CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN THE FIELD OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: SCHOOL SUPERVISOR EXPERIENCES AND BELIEFS

by

LAUREN A. ROBINSON MORET

(Under the direction of Kathleen deMarrais and John Dayton)

ABSTRACT

As U.S. school systems are called upon to serve increasingly diverse student populations, school leaders must expand their roles to help teachers meet all students' academic, social, and cultural needs. The purpose of this study was to examine culturally competent instructional leadership by interviewing principals and assistant principals known for their commitment to culturally responsive supervision. Eleven school leaders from four states participated in this in-depth interview study. Using inductive, qualitative analysis, this interpretive study examined how the administrators learned these skills and modeled them for teachers through the practice of instructional supervision. A model was constructed to illustrate the key findings of the study, which were as follows: Leaders encountered inequity and differential treatment early in their lives or as new teachers, and these experiences ultimately shaped who they became as school supervisors. Leaders used culturally responsive pedagogies as teachers, and now build on those skills in their supervision practices. Leaders described what it meant to be culturally competent in their work as K-12 instructional supervisors and practiced awareness as a way to "know" their instructional supervision work. Leaders shared the importance of connecting professionally and

personally with teachers through relationship building. Finally, leaders engaged in multiple strategies to support teachers in becoming knowledgeable about students and their communities. These findings have implications for the preparation and socialization of new school supervisors and indicate a need to examine in greater detail cultural competency used by instructional leaders.

INDEX WORDS: Instructional leadership; Instructional supervision; Principal leadership; Cultural competence; Culturally responsive schooling; Leadership development; Diversity.

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DEDICATION

This journey is dedicated to all women and single individuals trying to make it ‘out there’ in the world. You can, and you will succeed. Your voice matters.

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To my parents…it's been a long road. And this leg of the journey has brought us closer together than ever before. I know how much I am loved and appreciated. I am able to turn around and give out ten times more love because of the life lessons you've shown me. We may not have always agreed, but somehow we've come to a place of agreement. I love you Danny and Gail Moret, so much that it hurts.

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I wish to thank my participants and honor them for the courageous work they do in schools every day of the year. They have committed to a career of supporting communities of people. They engage with their own families to be a part of the school community within which

they work, supporting others not only throughout the school workday, but after hours, on the weekends, and through time off for belief system and nationally recognized holidays. You are sheroes and heroes to me. Thank you for sharing part of your story with me and with others who wish to learn from your depth of experience.

I love you Karl. Thank you for enriching my life and supporting me through this paw-cess.

POETIC ABSTRACT – CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN THE FIELD OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Hi I'm Lauren and this is my research,
At the lil red school house,
a place we all knew first.

My research is focused on leadership,
leadership in the schools,
'cause we got diversity growth, says the US Census,
we cannot be fools.

Our school leaders need to supervise all teachers instructionally,
but how do they know how to do it culturally competently?
What is cultural competency? And what is instructional supervision?
It's considering identity, race, family structure, y'all, and improving the teaching mission.

I drafted criteria from literature,
to find key themes describing a culturally responsive practitioner.
From these criteria, I spoke to ed professionals,
you know, former superintendents, professors, and policy making actors.
They recommended specific people I talk to,
principals and assistants who fit the bill.
These are the leaders who know how to lead in times of change well.

So who are these leaders and what did they share?
They are from Georgia, Mississippi, California, and Washington State,
and here's what they bared…

Experiences, beliefs, and practices modeled with teachers and community,
Just how they lead others to examine self-bias and its effects more fully.
'Cause in the classroom, teachers don't realize, they've got stereotypes too.
Just cause you're Asian or poor, White or single-parented, means you have voice too.
What you've seen in your life, imprints a record for review.
If you don't check what's playing, you might violate or discriminate too.

What I found from these culturally conscious leaders
Are beliefs and practices modeled with teachers.
Early experience with discrimination and inequity,
Knowing that's not how the world's supposed to be,
These leaders channel knowledge to work culturally competently.

They use call and response, and encourage teachers to take risks.
They are visible in the hallway, classrooms, cafeteria, library,
but keep distance at weddings & bris.
They used this stuff as teachers and now as leaders too,
using language they've learned through the years to talk it all through.
These leaders "Know" their work, and share what they know with others,
connecting professionally and personally with fellow educator sisters and brothers.

So what does this mean for the future, what will happen in schools?
We need support to focus on ongoing learning, succession, and socialization rules.
We need to develop more self-awareness, reflexivity, and the like.
We should consider cultural humility, it's okay to ask questions, even if they aren't phrased "right."

Leaders will supervise and teachers will teach.
School districts will ebb and flow and students will reach.
Our world is complex and it comes as no surprise,
Supporting change and growth, culturally conscious instructional leaders are in the wise.

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INTRODUCTION

The principal walked into my 7th grade, public school classroom for what I expected to be a routine, informal observation. I wasn't sure because this was my first year at this school, and he had never been in my classroom before. It was the end of February. He sat in the back of the room, opened his notebook, and stared out into my colorful classroom with his pen in hand. No writing yet.

He seemed to be occupied by the statements of empowerment and support lining the upper classroom walls. "Be the change you want to see in the world." "When you look at yourself in the mirror, how do you see yourself, versus how does the rest of the world see you?" Maybe he found the phrases uplifting, or the many colors distracting. I didn't know. Either way, he stayed in his chair with a blank look on his face for about 15 minutes, until the bell rang.

I couldn't make out what he was feeling or thinking. What was he looking for in his observation? Engagement of my students? Check. Differentiation of ESL instruction? Check. Connection to district standards using language the students could understand? Check. Preparation for state exams? Check. I wasn't sure what he wanted or how his feedback would support me, but I did know I was interested in what this veteran teacher of 32 years could offer me. I was thinking, "a lot."

While at first glance we may have looked similar on the outside, both with light complexions, we were very different from one another: he, a White, Catholic man from Southern California with a background of teaching in private schools; me, a White, Jewish woman from the Southeastern U.S. with only six-and-a-half years of teaching under my belt, all in an inner-city, public system. We were very different, and when he spoke to me about this observation, I couldn't have felt that difference more.

"Ms. Moret, you need to stick to the curriculum and not veer off of the required text reading. Consider getting these kids to the minimum scores for our upcoming tests. That's all we need at this point from our ESLs, just score the basic minimum. Each time you try to go outside the box, you put your kids at risk for failing the whole school. You don't want that on your shoulders, do you?"

My experience with this principal illustrates how observations, language, and interactions during instructional supervision can drive a wedge between teachers and school supervisors. This principal did not expect high outcomes for all students, regarding students of a lower

socioeconomic status (SES) from Black or Brown families as less capable than their White, higher SES peers. Was this a result, I wondered, of the principal's background in private schools for nearly his entire career? I knew my English Language Learner students (ELLs) were capable of scoring beyond the expectations he set. Was this a result of my presenting material in a way that engaged students beyond the expectations of the designated curriculum?

I began to reflect on the connections I had made and relationships I had formed with my students and their families. I realized these relationships provided insight into many aspects of their identity and culture, thereby forcing me to examine my own and to recognize both the differences and similarities between us. Discussing stereotypes, asking questions, and sharing with each other led me to adapt lessons and present material in ways that enabled the students to connect with the content in a deeper way, enhancing both their learning and mine.

Despite the similarity of our skin color and general physical characteristics, vast differences existed between my principal's worldview and my own. We held differing beliefs about which students could succeed and which could not, and what efforts we were willing to make for these kids. This experience led me to question other times when I, too, passed judgment or made a decision based on my beliefs or assumptions about a student's culture or identity. How often did instructional supervisors, those responsible for conducting formal evaluations and providing professional growth for faculty, make assumptions about teachers?

While differences in identity, culture, and perspective between school staff and student populations have often been noted, rarely have such differences between teachers and instructional supervisors been explored. Yet these differences may powerfully affect teachers' work in the classroom, influencing student outcomes. Principals and assistant principals charged with supervising instruction can use supportive and evaluative processes to help teachers become

more effective in diverse or demographically changing classrooms and school communities. Through instructional leadership, the differences among the adults in any school building can be used as teaching points to guide everyone toward creating more understanding, caring, socially just, and equitable school communities.

This study examined the experiences of school administrators who seek to engage teachers through instructional leadership using an informed and constructive discourse. Within such a discourse, power, privilege, and dominance are examined, including the leader's own positionality as the lead learner and evaluator of the school community. This practice is referred to in this study as *culturally competent instructional leadership*. The study sought to increase the recognition and understanding of culturally competent instructional leadership practices used by participant administrators. In addition, it examined how the administrators learned these skills and how they modeled the skills with teachers and in the larger school community.

In this chapter, I situate the study within current cultural demographics of school populations across the country and in the state of Georgia based on the information from the 2010 Census Bureau and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), School and Staffing Survey (SASS) results from 2003-4 and 2007-8. I then provide a statement of the problem by anchoring the need for cultural competency in the instructional supervision practices of school leaders. Next I explain the study's purpose, identify the research questions it explores, and describe the theoretical framework guiding the study. I conclude the chapter by discussing the study's significance, clarifying relevant terms, and providing an overview of the structure of the dissertation. While participants spoke of experiences in Mississippi, California, and Washington states, this study focused on policy, preparation, and leader facilitation in the state of Georgia.

Background of the Study

Each day, communities face challenges as a result of differences in identity among their members. The terms *difference* and *diversity* in the context of this study refer to any variation of social identity or experience in our individual backgrounds (Allen, 2011). For those in K-12 schools, differences in identity characteristics become particularly evident in the confines of the classroom (Sadker & Silber, 2006). Often teachers cannot anticipate the diversity they will face in a given classroom; nevertheless, they are required to ensure "equitable access to knowledge for all students regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, special needs or social class" (Badiali, 2005, p. 169).

In my own teaching experience, I could not have anticipated the diversity I would encounter in my first teaching job in San Francisco, California. Working with diverse student populations demands a skill set that new teachers often lack (Cross, 2003, 2004; Delpit, 1995), and this was certainly the case for me. As I gained experience, I learned about the various identities that came together in my classroom and began seeking ways to use this knowledge to help students achieve higher academic outcomes and positive behavioral goals. Through this process I developed an abiding interest in the meaning of identity and the ways teachers and school leaders use identity to bring people together or keep them apart.

The concept of identity is based on humans' need to symbolize the self, achieve fulfillment, gain a sense of belonging, and relate to others as individual beings (Coposescu, 2009). Identity is the story of oneself individuals create as a result of family, community, and media exposure (Sfard & Prusak, 2005)—a story that exists in a complex and constant state of flux (Danzak, 2011; Henry, 2010). Identity may thus be defined as "(a) a social category, defined by membership rules and (alleged) characteristic attributes or expected behaviors, or (b)

socially distinguishing features that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (or (a) and (b) at once)" (Fearon, 1999, p. i). Identity may include characteristics such as race, gender, or language(s) spoken, as well as beliefs and attitudes such as religion or motivation (Young, 2008).

Tajfel (1974) asserted that knowing more about one's own identity enhances positive group experiences. Identity characteristics such as family structure, eating habits, responsibilities outside of school, hobbies or interests, birth order, and so on can be used to produce results in the form of increased understanding of self, empathy for teachers and students, and an improved classroom environment. When working in diverse classrooms, then, teachers and school leaders can use aspects of identity beyond the demographics typically used to describe students (e.g., race, gender, class, religion) to enhance learning not only for students, but for teachers as well. Based on Tajfel's theory, knowing more about the people in our school environment leads to positive group experiences. By encouraging such examination of students' varied identities, school leaders can help teachers educate citizens who will possess the necessary skills and knowledge to participate in the democratic process. Apple (2013) notes the importance of providing students with an:

> Understanding of the complex ways in which public and private spheres, state and civil society, region and nation, person rights vs. property rights, cultures and ethnicities—all of which have participated in racial and racializing, as well as classed and gendered, logics and histories . . . are all being reconstituted. Our previous dichotomous ways of understanding these relations are no longer sufficient. (pp. xii-xiii)

Building upon their awareness and understanding of teachers' diverse identities and ideologies, instructional leaders can support teacher professional development and more

effectively meet the needs of the school community. By "advocating, leading, and keeping at the center of their practice or vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation and/or other historically marginalizing conditions," moreover, school leaders approach instructional leadership through a social justice lens (Theoharis, 2008, p. 6).

