are considering similar legislation[11]. Such efforts further exacerbate existing teacher shortages[12], leading to instances in some states where classroom teachers are not required to have college degrees or any training in their subject[13].

Many legislative attempts to prohibit DEI have been aimed at higher education, which ultimately undermine the basic tenets of academic freedom and justice so central to its mission[14]. Well-funded, far-right organizations like the Leadership Institute and Turning Point have fueled distrust and animosity towards higher education on college campuses and among the public. Two conservative think tanks, the Manhattan Institute and Goldwater Institute, recently created model legislation outlining how state legislatures can dismantle DEI initiatives in higher education[15]. These plans would forbid the hiring of DEI officers or administrators and prohibit DEI training, diversity statements, and declared commitments to social justice. The proposed legislation would allow students, faculty, and alumni to bring lawsuits against universities for promoting DEI initiatives. The bills would prohibit colleges from taking official positions on anti-racism, systemic oppression, and social justice.

Actions by legislators in the State of Georgia provide two key examples of the consequences of politicians' efforts to restrict DEI initiatives. In 2022, a state representative on the Georgia House Appropriations Committee, which oversees state funding for higher education, requested all public institutions provide information on DEI involvement (see Appendix A). The letter asked for information on any faculty who are involved in DEI programs and their salaries. It specified that this pertained to any individuals who "advance, advocate, or support" issues of gender, racial identity, ethnicity, anti-racism, social justice, bias, or DEI. Chillingly, the representative requested details about whether faculty conduct research and scholarship in any of those aforementioned areas, including publications and materials that contain the terms "anti-racism" or "equity", as well as publications generated at institutions that reference certain authors associated with social justice. The inquiry implied that funding for colleges

[11] Thorp, "Words Yes, Actions Unlikely."
[12] Natanson, "Never Seen It This Bad: America Faces Catastrophic Teacher Shortage"; Nittle, "The National Teacher Shortage Is Growing. In Florida, Controversial Laws Are Making It Worse."
[13] Ali, "Florida Hopes to Recruit Veterans to Address Dire Teacher Shortage."
[14] Kezar and Culver, "Leadership Provocation: Silence Is Complicity."
[15] Kelderman, "The Plan to Dismantle DEI."

could be put at risk, as well as faculty's job status, should they attempt to advance social justice issues.

At the same time this legislator was attempting to undermine DEI initiatives in higher education, others were passing State of Georgia House Bill 1084[16], directed at public school teachers. The bill restricts the teaching of "divisive concepts", which are vaguely defined. A close reading of the bill reveals that it is designed to restrict classroom discourse associated with DEI. It instituted procedures for parents to make complaints against teachers whose instruction or materials may include those DEI topics that could be deemed divisive concepts, which could lead to suspension, termination, or the revocation of teaching certificates. The bill bans training programs and teacher certification criteria related to DEI. Language within the bill does permit dialogue related to equity and race so long as it is deemed within the appropriate academic context and relevant to the content area. However, the ambiguity over what defines a divisive concept and the vague criteria that teachers may be sanctioned for function as a mechanism to restrict the content and speech that teachers may use in their instruction.

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) classifies bills of this nature as educational gag orders and asserts that they infringe on academic freedom[17]. Indeed, in 2023 the first teacher was fired as a result of having violated Bill 1084[18]. She was an elementary school teacher with 10 years of experience who purchased a book from the school's own book fair, allowed students to vote on which book she would read, and read their choice to her 5th graders. The book has an inclusive theme meant to challenge gender stereotypes and encourage students to embrace differences and is written for elementary-aged children. Yet somehow this book, sold at the school's book fair, was deemed to fall under the divisive concepts classification and cost the teacher her job. This example shows that legislation such as the bill passed in Georgia, and which many other states are enacting, has real-life consequences for students and teachers.

[16] "State of Georgia, House Bill 1084."
[17] University Professors, "Educational Gag Orders: Legislative Interference in Teaching about Race."
[18] Flannery, "Katie Rinderle Is Not Alone: The Georgia Teacher Was Fired for Reading Aloud a Book She Bought at Her school's Book Fair."

