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# Negotiating cross-cultural, interfaith, and cross-linguistic identities of teacher education in professional and personal spaces

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## Research Questions

This study used a qualitative self-study method approach to investigate the differences and similarities of how three partnering researchers have developed complex identities as teacher educators representing different backgrounds. The research questions were:

- ❖ How did the researchers learn to navigate their public and private spaces defined by cross-cultural, interfaith, and cross-linguistic experiences?
- ❖ How did the researchers negotiate the intersectionalities of their multi-dimensional public and private selves?

## Methods

### Participants

- ❖ **Gender:** 3 female researchers (100%) at suburban college
- ❖ **Ethnicity:** Caucasian (66.6%), and Asian/American (33.3%)
- ❖ **Country of origin:** Hungary (33.3%), Poland (33.3%), United States (33.3%) with Indian-Pakistani heritage
- ❖ **Languages spoken by three researchers:**

English (n=3, 100%)	Hungarian (n=1, 33.3%)
Russian (n=2, 66.6%)	German (n=1, 33.3%)
Hindi/Urdu (n=1, 33%)	Polish (n=1, 33.3%)
- ❖ **Faith:** Nondenominational (33.3%), Abrahamic (33.3%), and Roman Catholic (33.3%)
- ❖ **Years of teaching experience:** 21 (33.3%), 16 (33.3%), and 13 (33.3%), Total of 50 years of teaching, Mean = 16.7

### Procedure

Researchers followed the **self-study methodology** for teacher educators aimed at improving professional practice settings, as well as **collaborative inquiry** of self-initiated, focused, interactive, and improvement driven method (LaBoskey, 2004).

### Qualitative Data Sources

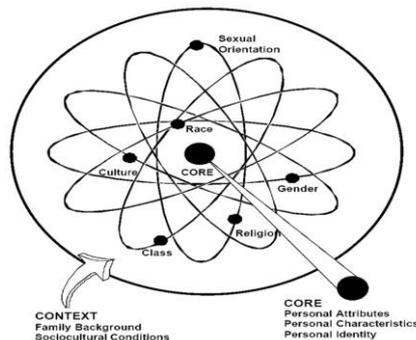
Three types of data sources were collected with the focus on cross-cultural, interfaith and cross-linguistic identities dimensions:

- (1) Two personal written narratives with stories reflective of experiences in professional and personal spaces.
- (2) Three digitally recorded dialogues as shared reflections, each focused on one of the dimensions
- (3) One digital recording of teaching practice and one written reflection based on own teaching about:
  - ❖ cultural notions which were most salient in the ways they teach their students
  - ❖ points of harmony or discord between frameworks of cultural reference and those of their students

## Methods (continued)

### Multiple Dimensions of Identity Model

(Jones & McEwen, 2000)



## Results

**Research Question 1-** How did the researchers learn to navigate their public and private spaces defined by cross-cultural, interfaith, and cross-linguistic experiences?

- ❖ Preliminary data analysis revealed that, while the researchers hailed from diverse experiences and backgrounds, their practices were aimed at consistently finding a common denominator of understanding with colleagues and students.
- ❖ Being from backgrounds that were linguistically and culturally divergent from norm had a significant impact in the development of their practice, particularly in the realm having a sense of responsibility to give voice to others who were from diverse backgrounds.
- ❖ The researchers also found that having such diverse backgrounds allowed for easy camaraderie with multi-faith, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic others because of the struggle to assimilate but also create a separate identity is a often a synonymous experience, regardless of background.

## Results (continued)

**Research Question 2 -** How did the researchers negotiate the intersectionalities of their multi-dimensional public and private selves?

- ❖ In analyzing the data associated with the researcher dialogs, the idea of assuming mentor and leader roles was particularly salient and was a recurring theme.
- ❖ Specifically, the researchers emphasized their commitment to mentoring students to help them understand that a multi-dimensional background is harmonious with achievement of different roles—whether the role be researcher, writer, or teacher.
- ❖ For each participant, having a multi-dimensional private self was an avenue to help to increase the public self's level of understanding of others' experiences and to assume leadership and mentorship roles that were collaborative and ever-evolving.

## Conclusions

Participating in this process of self-study allowed the researchers to engage in enhanced critical reflection about their teaching practice and how it is molded by their cultural heritage and experience. The interplay of cross-linguistic, cross-cultural, and interfaith factors in the context of professorhood, uncovered that all of these factors can be mitigated within each person and not become stumbling blocks in fulfilling professional and personal goals and responsibilities. To the contrary, they can continuously enrich teaching practices of their students, as well as interactions in their personal spaces.

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