Changing U.S. Demographics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), between 2006 and 2008, the composition of communities across the United States shifted with regard to race, ethnicity, income level, and geographical location. These changes indicated trends for further diversification of the population over the next decade. The National Center for Cultural Competence (2003) noted, "The make-up of the American population continues to change as a result of immigration patterns and significant increases among racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse populations already residing in the United States" (p. 1). Further supporting this view, the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life (2011) reported, "In total, about half of American adults have changed religious affiliation at least once during their lives. Most people who change religion do so more than once" (p. 1).

Consistent with this trend, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported between 2000-2010 changes in the demographic composition of the K-12 public school student population in the U.S. (e.g., race, language ability, supports needed). However, during this same period the demographics of the teacher and leader populations stayed relatively the same (NCES, 2011) (See Table 1.1 below). Research on the teaching and leadership force in K-12 schools reports little to no change in racial and gender diversity among teachers from 1989 to 2009 (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010; NCES, 2011). Comparisons of the School and Staffing Survey (SASS) results from 2003-2004 and 2007-2008 revealed similar results—student populations

were changing while teacher populations were not. Equally as teacher demographics have not changed, neither have leader demographics (NCES, 2011).

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, over 9 million individuals self-identified as multiracial, with an expected one in five Americans claiming a multiracial background as soon as 2050 (Jackson & Samuels, 2011). "Although the argument in support of culturally competent

Table 1

Student, Teacher, and Principal U.S. Public K-12 Statistics

	% of K-12 students with an IEP (U.S.)	% of K-12 students with an LEP (U.S.)	% of K-12 students White, non-Hispanic (U.S.)	% of K-12 students minority (U.S.)	% of K-12 students White, non-Hispanic (GA)	% of principals White, non-Hispanic (U.S.)	% of teachers White, non-Hispanic (U.S.)
2003-2004	12.8	10.8	60.3	39.7	53.6	82.4	83.1
2007-2008	12.3	11.3	57.8	42.2	50.4	80.9	83.1

Source: NCES School and Staffing Survey (2011)

leaders is most evident in diverse urban areas, rapid patterns of demographic change mean that few school districts will remain culturally homogenous in the near future" (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2005, p. 2). For local school systems, this shift in demographics creates both new obstacles and new opportunities to support teachers in guiding diverse students (Louis, 2003). Teachers often rely on school supervisors and the process of instructional supervision itself to help them learn new methods for reaching each and every student (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2008).

Today, a teacher who formerly taught a homogenous student body may face a classroom that includes three new students of Hmong decent, one student of Algerian decent, and a student who is teased for gender nonconformity. How can school leaders support such teachers in

serving a rapidly changing student population? What can principals do to help teachers identify their own assumptions and understand their influence on classroom interactions? Similarly, how can supervisors build relationships with teachers through and across similarities and differences in identity? Is attention to such differences even necessary? Is it necessary for school leaders to consider their own positionality in relation to their supervisory role with teachers? Administrator accountability forces the consideration of such questions, in addition to the many other tasks required of school leaders.

The changing demographics of school communities inevitably affect school leaders, as the principal's role has become "dramatically more complex and overloaded over the past decade" (Fullan, 2009, p. 56). These significant changes in school populations, combined with changes in the role of and pathways to the principalship, have transformed principals from managerial leaders to instructional leaders (Brooks, Solloway, & Allen, 2007; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Lyons, 1999; Zepeda, Bengtson, Parylo, Shorner-Johnson, He, Moret, … & Leonard, 2009) and community developers (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2008; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), 2008; McBride & Skau, 1995). "Mounting demands are rewriting administrators' job descriptions every year, making them more complex than ever" (ISLLC, 2008, p. 3). These shifts require school leaders to strive not only to meet the academic needs of their students, but also to acknowledge students' personal and cultural needs (Brown, 2009; Nieto, 2008; Palandra, 2010; Robins, Lindsey, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2005; Tomlinson, 2004; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Meeting these needs poses complex challenges for teachers and school leaders in an age of rapid change and increased educational accountability.

Educational Accountability

In school systems across the United States, including the state of Georgia, classrooms are more diverse (e.g., racially, religiously) and larger in size (i.e., student-to-teacher ratio) than ever before (Gay, 2000; GA Department of Education, 2011). Teachers are required to use multiple types of differentiated teaching methods and cultural competencies to reach all students in the classroom (Carolan & Guinn, 2007; Levy, 2008; Santamaria, 2009). However, in the neediest of under-resourced classrooms, one typically finds the least experienced teachers, teachers new to the profession, and alternatively certified teachers (De Luca, Takano, Hinshaw, & Raisch, 2009; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2008; Siwatu, 2011). At the same time, the most qualified administrators are rarely assigned to schools serving impoverished communities (Young, Reimer, and Young, 2010).

Over the last 15 years, educational accountability movements in the U.S. (e.g., No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and pay for performance initiatives) have called for improved job performance by teachers and administrators as demonstrated by increased student achievement in the form of higher standardized test scores (Altbach, Gumport, & Berdahl, 2011; Dworkin, 2008; Sahlberg, 2010; U. S. Department of Education, 2013). In the U.S., K-12 school supervisors are required to instructionally support teachers to improve students' test scores and the school's overall educational achievement level to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (Glanz, Shulman, & Sullivan, 2007). A common thread among reform efforts and accountability demands is the expectation that with the support of an instructional supervisor, teachers will advance their ability to deliver instruction and subsequently improve student learning (Zepeda, 2007; Zepeda, 2009).

School leaders experience pressures to advance students to levels of academic proficiency via test scores, contributing to an increased focus on test taking within and throughout curricula (Thomas, 2005; Vogell, 2009). MacDonald (2003) reported on the widening achievement gap in the state of Georgia between students of varying socioeconomic status as demonstrated through student test scores. Test scores varied dramatically between students from White, English-speaking families than those from impoverished families in non-English-speaking families (MacDonald, 2003). Thomas (2005) reported when schools lose instructional time to focus on test taking, the adults in the building feel treated like scapegoats as they are unable to teach and assess "qualities most resistant to measurement by tests—initiative, responsibility, creativity, critical thinking" (p. 5).

I assumed cultural competence is not often practiced by instructional leaders when one considers the overrepresentation of students of color related to suspensions or disciplinary offenses (Butler, Lewis, Moore, & Scott, 2012; Hannon, DeFina, & Bruch, 2013; Monroe, 2013), and in special education (Council for Children with Behavorial Disorders, 2013). These numbers are disproportionate to not only demographics but achievement, and present a case for the importance of attentiveness to cultural issues in the daily school activities of students.

Continual demands for increased accountability have created school cultures in which a focus on test results takes precedence over teaching and learning in a manner that honors individual students' needs (Gay, 2000; Greenman, 2011). Badiali (2005) argued that school personnel must "understand the culture and values of their communities and how those values intersect with the demands and expectations of educational policy" (p. 170). From this perspective, teachers must recognize their own cultural perceptions and their influence on students' classroom behavior as a necessary step in improving learning, implementing

educational policy, and enhancing student achievement outcomes (Gay, 2000; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2005).

Banks (2007) observed "Two of a teacher's most important roles are the selection of knowledge for instruction and the design of pedagogy to teach that knowledge" (p. 37). By enhancing instructional delivery to improve students' overall achievement—whether on standardized tests or individually-designed assessments—teachers support both student needs and district policies, including efforts to satisfy AYP requirements. However, teachers' efforts to enhance instruction by connecting with students in the classroom may go awry when students' multifaceted identities are neglected or their individual learning styles ignored. Teachers' cultural competence is thus a crucial element in their own instructional effectiveness and their students' academic achievement. Teachers can enhance their responsiveness to cultural differences in the classroom with the help of culturally competent instructional leadership (Banks, & McGee Banks, 2010). It is therefore crucial for educators to explore what cultural competence means, what culturally competent leadership entails, and how school leaders can implement culturally competent supervisory practices in their enactment of leadership.

Cultural Competence and Instructional Leadership

Scholars in the field of education have introduced a number of terms encompassing awareness of cultural identity and its connections to students and curricula. These include *cultural congruence* (Au & Kawakami, 1994); *cultural responsiveness* (Gay, 2002); *cultural proficiency* (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003); *intercultural competence* (Bennett, 2011); *culturally responsive teaching* (Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002); and *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Millner, 2011). I will discuss each of these concepts in greater detail in Chapter Two.

The terms *culturally competent instructional supervision* and *culturally competent leadership practices* are used to reflect practices employed by school leaders that draw on the qualities listed above. As a result of my experiences, I assert leaders who engage in culturally competent instructional leadership are able to engage in informed and constructive discourse with teachers and other colleagues to examine power, privilege and dominance, including their own positionality, when supervising instruction or providing other professional learning opportunities.

Cultural competence refers to "a set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable a system, agency, and/or individuals to function effectively with culturally diverse clients and communities" (Sloand, Groves, & Brager, 2004, p. 1). In the classroom, culturally competent strategies enable students from differing backgrounds to interact more positively and develop healthier attitudes about others' differences (Banks, 2006). Cultural competence helps strengthen relationships among teachers, students, and parents within the school context by recognizing individual differences as "crucial dimensions to an informed professional understanding of human behavior" (Hanson, Pepitone-Arreoloa-Rockwell, & Green, 2000, p. 653). Though specific definitions may lack consistency (Bennett, 2006), cultural competence is understood generally as a combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities related to one's understanding of cultural groups and an awareness of one's attitudes and beliefs about cultural groups, including one's own group(s).

As a result of globalization, the diversification of the U.S. population, and connections made through multinational companies and organizations, *intercultural competence* has emerged as a key characteristic for success in contemporary society (Fantini, 2001). "Intercultural competence is a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support

effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett, 2011). Intercultural competence supports supervisors and teachers working together across different cultures. Although the school leaders in this study may employ intercultural competencies in their work, for consistency I will use the term "cultural competence" to include these intercultural competencies.

Culture and identity each play an important role in how individuals construct and understand the world in which they live (Kolhi, Kolhi, Huber, & Faul, 2010). Fantini (2001) defines the term *culture* as encompassing "all manner of features, including the values and beliefs you have grown up with, your national, regional, and local customs, and in particular, attitudes and practices that affect the way you work" (p. 3). As Butin (2010) notes, "reality is intersubjective in that it is socially constructed, such that it can be described and represented through diverse perspectives" (p. 59). We see and understand ourselves, and develop beliefs and attitudes about others, based on this socially constructed reality (Brown & Mazza, 2005; Patton, 2002). These beliefs and attitudes subsequently affect our educational practices and shift our response to differences and awareness of identity and culture (Seeleman, Suurmond, & Stronks, 2009).

Instructional leaders can help teachers negotiate differences of identity and culture in the classroom to engage students in the learning process. Gay (2005) argued that "educating for diversity is really about everyone for everyone, and its implementation requires the participation of students and educators throughout the entire educational system in all school settings" (p. 110). She noted that supporting the learning and cultural needs of one student can support an entire class in their learning process.

In her work *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (2010), Gay cautioned, "culturally responsive teaching alone cannot solve all the problems of improving the education of marginalized students of color. Other aspects of the educational enterprise (such as funding, administration, and policymaking) also must be reformed" (p. 2). Thus major changes must occur if we are to eliminate social, political, and economic inequalities that exist in society, which are magnified within the context of a school (Anyon, 2005). Nevertheless, for supervising principals, employing culturally responsive leadership by linking professional development opportunities to teachers' identity and culture has the potential to model strategies teachers can use with students in their classrooms. For example, school supervisors can guide teachers to adopt the practice of "meeting students where they are" (Colantonio, 2005; Curwin, 2010; Kelehear, 2008, 2010; Sullivan & Glanz, 2009; Tolerance.org, 2011). As Ladson-Billings (2009) suggested, "By building bridges or a scaffolding that meets students where they are intellectually and functionally, culturally relevant teaching helps students get where they need to be to participate fully and meaningfully in the construction of knowledge" (p. 104).

To best address the needs of a changing and diverse school population, knowledgeable principals can support teachers in enhancing instructional practice. The single most important factor in student achievement is instructional improvement, making the teacher the most significant factor in students' learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000a, 2000b; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Odden & Wallace, 2003; Schmoker, 2006, 2011). Though supervisors have limited control over teachers and what actually occurs in classrooms (Schmoker, 2006), school principals are often tasked with helping teachers acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to move beyond "teaching to the test" to meet the needs of individual students. To teach to the entirety of the student population requires a broad knowledge of

identity and culture not found in teacher preparation curricula alone (National Education Association, n.d.). Such knowledge comes from understanding the culture, demographics, and background of each student—and for supervisors, the same concept applies to knowing each teacher.