The Influence of Authoritarianism

The increase in attacks on DEI is very likely related to the rise of Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and authoritarian policies in the Republican Party[19]. RWA is defined by three clusters or subtypes: submission to authority, conventionalism, and authoritarian aggression[20]. Submission to authority is connected to authoritarians' tendency to provide unquestioning support for leaders seen as "strong." This may lead authoritarian followers to at times accept wrongdoing by those leaders who exhibit strength. Authoritarian submission has been particularly common among the Republican Party electorate, as 48% of Republicans say they desire leaders who will break rules to accomplish their ends, while only 29% of Democrats say the same[21]. Authoritarian conventionalism refers to a preference for leaders who support conventional or traditional values. Changes that diverge from conventional/traditional values are seen as existential threats by authoritarian followers. They may believe these changes may end their society as they know it. Authoritarian aggression is directed at social groups pushing for progressive change, who are seen as threats to ingroup norms and are met with resistance[22].

Jost et al.,[23] established that political ideologies such as RWA result from differences in various psychological needs and motives. For example, people are motivated to avoid ambiguity and instead prefer structure and order, but the strength of this motive varies from person to person. According to this view, RWA best provides people with structure and order while removing ambiguity. Jost et al., conducted a meta-analysis and found that individuals who are more likely to support RWA and other conservative ideologies tend to be high in the need for psychological order, structure, closure, and threat sensitivity, yet low in acceptance of ambiguity and tolerance of uncertainty.

Strong leaders who use aggression to enforce ingroup norms are seen positively by authoritarians, and this aggression thus enhances the leader's

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[19] Hindle and Lindberg; P.R.R.I., "Threats to American Democracy Ahead of an Unprecedented Presidential Election."
[20] Altemeyer, *Right-Wing Authoritarianism*.
[21] P.R.R.I., "Threats to American Democracy Ahead of an Unprecedented Presidential Election."
[22] Crandall et al., "When We See Prejudice: The Normative Window and Social Change."
[23] Jost et al., "Political conservatism as motivated social cognition."

image among his followers. The shift toward aggressive authoritarian leadership has occurred around the world in recent decades. President Putin's authoritarian policies in Russia[24] are probably the most prominent. The Orbán regime in Hungary has moved the country ever closer to an authoritarian state[25]. Analyses of the governments in India, Israel, and Turkey, nations that once more closely mirrored American-style democracies, have found that their heads of state (Prime Minister Modi, Prime Minister Netanyahu, President Erdoğan respectively), have all shifted toward authoritarianism. Some authoritarian parallels between these leaders include the denigration of the free press, increased marginalization of ethnoreligious minorities, and economic policies that further disadvantage the poor.

Donald Trump is the prototypical example of a strong/tough authoritarian leadership style[26]. Unsurprisingly, authoritarian tendencies were correlated with the likelihood to support Donald Trump in the 2016 elections. Interestingly, authoritarianism even predicted support for Trump against other Republicans during the 2016 Republican Primaries[27] which suggests that conservatives were likely to support the candidate who displayed the highest level of authoritarianism over those who held similar policy positions but showed less authoritarianism. Trump's vow to build a wall on the southern border is an example that draws together several authoritarian traits. It allowed him to be perceived as a strong, aggressive leader while fueling xenophobic fears of those from other backgrounds and cultures, particularly of non-Whites.

The movement toward "Trumpian" authoritarianism is not just national but is also occurring at local levels across the U.S. Trump's successful election normalized the prejudiced and bigoted language he used toward marginalized groups[28]. This likely emboldened other authoritarian politicians at the local and state levels to be more open in supporting prejudicial policies and become more aggressive in attempting to pass those

[24] Everett, "Russia in the Putin Era" A Case of Bureaucratic Authoritarianism?"
[25] Fabry, "Neoliberalism, Crisis and Authoritarian ethicist Reaction: The Ascendancy of the Orbán Regime."
[26] Knuckey and Hassan, "Authoritarianism and Support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election."
[27] Womick et al., "Group-Based Dominance and Authoritarian Aggression Predict Support for Donald Trump in the 2016 US Presidential Election."
[28] Crandall et al., "When We See Prejudice: The Normative Window and Social Change."