Instructional supervision uses ongoing, developmental, and differentiated approaches to assist teachers in analyzing and reflecting on their own classroom practices with the assistance of an educational professional (Glatthorn, 1990; Glickman, 1985; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2005; Zepeda, 2010). Instructional supervision has been used as a means to "promote instructional dialogue" with teachers (Reeves, 2002, p. 1), providing a mechanism through which school leaders can use collaboration to meet supervisory needs (Glickman, Gordon, Ross-Gordon, 2005).

From a broader perspective, Alfonso, Firth, and Neville (1981) defined instructional supervision as a way for teachers and school leaders to facilitate student learning and adult professional development, advancing the goals of the organization. Notably, the school leader is the second most influential person in students' learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Instructional supervision is therefore "second only to classroom instruction among all school related factors that contribute to what students learn at school," and thus deserving of the time and attention of reflexive administrators willing to provide ongoing, in-depth instructional support to teachers (Shulman, Sullivan, & Glanz, 2008, p. 411). Instructional supervision acts as a guide for both teachers and supervisors, inviting critical self-reflection and dialogue that enable teachers and leaders to learn more about a self-chosen topic of their own teaching practices (Zepeda, 2010).

A key element found throughout the educational leadership and supervision literature is the practice of reflection (Blase & Blase, 2000; Burant, 2009; Nolan & Huber, 1989). Bolton (2010) described reflection as "an in-depth consideration of events or situations outside of oneself: solitarily, or with critical support" (p. 13). The reflection process may be viewed as static, focusing on an unvarying, mirror image of one's experience (Bolton, 2010). Taking this process to a deeper level, however, *reflexivity* is a dynamic practice that requires us "to question our own attitudes, thought processes, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual actions, to strive to understand our complex roles in relation to others" (Bolton, 2010). Reflexive practice in research explores the "ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon, and informs such research" (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 228). Similarly, school leaders engaging in reflexive instructional supervision examine how they influence teachers based on differences between the leader, the teacher, the school context, and the larger society. Such reflexive practices add to the validity of school leaders' work with teachers (Newton, 2009).

Willig (2001) described *personal reflexivity* as a consideration of the elements that shape our research or other work, including "our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life, and social identities" (p. 10). Willig (1999) explained that epistemological reflexivity "encourages us to reflect upon the assumptions (about the world, about knowledge) that we have made in the course of the research [work]" (p. 10). School leaders employing culturally competent instructional supervision engage teachers in personal reflexivity to explore how teachers' beliefs and values intersect with their students' various identities, cultures, and ideologies.

The National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) advocates for the creation of "inclusive communities free of discrimination and mistrust" in schools to enhance the culture of learning (NCBI, 2003, p. 5). Differences in identities between teachers and students can lead to "frequent misunderstandings and oppressive treatment" (NCBI, 2003, p. 11), leading to poor student outcomes. However, by using differences in our own identity to support learning:

1. Differences among individuals need not lead to division and discrimination.
2. Differences among groups can be a community asset.
3. Differences on issues need not divide communities. (NCBI, 2003, p. 5)

As a foundation by which to approach learning about the self and teachers, school supervisors can assist teachers in identifying teaching messages that are helpful and those that are harmful to students. Such an approach "not only promotes safety, but also creates means for students to develop leadership skills and for schools to become better places for living, learning, and growing" (NCBI, 2003, p. 28). Cochran-Smith (2004) wrote:

> As teacher educators, we cannot shy away from unpleasant and uncertain conversations because the failure and unwillingness to look, listen, and learn about diversity, oppression, and the experiences of the cultural other significantly interfere with the ability to critique and problematize schooling or "teach against the grain." (p. xii)

Cochran-Smith (2004) and Gay (2009) asserted that personal beliefs and attitudes regarding race, ethnicity, and culture are always present and contribute to teachers' and school leaders' perceptions and actions. Without working through these beliefs and perceptions, teachers and school leaders seeking to educate students may inadvertently hinder the learning process, with negative consequences for students and others in the school community.

Statement of the Problem

Many individuals enter the field of educational leadership with little understanding of the "wide range of skills and behaviors that principals need to succeed in a highly complex and demanding job" (Briggs, Cheney, Davis, & Moll, 2013, p. 3). This lack of understanding may create a great divide in the community, with school personnel unable to meet the needs of the student population culturally or academically (Carjuzaa & Abercrombie, 2008). With communities becoming increasingly more "diverse, multicultural, multiracial, and multilingual, while our public schools become increasingly more segregated and unequal, the ability, desire, and political will to pursue multiple strategies to promote diversity and improve education for all children becomes increasingly more important" (Brown, 2009, p. 192). Successful leaders are best able to infuse their own daily work with culturally competent practices when they are willing to engage in critical dialogue and reflect on perspectives shared by others (Freire, 2005). What remains unclear is how school supervisors can learn to use cultural competency to support teachers through the practice of instructional supervision.

Researchers argue that teachers and school leaders are not taught how to address sociopolitical or sociocultural matters in the classroom and are therefore unaware of how to influence issues related to race, class, gender, and other identity variables in the school setting (Giroux, 1992; IEL, 2005; Young & Laible, 2000). Stanik (2007) asserted it takes a "highly qualified teacher" or leader to know how to "communicate and relate to students" and "establish a relationship between the family and the school, and keep channels of communication open" (p. 14). The experiences, backgrounds, beliefs, and identities of school leaders play a prominent role in the framing and interpretation of issues teachers face at any given time during the school

day. Yet not all school administrators are prepared personally or intellectually to discuss issues of identity with their teachers (Beach & Reinhartz, 2000).

Many principal preparation programs do not take into account the contextual needs of student populations, schools, or districts when instituting a specific knowledge base or curriculum (Hallinger, 2003; Mitgang, 2008). Moreover, seven of 10 principals surveyed by Public Agenda, a nonpartisan research and public engagement organization, believed that "leadership training at universities is out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today's school districts" (Mitgang, 2008, p. 4). Principals today must not only demonstrate cultural competence themselves; they must also help teachers learn how to connect with students across identity differences. Thus researchers need to examine how successful principals incorporate culturally competent strategies into their instructional leadership practices.

Even with state-adopted standards, there remains a need to redesign preparation programs for school leaders with a greater focus on connecting practice and theory (Mitgang, 2008, p. 4). "The research is clear that principals are a critical force in school improvement in that they are responsible for attracting and retaining teacher talent and driving the improvement of student learning" (Briggs et al., 2013, p. 2). There is a growing need to link theory and practice to better support both new and veteran leaders in confronting rapid demographic changes in their schools and districts (Briggs, Cheney, Davis, & Moll, 2013). School supervisors must help teachers connect with every student in their classroom; given changing demographics, forging such connections poses an urgent challenge that demands the availability of culturally conscious support through instructional leadership. Given all of these concerns about schools listed above, the problem specifically explored in this study is directed at the need for justice in leadership through culturally competent work with teachers.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

While extensive research has examined teachers' culturally competent best practices (Banks, 2001; Banks & Banks, 2010; Gallavan, 2011a, 2011b; Gay, 2002, 2010; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2001; Lum, 2010; Taylor, 2010), little research has examined instructional supervisors' knowledge and use of culturally competent practices. This study fulfills a need to investigate culturally competent K-12 instructional leadership. Hence, the purpose of this study was to examine culturally competent instructional leadership through interviews with principals and assistant principals known for their commitment to culturally responsive supervision.

The specific research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. How do instructional leaders engage teachers to improve their pedagogical practice for diverse learners?
2. How do instructional leaders assist teachers to examine the experiences, beliefs, and attitudes that influence their work with diverse learners?

These questions enabled the examination of the beliefs and practices of culturally competent instructional leadership, exploring how these skills were learned, how they are modeled, and what elements are needed for creating an environment conducive to these practices.

Significance of the Study

This study has considerable practical value for informing leadership preparation programs, professional learning opportunities for district staff, and succession planning within the school district, including leader socialization and evaluation practices. To date, no study has investigated culturally competent practices in instructional supervision among K-12 school leaders, or examined how these leaders build successful relationships with teachers working in

diverse classroom settings. Therefore, the findings of this study may inform the curricula of school leadership preparation programs as well as the development of culturally competent practices and policies in K-12 schools.

Curricula, contextual projects, and other aspects of school leadership preparation programs may benefit from this study's findings. For colleges and universities seeking to update leadership practices, principal candidates will be exposed to leadership theories engaging them further as the building manager, culture creator, and lead learner of the school. The next generation of school leaders may be affected by changes in university preparation programs or district succession plans. Additionally, as student populations become more diverse, leaders can use these findings to support their work with teachers amidst changing school demographics.

The findings of this research study may inform leadership preparation program policies at local, state, and even national levels. Leadership credentialing bodies rely on preparation programs to expose administrator candidates to theories and practices informed by research. The findings of this research study may stimulate policy changes in administrator preparation programs in which, for example, all leadership candidates may be required to demonstrate various cultural competencies to complete program requirements in the future.

For external, district-level leadership training or internal succession planning programs, the study's findings may enhance the skill set a new school leader brings to the practice of instructional supervision. As student populations grow more diverse, leaders must continue to work effectively with all learners. To understand how some leaders do this more successfully than others, it is important to know how instructional supervisors perceive, define, and use the skills of cultural competency. The findings presented here thus have the potential to fill gaps in

the literature regarding culturally competent practices in K-12 instructional leadership and supervision.

Assumptions of the Study

In undertaking this project, I made certain assumptions about the school leaders who participated in the study, including:

1. School principals and assistant principals are the main school leaders conducting instructional supervision with teachers;
2. School leaders are open to discussing biases and differences in the identity characteristics that exist between themselves and those they supervise; and,
3. School leaders are willing to acknowledge the various practices they use when differentiating their supervision processes.
4. School leaders are aware of and work to examine their privilege in their position of leadership.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations exist when conducting any type of research study, and this study is no exception. The very nature of the dissertation topic focused on various identity characteristics that make each person a unique individual. As no two people have the exact same needs or background, the diverse nature of human experience limited the outcomes of this study, as it is unlikely duplicate results will be reproduced from multiple research participants. The findings from this small number of people cannot be generalized to a larger population, as every leader, every context, and everyone's experiences are different.

Talking about our own biases, beliefs, values, and attitudes can be uncomfortable. The general content of the study may therefore be uncomfortable for people to discuss. Additionally,

because I did not know many of the participants before we met for the interview, some leaders may have felt hesitant to talk with me in great depth. As a result, some participants may have held back or shared only limited information about their thoughts and experiences regarding culturally competent practices. This serves as a limitation of this study.

To truly understand the day-to-day practices of a culturally competent instructional leader requires time in the field. I had limited access to a school and school leaders for an extended length of time. The in-depth interviews conducted with each school leader proved to be an alternative to extensive fieldwork during the data generation phase. A lack of participant observation through fieldwork serves as a limitation to this study. Given a longer period of time to reflect, participants may have offered additional insights regarding the culturally competent practices used with and modeled for teachers. Future researchers may therefore want to undertake an ethnographic, longitudinal approach to collect in-depth observational data about culturally competent instructional supervision and evaluation. More extensive time in the field would offer access to pre-observation, observation, and post-observation data, which may offer more multidimensional insight into the practices of cultural competence used by instructional supervisors.

Organization of the Dissertation

This study is organized in five chapters. Chapter One describes the background of the study and presents a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, guiding research questions, the significance of the study, assumptions underlying the study, and the limitations of the study.

Chapter Two provides an overview of the relevant literature for this study. In this chapter, I focus on instructional supervision, cultural competency knowledge in supervisory practices, and the relationship-building theory and practice of school leaders.

Chapter Three describes the theoretical framework and research design of the study. I detail the research methods, data collection, and data analysis strategies, as well as explaining how quality was built into the study.

Chapter Four reports the study's thematic analyses of findings.

Finally, Chapter Five provides a summary of the findings, a discussion of the study's contributions to the research literature, and implications for both further research and practices in culturally competent instructional supervision. Recommendations for school leaders, school districts, institutions of higher education, and policy makers are also provided.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine culturally competent instructional leadership through interviews with principals and assistant principals known for their commitment to culturally responsive supervision. Analysis focused on where and how leaders used the process of instructional supervision to explore and create a deeper understanding of culturally competent leadership. To gain a better understanding about the culturally competent beliefs and experiences shared by participating school administrators, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. How do instructional leaders engage teachers to improve their pedagogical practice for diverse learners?
2. How do instructional leaders assist teachers to examine their own experiences, beliefs, and attitudes influencing their work with diverse learners?

These questions enabled the examination of the beliefs and practices of culturally competent instructional leaders, exploring how these skills were learned, how they are modeled, and what elements are needed for creating an environment conducive to these practices.

While recent dissertations focused on culturally competent practices of leadership (Barnett, 2011; Dellinger-Holton, 2012; Gies, 2010; Hobbs, 2011; Kahla, 2010; Kelley, 2012; Mayfield, 2012; Morton, 2012; Nunez, 2011; Ward, 2011; Wernet, 2011), no empirical study was found that investigated the culturally competent practices of instructionally supervising K-

12 school principals and how these leaders successfully built relationships with their teachers in diverse classroom settings, making this study insightful for future supervisory practices and policies affiliated with K-12 school leadership preparation.

In this chapter, I provide a review of the literature in the three primary areas: (1) instructional supervision, (2) school leader relationship building, and (3) cultural competency in professional supervisory practices. First, I offer a background on educational instructional supervision, including a history of use, definitions, intents, and purposes. Next, I provide a review of the literature on principal relationship building with various members of a school community. Then, I offer an overview of cultural competency practices used by supervising leaders in the areas of healthcare, social work, human resources and organizational development, and public administration. Finally, I reference cultural competency in instructional supervision.

Instructional Supervision

The literature of instructional supervision is steeped in the history of leadership in education. Instructional supervision developed through many stages over the years, taking on different forms, holding various intentions, with multiple purposes and definitions. Once known as clinical supervision (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Cogan, 1973; Goldhammer, 1969; Gray & Smith, 2009), the process of instructional supervision allows teachers to focus on improving practices in the classroom, as a type of ongoing professional learning. For those serving as the lead instructor of the school, the school principal, instructional supervision is often seen as a tool used to drive forward a mission and vision for a school and community. In this section of the literature review, I provide an overview of the background of instructional supervision, including definitions, intents, and purposes of this practice.

Definitions of Supervision

Over time, supervision has been defined in various ways. Often seen as "a means to promote instructional dialogue," supervision means different things to professionals depending on one's background experience (Reeves, 2002, p. 1). Often, supervision is referred to as a planned program to improve instruction, where people grow and develop (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Adams & Dickey, 1953; Simon, 1976). Viewed as a common practice of school leaders, instructional supervision uses ongoing, developmental, and differentiated approaches to support teachers through analysis and reflection on their own classroom practices with the assistance of an educational professional when it is conducted as intended (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Firth & Pajak, 1998; Glatthorn, 1990; Glickman, 1985; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2005; Pajak, 2003; Zepeda, 2010). The promotion of instructional dialogue with and among teachers allows school administrators to use collaboration that meets teachers' supervisory needs (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2005).

Instructional supervision is used as a planned program of support and improvement, with a focus on people and instruction (Adams & Dickey, 1953). According to Adams and Dickey (1953), instructional supervision:

> recognizes that individuals are unique indivisible units and that everyone has individual needs to be met, needs different from those of other persons. Cognizance is also taken of the fact that each individual has some needs in common with other people. Hence, it is believed that before one can effectively guide the learning process, it is imperative that the common and individual needs of the learners be understood and that the methods and materials of instruction be planned and presented in light of these needs. It is important, therefore, for teachers and supervisors to understand the factors and processes which

> facilitate and retard learning or which result in unacceptable and undesirable behavior. It is important, too, for supervisors to be alert to the needs of the teachers with whom they work if the program of supervision is actually to achieve the improvement of instruction. A program developed only in terms of what the supervisor alone visualizes and desires or one which fails to recognize the fundamental educational principle of individual differences will become autocratic, dreaded and feared by the pupils and teachers it is designed to serve, and ineffective in improving teaching and learning. (Adams & Dickey, 1953, pp. 168-169)

Principals who know their teachers, understand individual learning needs, and provide a clear pathway for adult learning through instructional supervision serve the school community successfully (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). As a result, principals who engage teachers thoroughly in the process of instructional supervision avoid divisiveness, tension, and conflict (American Association of School Administrators, 1963).

From a larger organizational perspective, Alfonso, Firth, and Neville (1981) defined instructional supervision as way for the teacher or leader to behave that facilitates student or adult learning leading all toward the goals of the organization. Instructional supervision, "second only to classroom instruction among all school related factors that contribute to what students learn at school," requires the time of reflective administrators who are willing to provide ongoing, in-depth instructional support to teachers (Shulman, Sullivan, & Glanz, 2008, p. 411). Instructional supervision, overall, is the observation and analysis of classroom teaching behaviors (Fleming, 1987).

Initially viewed as a way to monitor teachers (Ryan, 1971), instructional supervision evolved as a method to improve practices with the teacher and supervisor working together

(Cogan, 1973; Goldhammer, 1969; Goldhammer, Anderson, & Krajewski, 1980). Joyce and Showers (1982) viewed instructional supervision as a means to improve practices with a peer or "coach," providing for teachers to work in a collaborative environment, lessening the feelings of a more top-down, hierarchical approach. By using a collaborative framework for instructional supervision, administrators and teachers were less likely to feel threatened in their work together.

The study of instructional supervision addresses various positional vantage points, including high school department chairs (Kruskamp, 2007; Mayers, 2008), itinerant teachers (Benson, 2008), veteran teachers (Baker van Solen, 2008), Fine Arts teachers (Beaver, 2008), and Gifted or advanced classroom teachers (Bentley, 2008). Additional perspectives include viewing instructional supervision from a position of individual and organizational improvement, including teacher empowerment perspectives (Costa & Garmston, 1986), improving work process and the overall social systems of a school organization (Duffy, 1994), and shared leadership for teaching and learning improvement (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2011). Studies also viewed instructional supervision from a technological advancement perspective, including the three-minute classroom walkthrough (Brooks, Solloway, & Allen, 2007; Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, & Poston, 2004), video technology, and other computer related applications of instructional supervision (Alger & Kopcha, 2009; Sewall, 2009). A commonly used view of instructional supervision includes the Pre observation-Observation-Post observation process or P.O.P. cycle, where an administrator meets with the classroom teacher before the observation, conducts the observation, and then debriefs with the teacher after the observation (Zepeda, 2012). However, with numerous requirements of the job, principals do not often get the opportunity to spend the time needed to support teachers through this P.O.P. cycle process.

Instructional supervision acts as a guide for the teacher and supervisor. The act of instructional supervision involves a process of critical self-reflection and dialogue enabling the teacher to learn more about a self-chosen topic that can lead to student academic improvement (Zepeda, 2010). With changing demographics in any classroom, instructional supervision can help teachers to navigate learning and teaching challenges with the aid of a supervisor. The term 'instructional leader' refers to "a well-defined set of leadership practices" rather than a specific individual (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 8). For the purposes of this dissertation study, the operational definition of instructional supervision is an engaged reflective, dialogic process between and among school leaders and their teaching staff to improve classroom output for student academic achievement.

Intents and Purposes of Instructional Supervision

In the past, scholars and practitioners used instructional supervision with differing purposes and intents. Unruh (1977) reported on supervisors as unable to meet the demands of mature, tenured faculty. Supervisors were not viewed as instructional leaders, but as problem solvers to the classroom teachers' woes (Unruh, 1977). Zepeda (2007) highlighted the idea of instructional supervision as an ongoing series of professional development where lifelong learning is promoted through "inquiry, reflection, collaboration, and a dedication to professional growth and development" (p. 1). Such intent may enhance student learning by improving teacher instruction (Bellon & Bellon, 1982). However, instructional supervision "cannot be reduced to a lockstep, linear process with a fixed beginning or end. Moreover, the processes involved in supervision, professional development, teacher evaluation, and the like must be cyclical and ongoing" (Zepeda, 2007, p. 11). In one's school community, the process of instructional supervision is long-term, taking place multiple times throughout the school year,

and consistently building on the previous findings and experiences. For many teachers, supervision is determined by the position and experience of the principal (Blumberg, 1980; Bowers & Flinders, 1991; Jones, 1924). Often instructional supervision is used as a way to evaluate teachers, and is seen as a summative, rather than formative process leaving many to feel the process as an evaluative effort rather than a tool for professional growth (Cogan, 1973; McBride & Skau, 1995; Okafor, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2006).

Research on educational leadership suggests leaders promote better teaching, as these leaders directly influence the work their teachers do in the classroom (ISLLC, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004). Acting as the instructional leader in the school, paired with the duties of building, books, and bus manager, leaves the principal with little time for instructional supervision. As a result, instructional supervision is often left to an untrained group of others such as educational coaches who have had traditional supervisor and principal duties passed on to them often without any additional preparation (Beach & Reinhartz, 2000; Glanz, et al., 2007). Instructional supervision is seen as successful for school leaders and teachers when the process is paired with a professional development model that works for the context of the participants (Glanz, 2007).

Some scholars believe the standards and supports of instructional supervision are bypassed as a result of increased attention to the accountability movement with its high-stakes testing (Glanz, et al., 2007; Rinke & Valli, 2010; Zepeda, 2007). Sargeant's (1924) early description of the duties of the school principal directing a corps of teachers covers a narrow scope of what is required from contemporary instructional leaders. Today, the intents and purposes of instructional supervision vary depending on one's beliefs and perspectives of the direct connections to evaluation, a final, summarizing aspect to principal leadership of teachers. According to Beyciouglu and Donmez (2009), instructional supervision has three foci—

guidance, training, and instruction. Within the framework of this dissertation study, the purpose and intent of instructional supervision were focused on engaging with teachers in a way that was collaborative, reflective, and dialogic to improve classroom outputs for student academic achievement. Despite numerous studies focused on instructional supervision, no empirical study was found that specifically examined the cultural competency practices of instructional supervisors.

Relationship Building and Instructional Supervision

The role of relationship building between a supervisor and a teacher is relevant to better understand how administrators instructionally lead teachers. Since the 1920s, education policy actors suggested the role of the principal or school administrator has a connection to student achievement when teachers are given the room to make decisions about their own teaching practices (Cubberly, 1923), yet there is still no direct link connecting leadership to student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). However, the role of the school leader and the relationships the leader has with teachers and the school community enhances the environment and overall experience for students (Leithwood et al., 2004).

The skills of relationship building play an important role with school administrators as they connect with all types of people as the instructional leader. But how do leaders accomplish such bridge building with diverse personnel? By acting as lead learner and culture creator of a school, the principal and school administrator directs a corps of teachers to instill a sense of civic duty and responsibility among staff and students (Sargeant, 1924). According to early literature on principal leadership:

> Through scholastic education, [the principal] should have a comprehensive grasp of current problems, current thought, the hidden forces working to destroy the structure,

> which he and his teachers are working to build. [The principal] should be active in politics, but not an intense, narrow partisan. [The principal] should be active in religious work, but not a narrow sectarian. In short, [the principal] should be able to discuss political, economic, and religious questions with his faculty and pupils in a way to throw light upon these questions and have all feel his [or her] presentation is helpful and fair. [The principal] must know the leading citizens of his community, its business, political, charitable, several of them, he [or she] must be strong enough with these organizations to insure accurate information and wise counsel should it be needed. [The principal] should be well enough known to the membership to make it dangerous for his enemies to attack him unjustly. It is only in this way that he [or she] can secure the consideration due his [or her] district and his [or her] school. And [the principal] is not a good citizen unless he [or she] does secure this consideration. (Sargeant, 1924, p. 233)

Principals prepared to work through many community-based issues with absolute awareness to build relationships with teachers can meet the needs Sargeant (1924) mentioned in diverse school settings. Principals build relationships with teachers to support youth like they are members of the family, while coaching teachers to keep them from "adjust[ing] the black child to the white middle-class norms educators accepted unquestioningly" (Tyack, 1974, p. 220).

Principals who seek to create healthy working relationships with teachers in diverse settings are required to focus on building trust as colleagues. Building trusting relationships between a school leader and teacher is supported through mentoring, action research, and study groups that help one work through differences (Watkins, 2005). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) argue that to work with others on topics that are difficult to discuss requires a level of trust and commitment within a collegial relationship. "Increasingly, trust is recognized as a vital

element in well-functioning organizations […] necessary for effective cooperation and communication, the foundations for cohesive and productive relationships in organizations" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 549). Additionally, these authors (2000) found:

> American schools face increasing diversity in terms of languages, ethnic groups, races, and socio-economic status. This diversity brings a richness, but it also brings with it challenges in the development of trust. People who perceive themselves as different need time, support, and structures to come to view themselves as part of the same collective. (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 561)

Relationships build when school leaders and teachers can connect through such differences. Connecting through difference takes time and trust. The literature on principal relationship building is focused on awareness, collegiality, and trust.

For principal leadership, especially among those who created or chose curricula used in schools, Banks (2001) believed:

> The curriculum builder should seriously examine the "common culture" concept and make sure that the view of the American common culture is not racist, ethnocentric, or exclusive, but is multiethnic and reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity in American life. We need to redefine what the common culture actually is and make sure that our new definition reflects the social realities, and not the myths, within this nation. (p. 172)

By practicing awareness of the differences that exist in a classroom and between a leader and teacher, the school supervisor develops a greater understanding of alternate worldviews, adds to her own ability to talk about race and other oppressive differences, and learns to appreciate the experiences that others from a different background present (Brown, 2009). As a result, supervisors engage in informed and constructive discourse with other adult learners where

power, privilege, and dominance are examined and relationships are explored and deepened. Through instructional supervision practices, such discourse could fundamentally change teaching practices and improve student achievement results.

To provide support for the differences that exist culturally between students, teachers, and administrative leaders, districts ask that school leaders promote "multicultural awareness, gender sensitivity, and racial and ethnic appreciation" in their practice of supervision (Growe, Schmersahl, Perry, & Henry, 2002, p. 205). Tyack (1974) revealed, "the principle underlying such progress was 'recognition of individual differences' and the consequent attempt 'to adjust our schools to the needs and capacities of those who are registered in them'" (p. 182). In terms of building relationships with others, leaders meet teachers where they are and appreciate the cultural values that they bring into the curriculum and the overall K-12 school setting. Such a practice of relationship building is critical if school leaders and teachers are to have any hopes of transferring this knowledge to children in the classroom.

Elements of authenticity, trust, and engagement are viewed as critical elements to relationships that exist between teachers and principals (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Wang & Bird, 2011). Similarly, building relationships with students is seen as an important indicator as to what principals can do to build solid relationships with teachers. According to Rieg (2007), principals build relationships with teachers and students by:

1. Visiting classrooms regularly;
2. Knowing student and faculty names;
3. Familiarizing others to the principal's office when there is no negative purpose for being there;
4. Acknowledging accomplishments and struggles of others;

5. Allowing others to collaboratively help develop rules;
6. Understanding and communicating that support needed for elementary teachers is different than what is needed for secondary level teachers;
7. Attending afterschool and weekend activities that support members of the school community;
8. Advocating in the larger community on behalf of the students and faculty;
9. Remaining updated on best practices while passing along this new knowledge to others; and,
10. Providing space and time for teachers to practice implementing new knowledge.

Relationship building is a high-priority to principals, as they function as ambassadors of the school (Connors, 2000; Rieg, 2007). According to Rieg (2007), the best administrators:

> spend an intense amount of time developing, improving, and investing in relationships. Positive relationships are the heart of what makes a school extraordinary. The best leaders build environments of trust, respect, professionalism, caring, compassion, collaboration, teaming, advising, caring, and nurturing. (p. 210)

Relationships require time and investment in and among people; they are critical to a successful mentoring process between school leaders and teachers (Heung-Ling, 2003).

According to Lester (2011), elements to successful relationship building between principals and teachers include:

1. Principals understand that ownership of the school belongs to the community;
2. Principals have prior knowledge of multiage teaching exists;
3. Principals have active involvement in the community with community acceptance; and,

4. Principals collaboratively work with others. (p. 87)

These actions represent principals knowing what and how to use experiential knowledge to connect with all school community stakeholders to build relationships. Characteristics of these actions contribute to the essence of mentoring and relationship building, key concepts for instructional supervision (Heung-Ling, 2003). However, these theories do not address the dynamics of power or positionality, and how hegemony affects the supervisorial process with teachers.

Examinations of successful relationship building between school leaders and teachers included more than a management checklist. Banks (2007) believed leadership was more than one simple definition, where leadership consisted of two concepts, (1) a group phenomena and, (2) those in power exercise power over or with others. "To understand the nature of leadership requires understanding of the essence of power, for leadership is a special form of power" (Burns, 1978, p. 12). Power cannot be overlooked in the process of instructional supervision, nor during the process of building relationships, trust, understanding, tolerance, and influence between an instructional supervisor and teacher; each affects the other (Banks, 2007).

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) (2005) asserted culturally competent school leaders harness a collective of learned knowledge and personal attributes that supported their work. Such skills include understanding power of positionality, and how these affect individuals as well as how the organization and educational system are affected. Culturally competent leaders held "understanding of critical theories about how people learn, and the impact of race, power, legitimacy, cultural capital…" on the shared experience between the leader and teacher (p. 3). Leaders who considered vertical and horizontal struggles of power asked questions of themselves such as: "What privileges do they enjoy? How do they use their

power and influence? What kind of prejudice and bias influence their leadership decisions and behaviors? and Does it have an impact on the lives of their students?" (IEL, 2005, p. 4).

Tyack (1974) reported reform in education exists in a cyclical format where politicians, school leaders, board of education members, and other interested stakeholders respond to necessary and inevitable changes in the environment, either by taking or not taking action of some sort. Changing demographics in a community requires an adjustment in approach or response to new issues that arise. "Policymakers, teacher educators, members of ethnic communities, and school leaders agree that the education profession needs more teachers of color" (National Education Association, 2004, p. 6). If these desired personnel are not available, then principals can prepare others by working through conversations about practice and how it is affected by beliefs and attitudes related to identity characteristics such as race and ethnicity. But engaging in such dialogue is a challenge. To engage in constructive conversations about the alignment of student and educator performance, leaders cultivate a culture based on the norms of high expectations, shared responsibility, mutual respect, and relational trust (Learningforward.org, 2012).

School leaders can facilitate educational programs for others to appreciate these cultural differences in the future, while paying attention to groups who have been traditionally marginalized, supporting them in a more equitable manner. Building and improving upon relationships with teachers through instructional supervision and other professional development activities, are key tasks for school supervisors as they strive to support student learning, community development, higher high school graduation rates, and the overall youth population—a group that will grow to become our future leaders, politicians, educators, and voters. And while "we cannot expect education to compensate for inequities wrought by

macroeconomic policy" (Anyon, 2005, p. 38), which influences what happens inside and outside of the schoolhouse, educators continue their work to support the student and family community in a way that enables literacy, critical thinking, and community building regardless of an existing achievement gap (Ladson-Billings, 2007).

But how do principals become culturally competent to do such multicultural promotion for inclusion and student achievement? Where do leaders receive their training, on the job, or in other forums? How are administrator preparation programs readying the principal workforce for diverse school settings? Leaders need to be trained in administrator preparation programs to handle cultural assessments and make the necessary changes for stakeholder support. According to some social scientists, the preparation of school leaders has seen little change in learning and teaching others how to do this (Cardno, 2005; Evans & Mohr, 1999). Therefore, it is imperative that educational scholars study how school supervisors, who are successful in leading faculty through demographic changes and the challenging issues of diversity, work with teachers to build relationships that engage in greater understanding of difference, how it manifests in the classroom, and changes that can be made to improve overall attitudes, shift the delivery of instruction, and possibly improve student achievement.

Cultural Competence in Supervision

Administrator awareness of multiple cultural beliefs and values, the effects of one's own cultural heritage and behaviors on others, and perspectives on root causes and systems of privilege and oppression have the ability to shape the understanding of social justice issues. Yet, "Few researchers have empirically examined cultural competency in school leadership," creating a need to understand ways administrator preparation programs and schools organizationally

support the cultural competency training and continuing professional development of K-12 leaders (Bustamante, Nelson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2009, p. 799).

In instructional supervision (generally taught on the job or through leadership preparation curricula), the term "cultural competency" is rarely used. Instead, similar concepts are covered under the research base on social justice leadership (Jean-Marie, 2006; Rhodes & Calderone, 2007; Serviovanni, 1994; Theoharis, 2008; Thrupp & Lupton, 2006) focused on school leaders' needs to "promote multicultural awareness, gender sensitivity, and racial and ethnic appreciation" through supervision (Growe et. al., 2002, p. 205). School leaders coached and supported teachers to "think deeply about their teaching strategies and become personally involved with their students to at least some degree" (Metz, 1988, p. 130). Thrupp and Lupton (2006) found that leaders who considered school contexts and individual differences more finitely, "develop less 'neutral' discourse on schooling and give greater recognition to the importance of social injustices in reproducing educational inequalities" (p. 311). However, Bustamante, Nelson, and Onwuegbuzie (2009) found little research conducted in the areas of school-wide cultural competency and supervision including ways to assess it that led to determining the "impact of school-wide cultural competence on inclusion, equity, and student achievement" (p. 799)

Born out of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, multicultural education and culturally relevant teaching focus on integrating content into the culture of the student while seeking to reduce prejudices and empower youth and build equity into the school's social structure (Banks, 1998). In other areas of education, such as curriculum and instruction, extensive literature dating from the 1960s examines multicultural education, culturally responsive teaching, or culturally relevant teaching, which typically includes a holistic approach

to teaching grounded in social justice, equity, and citizenship where lesson information is given to, exchanged with, or encountered by students through varying styles that make information more relevant for students (Banks, 1997; Bennett, 2007; Gay, 2000, Gorski, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Meyer, Bevan-Brown, Park, & Savage, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2011; Schofield, 2010; Sleeter & Grant, 1987). Called "antiracist education" (Nieto & Bode, 2011), multicultural education is about education for everyone, where teachers and students work to accept and affirm differences (Nieto, 2010). Notably, "Theories about cultural differences call for educators to understand the differences of minority students so as to establish a more culturally congruent classroom situation" (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995, p. 241).

Multiple terms are used through education literature to describe providing students with access to curricula across boundaries, abilities, and differences. Terms associated with multicultural education used to discuss connecting students to curricula are found throughout the literature on teaching education, but are rarely found in the realm of leadership. One can infer the literature on teacher education is transferable to the literature of educational leadership, including concepts of *cultural congruence* (Au & Kawakami, 1994); *cultural responsiveness* (Gay, 2002); *cultural proficiency* (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003); *culturally responsive teaching* (Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002); *intercultural competence* (Bennett, 2011); and *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Millner, 2011). In the following paragraphs, I describe these terms in greater detail.

Elements of culture inferred through these titles refer to systems of meaning that are passed along from one generation to the next (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993), or symbols of meaning that help people connect to a shared system of beliefs, attitudes, language, morals, and values (Guy, 1999; Hecht, Jackson, & Rieau, 2003). Growing consensus of what defines culture

includes interactions with people and the environment, shared concepts and elements with these other people, and transmission across generations (Triandis, 2007). Educators can use elements that socially define one culturally (e.g., race, customs, language, shared history) to enhance the experience of the learner (Cushner, K., McClelland, A., & Safford, P. L., 2006). Though each term uses the word 'culture' throughout, culture and elements related to culture are hard to define (Guy, 1999; Tillman, 2002) and are still in the process of being debated (Schim & Doorenbos, 2010), making it challenging to distinguish where one concept ends and another begins.

Educational researchers use various terms to name the relationship between students' home culture and school culture from a perspective of accommodating or enculturating the students' culture into the main culture of the school, including culturally appropriate, culturally congruent, and culturally compatible (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Cultural congruence suggests students learn best in a school context that directly reflects the community served (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Singer, 1988), teachers understand their own cultural biases and how these biases influence judgments made about student performance (Zeichner, 1995), and teachers show respect for the diverse cultural traditions of the student in the social environment of the classroom (Hall, 2005).

Culturally relevant teaching, coined as 'culturally relevant pedagogy' by Ladson-Billings (1992), was a descriptor of successful pedagogies used in her own classroom with underserved populations of children, mainly students from Black and other marginalized identity groups. She sought methods to help what sociolinguists called an attempt to navigate language and understanding differences students experienced in the home versus what took place in the school (Ladson-Billings, 1995). When writing about practices in her classroom, the author declared "But that's just good teaching!" (1995, p. 159). This concept of culturally relevant pedagogy,

with influence from Pewewardy (1993), became a concept that explained "the reasons [Native American Indian] children experience difficulty in schools is that educators traditionally have attempted to insert culture into the education, instead of inserting education into the culture" (p. 159). By inserting education into the culture of the student population, the teacher humanizes education, leading to student academic success, student cultural competence, and a development of students' critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). As a result, students "develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (p. 162).

Culturally proficient teaching refers to a way of being rather than a destination or final outcome; as it explains "a way to understand, embrace, and talk about differences that recognizes and respects individuals and their cultures" (Robins, Lindsey, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2005, para. 2). For school leaders, cultural proficiency translates to raising awareness through dialogue with teachers about the spaces and differences between "a person's expressed values and how he or she is actually perceived and experienced by clients, colleagues, and the community" (para. 4). The context of instructional supervision supports leaders engaging in such a dialogue with teachers.

Gay (2000) defined culturally responsive teaching as teachers using students' cultural characteristics to make learning more meaningful. By teaching students through their own cultural lenses, student learn more easily. Teachers attempt to gain knowledge about students' cultural characteristics based on experiences and use it as "conduits for teaching them [students] more effectively" (Ladson-Billings, 2002, p. 106).

These various terms focus on connecting curricula and practices to the culture of the student. And while this information is found throughout the teacher preparation curricula, there

is limited research available of administrators who need use supervision that works in contexts of diversity, creating a need to search for ideas and concepts in other fields. Therefore, to better understand about the background of cultural competence in educational instructional supervision, a review of cultural competence in the supervision literature in the fields of healthcare, social work, and human resources and organizational development is briefly explored here (See Table 2).

Healthcare. Cultural competence used specifically in the training of supervisors originated within the healthcare field of nursing, specifically nursing continuing education and professional learning (Salimbene, 1999; Sloand, Groves, & Brager, 2004; St. Clair & McKenry, 1999). By the turn of the 21st century, with the U. S. growing more diverse, the Office of Minority Health (OMH) took on the task of creating a set of national standards considered culturally and linguistically appropriate for the rendering of health care services (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services & OMH, 2001). Culturally and linguistically appropriate services referred to culture as "integrated patterns of human behavior that included the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups" (Department of Health and Human Services & OMH, 2001, pp. 4-5). 'Competence' was applied to the function of the health provider to determine whether the individual could provide care "within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by consumers and their communities" (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989, n.p.). Related to the care of patients, supervising nurses defined cultural competence as "a set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable a system, agency, and/or individuals to function effectively with culturally diverse clients and communities" (Sloand, et al., 2004, p. 1). Culture specific nursing was considered as understanding the learned, shared, and transmitted

values, beliefs, norms, and lifeways of a particular group that guide this group's thinking, decisions, and actions (Choi, 2002).

In the larger healthcare field, the concept of cultural competence involved looking at cultural identities and differences as a positive connection when performing patient care (Bhui, Warfa, Edonya, McKenzie, & Bhugra, 2007; Cohen, Gabriel, & Terrell, 2002; Cross, et al., 1989; Dogra, Vostanis, & Frake, 2007). A health professional would approach a different work environment and patient care with an attitude of appreciation and admiration for differences rather than taking a view of differences as a deficit. With culturally competent practices, services could be "delivered in ways which are culturally acceptable to clients and enhance their ethnic group participation and power" (Cordero, 2008, p. 166).

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) recognized various factors that influence and impact behaviors in the medical field (Cohen, et al., 2002). These factors impact the practices of healthcare providers and directly reflect the cultural awareness knowledge of the practitioner. Elements of interest to culturally competent provider practices include communication styles, diet preferences, health beliefs, family roles, lifestyles, rituals, and decision-making processes. Heightened awareness of these practices has led to an improvement in caregiving to patients.

Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) and Dogra, Vostanis, and Frake (2007) acknowledged cultural competence as the ability of individuals, organizations, and systems to respond to the different and unique needs of individuals receiving care whose cultures are different from that of the mainstream. Fox (2005) defined cultural competence as "a body of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors by which physicians ought to be trained if they are to deliver sensitive, empathetic, humanistic care that is respectful of patients, involves effective

patient-centered communication, and responds to patients' psychosocial issues and needs" (p. 1316). For healthcare workers, cultural competence included having the knowledge, skills, and abilities with behaviors and attitudes that offer a holistic and sensitive, patient-comfort focused practice (Fox, 2005).

Social work. Cultural competence within social work was recommended or mandated in two distinct frameworks, either through educational policy and/or curriculum, or through specific accreditation standards (Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011). These requirements were created from the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, affirmative action, feminism, the introduction of professional standards, and the emergence of multiple identities (Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), 2012). Yet, with longstanding requirements, definitions of cultural competency within the social work community tended to be "narrow, even tokenistic" (Furlong & Wight, 2011, p. 39).

Social work supervisors urged practitioners to be aware when working with individuals who were different from those that were considered majority or "historically referred to individuals and groups of non-White racial origin, […] the term [cultural competence] has evolved to encompass differences pertaining to sexuality, religion, ability, and others" (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 245). The broadening of issues beyond racial and ethnic categories opened up the framework of ethnic competency by promoting adaptation, as staff in social work positions were challenged to recognize the organizational or institutional oppression that existed beyond race and culture (Gallegos, 1982; Green, 1982; Saltzurg, 2008). As a result, the increased attention to race and history in social work led to the creation and adoption of cultural competency standards for social work education (CSWE, 2012). Cultural competency training supported the education of social workers to challenge any institutional or organization racism

they encountered (Abrams & Moio, 2009).

Public administration and human resources and organizational development. For the field of public administration, the origins of cultural competency mandates date back to policy from the mid-20th Century with the Hill-Burton Act of 1946[1] and the Social Security Act of 1965, both of which focused on healthcare services provided to those with different identity characteristics than those who were considered members of the population majority (Carrizales, 2010). Roots in the Civil Rights Movement underscored the importance of being a culturally competent practitioner, as more Americans stepped up in the 1960s and 1970s to claim equal rights for various demographic categories (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Carrizales, 2010).

The field of human resources and organizational development adopted the term cultural competency as it provided an avenue for two important elements in multicultural leadership (Hanson, Pepitone-Arreoloa-Rockwell, & Green, 2000). First, cultural competency recognized that individual characteristic differences "are crucial dimensions to an informed professional understanding of human behavior" (Hanson et al., 2000, p. 653). Second, these attributes of cultural competency allowed for others to develop positive attitudes towards intergroup racial and cultural differences for groups other than the Anglo-American culture group. Organizational leaders are responsible for developing such positive attitudes and outlooks within their given system. Without developing such skills, top-level managers will insufficiently support personnel (Adler & Bartholomew, 1992).

The National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) operates as a partnership organization with a mission to "increase the capacity of health care and mental health care

[1] The Hill-Burton Act of 1946 was later struck down as separate but equal was proved unconstitutional.

Table 2

Matrix of Cultural Competence Theories/Models/Perspectives
Modeled after Gallegos, Tindall, and Gallegos, 2008, p. 53
-Definitions for cultural competency lack consistency and coherence (Bennett, 2006; Papadopoulos, Tilki, & Less, 2004).

Theory/Model	**Major Components/Defining Terms & Process Steps**	**Field of Focus**	**Major Distinctions/ Based Upon**	**Author (s)**
Multicultural Education/ Cultural Responsiveness	Content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, empowering school culture and community.	Education	Equality; Civil Rights	Au & Kawakami, 1994; Banks, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2006; Bennett, 2007; Bowers & Flinders, 1991; Hawley & Nieto, 2010; Gallavan, 2011a, 2011b; Gay, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2002, 200, 2009; Gorski, 2010; Henry, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995, 2005, 2006; Milner, 2011; Nieto, 2008; Nieto & Bode, 2011; Santamaria, 2009; Sleeter & Grant, 1987; Tillman, 2005
Cultural Competence	Behaviors, attitudes, and policies that support working effectively with diverse clients; enhances participation and power of clients.	Nursing; General healthcare practitioners	Delivery of services that are culturally acceptable to patients and encourage multiple ethnic participation in the health care of others	Bhui, Warfa, Edonya, McKenzie, & Bhugra , 2007; Choi, 2002; Cohen, Gabriel, & Terrell, 2002; Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989; Dogra, Vostanis, & Frake, 2007; Fox, 2005; Leininger & McFarland 2005; Majumdar, Browne, Roberts, & Carpio, 2004; Sloand, Groves, & Brager, 2004
Ethnic Competence/ Cultural (Cross-Cultural) Awareness	Working beyond issues of race, gender, and culture to understand more about differences in sexuality, religion, and ability.	Social Work	Working beyond issues of race and gender; Civil Rights	Abrams & Moio, 2009; Furlong & Wight, 2011; Gallegos, 1982; Gallegos, Tindall, & Gallegos, 2008; Green, 1982; Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011
Global Competency	Ability to judge demands of a company or organization to sufficiently support personnel through global, strategic challenges.	Public Administration/Human Resources and Organizational Development	Globally focused for personnel support and organizational growth	Adler & Bartholomew, 1992; Carrizales, 2010; Egan & Bendick, 2008; Hanson, Pepitone-Arreoloa-Rockwell, & Green, 2000

programs to design, implement, and evaluate culturally and linguistically competent service delivery systems to address growing diversity, persistent disparities, and to promote health and mental health equity" (National Center for Cultural Competence, n.d.). NCCC encourages organizations and institutions to define values and principles that connect to behaviors and attitudes enabling members of the organization to work across cultures. This included embracing principles of equity and non-discriminatory practices when providing services to another person, a practice of being culturally competent.

Egan and Bendick (2008) defined cultural competency as the ability to work in diverse teams, together as a system, or individually with results. From humble beginnings in the healthcare field, cultural competence training in the form of sensitivity training and education provided educators an alternative perspective to practices that were otherwise discriminatory, biased, and culturally insensitive without ever having the intention to be so (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Majumbdar, Browne, Roberts, & Carpio, 2004). To discuss cultural competencies, one should be able to define what it is or what they are. However, there is limited agreement on what defines cultural competency.

Definitions of what it means to be culturally competent or to attain cultural competency lack consistency, coherence, and overall agreement (Bennett, 2006). According to Papadopoulos, Tilki, and Less (2004), there is little consensus on a working definition of cultural competency. Therefore, it is highly likely that there will continue to be disagreements among attitudes surrounding an applicable, working definition of the term. Cowan (2009) generalized cultural competency as the ability to "maximize sensitivity and minimize insensitivity in the service of culturally diverse communities" (p. 30). Fox (2005) reported that cultural competency policy and practice were sought in relation to an ever-diversifying American composition. The

term cultural competency originally applied to the ethnic, racial, and economic disparities in access and quality of healthcare (Fox, 2005). As mentioned previously, for the purposes of this study, cultural competence is defined generally as a combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities about cultural groups, and awareness about self-attitudes and beliefs about cultural groups, including those related to one's own group(s).

Cultural Competency in Educational Supervision

School leaders charged with supervision duties are required to encourage work in teams and individually to achieve results. But how does a school leader learn to develop cultural competency skills? How do school leaders use cultural competency knowledge to support teachers through supervision? And why is this important? In 2004, members and invited guests of the School Leadership Learning Community (SLLC), a group of 24 organizations and institutions focused on improving leadership in low-performing schools, came together to address a need for authentic leadership development programs (Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), 2005). Discussions led to participants asking, "'Is a culturally competent school leader any different from an effective school leader?' Said another way, is it possible to have an effective school leader who is not culturally competent? Participants agreed that, increasingly, it is not" (IEL, 2005, p. 2). The SLLC adopted the belief that cultural competence is a necessity for leadership preparation programming and ongoing professional development for school leaders at all grade levels and across the career spectrum. "Cultural competence should be viewed as a set of capacities that inform every aspect of effective leadership, rather than as an added component or "icing on the cake"" (IEL, 2005).

Culturally competent instructional leaders must consider the achievement gap when leading for diverse contexts. Literature on the overrepresentation of students from black and

brown families and low socio-economic status receiving special education services, suspensions, and behavior referrals compel leaders to not only focus on instructional services for students but cultural needs of students as well (Butler, Lewis, Moore, & Scott, 2012; Council for Children with Behavorial Disorders, 2013; Hannon, DeFina, & Bruch, 2013; MacDonald, 2003; Monroe, 2013; Thomas, 2005; Vogell, 2009). While there are multiple bodies of literature that acknowledge this work, for the purposes of this study, these bodies of literature lay beyond the scope of this work. Gleaned from these works is the concept of moving from deficit models to difference models when considering youths' racial and ethnic differences, and how to serve their individual needs through these differences.

Meeting educational and personal needs of students requires school leaders to work closely with teachers through supervision processes (Shulman, Sullivan, & Glanz, 2008). School principals can use the process of instructional supervision to adequately serve the school population by working with others to gain the contextually appropriate cultural competency skills, knowledge, and abilities required to fulfill the needs of faculty and staff during school population changes or to continue meeting the needs of an ever-diversifying overall school community. Therefore, it becomes important for instructional supervisors to know what cultural competency is and how to recognize and label its attributes to enhance instructional leadership practices. However, no studies indicate how school supervisors manifest and use culturally competent practices as instructional leaders.

School leaders create relationships with members of the school organization and bring them into the change process by demonstrating that their opinions and views are valued by the school's administration. School leaders build trust and a culture for tolerance within a school by honoring and respecting the cultures of those present within and outside of the school through

utilization of cultural competence as a tool in their leadership toolbox. Successful school leaders understand that transformation within the school can never take place without a collective cultural understanding and adaptation. For some supervisors:

> effects of gender and cultural differences, the feminist and cultural minorities critiques stressed that traditional supervision was aligned with a white, male, Western, hierarchical perspective, which did not address the power issues identified in the structural, political, and socio-cultural discourses on supervision. (O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2011, p. 10)

School leaders, too, can learn to relate to people from other cultures and belief systems from a place of equality rather than cultural superiority (Adler & Bartholomew, 1992).

Furthermore, "Diversity should be understood as the varied perspectives and approaches to work that members of different identity groups bring" (Thomas & Ely, 2007, p. 270). For educational supervisors, understanding the diversity that exists on campus and the many perspectives that this diversity will bring towards teaching practices among staff builds greater understanding as common core for the development of staff and students in the future. Banks (1975a, 1975b, 2001, 2006) borrowed this concept of challenging the institution in the field of education by leading the charge to bring multicultural education, a form of teaching culturally competently, to the masses as a new type of "citizenship education."

Banks (2001) viewed cultural competency as the link that would allow for teachers and leaders of different ethnic groups to "critically analyze and rethink their notions of race, culture, and ethnicity, and to view themselves as cultural and racial beings" (p. 12). For leadership, especially among those who created curricula used in schools, Banks believed:

> The curriculum builder should seriously examine the "common culture" concept and make sure that the view of the American common culture is not racist, ethnocentric, or

> exclusive, but is multiethnic and reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity in American life. We need to redefine what the common culture actually is and make sure that our new definition reflects the social realities, and not the myths, within this nation. (p. 172)

By practicing awareness of the differences that exist, the school leader develops a greater understanding of alternate worldviews, adds to one's own ability to talk about race and other oppressive differences, and learns to appreciate the experiences that others from a different background present (Brown, 2009).

As our communities become increasingly more "diverse, multicultural, multiracial, and multilingual, while our public schools become increasingly more segregated and unequal, the ability, desire, and political will to pursue multiple strategies to promote diversity and improve education for all children becomes increasingly more important" (Brown, 2009, p. 192). School leadership can experience success through the daily job-embedded use of cultural competency practices when one is willing to put in the work it takes to have the discourse and reflect on perspectives shared by others. But what is often unclear is how supervisors know when and how to use cultural competency skills to support teachers through leadership practices.

For school leaders, examining the common culture of the school environment, curricula, and teacher pedagogy is to be completed regularly and without fear of changing the status quo. Successful leadership relies on the relationships and shared values between leaders and followers. School leaders are trained not to "adjust the black child to the white middle-class norms educators accepted unquestioningly," but instead learn about the ways the school can support youth like they are a member of the family (Tyack, 1974, p. 220). As an educational historian, Tyack argues such a cultural and community focus provides access in the process of

building cultural competency, demonstrating to teachers and students the value in belief the school holds for each student and staff members' cultural background (Anyon, 2005).

To help provide support for the differences that exist culturally between students, teachers, and administrative leaders, districts ask that school leaders promote "multicultural awareness, gender sensitivity, and racial and ethnic appreciation" in their practice of supervision (Growe et al., 2002, p. 205), and support teachers through their use of culturally relevant pedagogy (Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995). Tyack (1974) revealed, "the principle underlying such progress was 'recognition of individual differences' and the consequent attempt 'to adjust our schools to the needs and capacities of those who are registered in them'" (p. 182). To meet the needs of the key stakeholder in schools, the students, supervisors are required to support teachers' ability to attain the goal of high academic achievement. By appreciating the diverse identity characteristics and the cultural values students bring into the curriculum and the overall K-12 school setting, the chance to improve academically and socially is increased for all through awareness, self-reflection, dialogue, and action (Banks, 2001, 2006; Banks & Banks, 2010; Gallavan, 2011a, 2011b; Gay, 2002, 2010; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995, 2001; Lum, 2010; Noguera, 2007; Taylor, 2010). However, there is limited research regarding the work school supervisors do with teachers through instructional leadership practices to attain the goals of student academic and social improvement.

Instructional leaders are critical agents guiding teachers to question and negotiate elements of identity and culture in the classroom including how teacher beliefs and attitudes surrounding these elements affect instruction and student learning. Giroux (2006) asserted teachers' need to connect:

> theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and social change… I think critical pedagogy is often seen as dangerous because it is built around a project that goes to the very heart of what education is about and is framed around a series of important and often ignored questions such as: Why do we [as educators] do what we do the way we do it? Whose interest does schooling serve? How might it be possible to understand and engage the diverse context in which education takes place? (p. 186)

School leaders can support teachers through areas of critical need and growth by acting as mentors and guides while they each seek to answer such challenging questions as whose interest is served in my classroom, and why do I do things in this way. Supervisors who engage teachers with questions related to how and why they do what they do model the same sensitivities to cultural patterns in the supervisor-teacher relationship as are often found in the student-teacher relationship (Bowers & Flinders, 1991). Leaders who are taught to use a culturally competent approach to their leadership and instructional supervision create opportunities for teachers that provide for a richer school experience for youth. Culturally competent strategies enable students from differing backgrounds to interact more positively, while developing healthier attitudes about others' differences (Banks, 2006; Brown & Mazza, 2005; Ginwright, Noguera, & Cammarota, 2006). As a result of using culturally competent methods of leadership, school administration can help "teachers, practitioners, and scholars to conceptualize and observe the diversity within ethnic groups… while helping students to develop positive intergroup attitudes" (Banks, 2006, p. 608). By developing positive intergroup attitudes, particularly in areas with changing demographics, schools adapt as an organization and support student growth in their own critical thinking, an element of social justice.

Cultural competence is a tool to develop relationships within the school context among leaders, teachers, students, and parents. By training to build a culture of diversity awareness, understanding, and inclusion, school leaders can achieve transformation or organizational change while increasing students' critical thinking skills (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006). Culturally competent school leaders know how to make sense of a particular situation and adjust accordingly to meet students' and community needs. While "we cannot expect education to compensate for inequities wrought by macroeconomic policy," which influences what happens inside and outside of the schoolhouse, leadership within our schools is preparing educators to support students, families, and communities in a way that enables literacy, critical thinking, and community building (Anyon, 2005, p. 38). Culturally conscious supervision can provide guidance towards the teaching opportunities that meet literacy, critical thinking, and community building goals.

Social justice and transformative leadership theories as critical influences. While there is limited literature specifically related to cultural competency and instructional leadership, there is a growing literature related to social justice and transformative leadership theories in education. Though a full review of this literature is beyond the scope of this study, I briefly summarize the concepts of these theories next.

There is a reciprocal nature of learning concerning the work of leadership theories grounded in advocacy (social justice leadership theory, transformative leadership) and the practice of cultural competency skill building as an integral part of educational supervisory practices. Taking influence from John Dewey, Nelson (2003) acknowledged changes in the make-up of the American population; students and teachers require more connection to each other and the curriculum. "Since freedom of mind and freedom of expression are the root of all

freedom, to deny freedom in education is a crime against democracy" (Dewey, 1987, p. 378). A leadership focus that meets the cultural and identity changing needs of students and staff, with an emphasis on social justice, provides the type of educational freedom about which Dewey wrote.

A social justice theory of leadership is a leadership practice tied to social change, reform, and systems that influence power and justice, with a firm belief in the commitment to help students achieve success (Jean-Marie, 2006, p. 99). For others, a social justice theory of leadership consisted of "advocating, leading, and keeping at the center of their practice or vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation and/or other historically marginalizing conditions" (Theoharis, 2008, p. 6). A social justice theory of leadership is also considered the practice of understanding the collective social struggle, even at the risk of disrupting "social stability" (Rhodes & Calderone, 2007, p. 116). School leaders who embraced a social justice theory of leadership enable greater job and school success, as sensitivities to different groups contribute to the knowledge and understanding the way group members learn best (St. Clair, 2008; Growe et al., 2002).

Transformative leadership builds strategies through participation, including integrating student-family cultures into the curriculum and the overall learning process (Brown, 2004, 2006, 2009). Cooper (2009) defined transformative leadership as "engaging in self-reflection, systematically analyzing schools, and then confronting inequities regarding race, class, gender, language, ability, and/or sexual orientation" (p. 696). Transformative leadership is activist-oriented and political with equity and freedom at the forefront of all practices (Cooper, 2009; Shields, 2010). Transformative leadership is practiced successfully when approached collaboratively, making this leadership style suitable for instructional supervision analysis. Brown (2009) asserted, "transformative learning changes the way people see themselves and

their world. It attempts to explain how their expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning they derive from their experiences" (p. 78). Transformative leadership directly engages learners in a type of dialogue and self-reflection cycle that creates a forum for change as intimate discovery helps learners to work through bias and privilege.

Social justice and transformative leadership theories connect to Freire's (1970) notion of critical pedagogy, which called for a transformation of education, a new way to look at educational and societal relationship dynamics between those with power (the oppressor) and those without or with less power (the oppressed). In the schools, this translated to a dialogue about positionality, where the teacher becomes the student and the student becomes the teacher. Giroux (2010) described:

> For Freire, pedagogy is not a method or an a priori technique to be imposed on all students, but a political and moral practice that provides the knowledge, skills and social relations that enable students to expand the possibilities of what it means to be critical citizens, while expanding and deepening their participation in the promise of a substantive democracy. Critical thinking for Freire was not an object lesson in test taking, but a tool for self-determination and civic engagement. For Freire, critical thinking was not about the task of simply reproducing the past and understanding the present. On the contrary, it offered a way of thinking beyond the present, soaring beyond the immediate confines of one's experiences, entering into a critical dialogue with history and imagining a future that did not merely reproduce the present. (para. 7)

A critical framework for understanding cultural competency in instructional supervision required what Freire (1970) described as a critical consciousness, the ability for one to make a connection

between the socio-economic and cultural contradictions in society, and then apply to practices that 'liberate' both the oppressor and the oppressed. As Fritze (2013) writes, "it means looking at reality and recognizing such contradictions as fact" (p. 2), then changing dominating practices to be more inclusive of all.

Chapter Summary

Literature on principal relationship building with and the instructional leadership of teachers is plentiful, while the literature of culturally competent knowledge and practices in education and other related fields continues to grow. However, there is limited discussion related to the origin of culturally competent practices and the specifics of the practices used by school leaders in their process of instructional supervision and how elements of relationship building affect the leadership process. How do school supervisors develop sensitive and empathetic understanding of personnel and context in their process of instructionally leading teachers (Hoy, Rickart, Durham, Puntametakul, Mansoor, Muijlwijk, & Bounnaphol, 2010)?

Given this lack of attention to cultural competency in the research on instructional supervision, the purpose of this study was to examine culturally competent instructional leadership through interviews with principals and assistant principals known for their commitment to culturally responsive supervision. To understand more about the cultural competency skills used by administrators as they instructionally lead teachers the following research questions were employed in this study:

1. How do instructional leaders engage teachers to improve their pedagogical practice for diverse learners?
2. How do instructional leaders assist teachers to examine their own experiences, beliefs, and attitudes influencing their work with diverse learners?

The analysis of this study focused on where and how principals used these culturally competent practices in the process of instructional supervision and in the process of building relationships with teachers. Through this study, the author sought to reach a deeper understanding of culturally competent instructional leadership.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine culturally competent instructional leadership through interviews with principals and assistant principals known for their commitment to culturally responsive supervision. The study employed an in-depth qualitative interview design to elicit participants' experiences, beliefs, and perspectives. A thematic analysis using the constant comparative method guided the analysis process (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This approach allowed me to explore the meanings and themes related to culturally competent instructional leadership generated from the interview transcripts.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. How do instructional leaders engage teachers to improve their pedagogical practice for diverse learners?
2. How do instructional leaders assist teachers to examine their own experiences, beliefs, and attitudes influencing their work with diverse learners?

These questions focused the study on understanding the who, what, why, when, where, and how of cultural competency in instructional leadership.

This chapter first describes the research questions investigated in this study. Next I present descriptions of the theoretical framework, research design, and rationale for the study. I then detail the participant selection criteria as well as data collection and analysis methods. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how quality and rigor were built into the study.

Theoretical Framework

In examining a methodology, one discovers the possibility of many "assumptions buried within it. It is these assumptions that constitute one's theoretical perspective and they largely have to do with the world that the methodology envisages. Different ways of viewing the world shape different ways of researching the world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 66). Similarly, Patton (2002) argued, "qualitative inquiry is not a single, monolithic approach to research and evaluation." Yet it is through such philosophical and theoretical inquiries and perspectives that insight is gained into a particular area of interest (p. 76). A qualitative research approach "contribute[s] to fundamental knowledge and theory" (Patton, 2002, p. 213), enabling us to learn about the practice of culturally competent instructional supervision and to discover why and how it occurs. By researching how culturally competent instructional leadership helps teachers enhance student learning, we begin to understand how to best provide support to develop teachers and rising leaders.

Interpretivism provided the theoretical lens for this study; this approach helps develop the science of understanding (Merriam, 2002; Schwandt, 1994) needed for culturally competent instructional leadership. Born of the works of Max Weber (1864-1920), interpretivism seeks to understand and explain the social world by analyzing the meanings people give for their own actions (Lichtman, 2010). An interpretivist approach "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). Using an interpretive framework enabled me to understand the ideas, issues, and concerns of the research participants; identify patterns, themes, and relationships in their responses (Thomas, 2003); and report these findings to further develop meaning and encourage future research (Schwandt, 1998).

Using an interpretive approach to make sense of the data "remind[s] us that what something means depends on the cultural context in which it was originally created as well as the cultural context within which it is subsequently interpreted" (Patton, 2002, p. 113). Sense making offers an "objective understanding and an interpretation that is valid for all people who share the same worldview at a given time" (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 107). Interpretivism explains human and social interactions based on the understanding that although people may experience similar issues or phenomena, they may create different meanings from those experiences (Crotty, 2005; Stake, 2010). The participants expressed varying perspectives regarding the phenomenon of culturally competent instructional leadership and described different ways of addressing diversity in the context of their own district's protocol for instructional supervisory and related leader practices. Interpretation of the data provided an opportunity to understand these individual meanings in order to make sense of the instructional leader's world.

Research Design

This study used an in-depth interview design. As Berry (1999) observed, in-depth interviews are a useful data collection method across multiple social science disciplines. The in-depth interview is "the type of interview which researchers use to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view or situation" (Berry, 1999, para. 3). In-depth interviews are generally used in studies "with a small number of respondents to explore their perspective on a particular idea, program, or situation" (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p. 3). An in-depth interview design was appropriate for this study as it offered "an effective qualitative method for getting people to talk about their personal feelings, opinions, and

experiences. It was also an opportunity to gain insight into how people interpret and order the world" (Milena, Dainora, & Alin, 2008, p. 1279).

In this study, in-depth interviews provided access to information from relatively few people, allowing me to "deeply explore the respondent's feelings and perspectives on a subject" (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2012, para. 2). In my interviews with the 11 study participants, I sought to be a good listener and remain open-minded, flexible, responsive, patient, and observant, while probing for deeper meaning and understanding (Guion et al., 2012). As the research instrument for this study, I aimed to be self-reflexive while respecting the context and position of each interviewee's "race, class, gender, culture, [and] language," as well as my own "status in relation to each interviewee; and prior experiences and relationships with the participant among other social locations" (Roulston, 2010, p. 5).

Participant Selection

Based on the relevant literature on cultural competency, I created a list of criteria describing personality characteristics and practices of culturally competent supervisors from the fields of health care, social work, and human resources and organizational development. These characteristics included school leaders who:

1. Formally supervise teachers;
2. Work in a public or private K-12 school setting with high levels of student diversity; and,
3. Were recommended by educational professionals as effective supervisors who use culturally competent practices.

These culturally competent practices include:

1. Displaying behaviors and attitudes indicating a desire to help teachers integrate ideas of equality, civil rights, and multiculturalism into content delivery and knowledge construction;
2. Leading and engaging with teachers in discussing elements of identity and exploring how differences within and between identity groups may enhance or inhibit classroom engagement and learning;
3. Building close, trusting working relationships with teachers that enable them to discuss social justice issues regarding race, gender, ethnicity, SES, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, etc.;
4. Being viewed by teachers as a collaborator, rather than only as a supervising evaluator;
5. Encouraging teachers to connect with students' prior knowledge, values, and experiences, and providing or supporting models that incorporate these notions into all aspects of the curricula; and,
6. Engaging teachers in professional development opportunities specifically targeted to address issues of stereotyping and the dynamics of power.

These characteristics were compiled in a letter that I sent to educational professionals in Georgia and school leaders in my home district in California as a means of identifying potential study participants (Appendix A). I networked with professors of education and school leaders working in the field, including former school principals, system superintendents, and those intimately familiar with the educational landscape of the K-12 system in Georgia. I asked these educational leaders if they could recommend other school leaders who are known in their system

and school for their commitment to promoting culturally relevant pedagogies to enhance student learning.

In one instance, one of my dissertation committee members recommended an elementary school principal and assistant principal—both formerly her students—as leaders who were recognized in their system as using culturally relevant professional development strategies to engage their teachers. One of these two former students participated in this study. It was from such initial recommendations that I found study participants. Once I made contact with individual school leaders and they agreed to participate in this project, I sought additional networking samples (Snowball Sampling, LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) of other potential interview participants.

I looked exclusively for participants committed to culturally competent instructional supervision by using an ideal-typical, network-sampling selection process (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Ideal-typical case selection is "a procedure in which the researcher develops a profile or model for the best, most efficient, most effective, or most desirable example of some population and then finds a real-world case that most closely matches that profile" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 77). With ideal-typical case selection, I chose a small number of participants known to use culturally competent practices in instructional leadership.

As the researcher, I made "thoughtful decisions regarding sampling" so as to include only participants who possessed qualifications relevant to the topic of study (Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora, & Mattis, 2007, p. 299). The participant selection process is considered "critical" as it is "likely to be especially informative about the phenomenon or perspectives under study, and may enable the researcher to put a particular theory" to the test (Springer, 2010, p. 110). Using ideal-typical selection, research participants from various school districts in which demographic

changes are occurring or have occurred were chosen who could describe in detail their work in leading teachers in a culturally competent manner. These participants had the potential to yield "the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge" (Patton, 2002, p. 236). In many cases the participants recommended by educational professionals were assistant principals, but because both principals and assistant principals facilitate formal supervision and evaluation protocols with teachers, both were invited to participate in the study.

While no risks or discomforts were expected or anticipated, I did take into account that the topics discussed during interviews, such as such as race, class, gender, sexual identity, and religion, were social justice issues that are often sensitive in nature. For example, in responding to interview questions asking them to recall past incidents, participants may experience painful memories. In light of this awareness, I attempted to remain emotionally neutral, yet supportive of the participants throughout all interviews. Participants had the option to decline answering any of the questions and could terminate the interview at any time without penalty.

I used pseudonyms throughout the study to maintain confidentiality and distinguish between participants. Identifiers including participant names and affiliated schools are not included in the final research findings. All data were stored on my personal computer, including all digital recordings of participant interviews. I did not share any information regarding participant raw data. Raw data in the form of interview recordings, observation notes, and documents will be deleted from my laptop's stored files no later than January 1, 2018.

There were no extrinsic benefits for participants in this study. Intrinsic rewards may come from knowing that the information they provided will help advance knowledge and awareness of culturally competent practices among supervisors and teachers in diverse K-12 schools and may enhance the preparation of future school leaders. Additionally, participants

may benefit from knowing that sharing their expertise supported a graduate student who sought to learn more about the culturally competent practices of school leaders.

Data Collection Methods and Techniques

The in-depth interview method used in the study included a 1-2 hour formal interview with each participant. In the case of seven principals, I was able to conduct informal observations and shadowing of the administrator when time and context permitted. I collected documents for analysis when provided by the participant. In all, I situated myself primarily as a researcher conducting in-depth interviews to study culturally competent instructional practices, and if time permitted, I observed school leaders conducting informal supervision visits with teachers. I conducted two of the eleven interviews virtually, through Skype or the telephone; nine interviews were conducted face-to-face. Eight of these nine interviews took place at the leader's school site.

Participant Interviews

Interviewing participants provided the "opportunity to learn about what [the researcher] cannot see and to explore the alternative explanations of what [the researcher] does see" (Glesne, 1999, p. 81). Using a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix B) (Roulston, 2010), the researcher formally interviewed participants for 1-2 hours each at their respective school sites. Interviews began in September 2012 and concluded in December 2012. Handwritten notes were made during the interview on a printed interview guide. Interview transcription began immediately after the first interview. I transcribed each interview verbatim, making efforts to complete the first interview's transcription by the time the next interview took place.

The first part of the interview laid the foundation with participants. I used this section of the interview to build rapport with the participant, become familiar with the school context, and

learn about the participant's theory and practice of instructional leadership. I asked participants to detail the practices they use in their instructional supervision of teachers and to describe specific ways in which they promote, model, or share culturally competent practices with teachers to support diverse learners. The second part of the interview was used to follow up with clarifying questions.

Research Journal

I used a research journal for field notes, reflections, and memos. Rossman and Rallis (1998) note that "Data gathering is a deliberate, conscious, systematic process that details both the products—the data—and the processes of the research activities so that others may understand how the study was performed and can judge its adequacy, strength, and ethics" (p. 123). I used my research journal to document all aspects of the research process, including what happened and when, along with my thoughts, questions, concerns, and anything else I viewed as important, from what I observed to how I felt during an interview (Miyata & Kai, 2009). I kept this journal throughout the study to chronicle my process of data collection and analysis immediately following the interviews and upon initial transcription, using it to write about the environment and my feelings related to being in each interviewee's school context.

Additionally, I documented my feelings as they related to the data generated by the interview questions. I journaled about each interview as it occurred, noting the time of day, the length of the interview, whether it started on time or later than scheduled, and whether I felt anxious or unsure about how the interview would go. I wrote about my interactions with and observations of all those with whom I interacted once I entered the school grounds (e.g., school personnel, community members, guardians, students), including staff in the front office or

hallway who were introduced to me or who approached the school leader as we walked to the interview location.

In summary, I used my research journal as an opportunity to be reflective and reflexive about my participation in the observation and interview process, as Patton (2002) advocates. "It's in the nature of our intellects that ideas about the meaning, causes, and significance of what we experience find their way into our minds. These insights and inspirations become part of the data of fieldwork and should be recorded in context" (Patton, 2002, p. 304). Such wide-ranging data is typically "not characterized by the orderly progression that is eventually bred into published accounts of it. The gap between the way it was in the field and the way it turns out to be in print is generally considerable" (Anderson, 1990, p. 4). Reflective journaling allowed me to document my thoughts, feelings, and actions throughout the data collection process to capture its personal and professional dimensions (Anderson, 1990).

Participant Observation

While this was not an ethnographic study, I was able to collect some observational data to better understand the cultural systems and overall contexts of the participating school leaders (Patton, 2002). Though I had limited access to shadow these leaders in their natural supervisory contexts, I was able to observe several school leaders in a formal and planned way, allowing me to interact with participants to "gently influence the flow of information" (Springer, 2010). While observing, I took descriptive field notes to capture a "slice of life" (Bogden & Biklen, 2003, p. 112). As Bogden and Biklen (2003) explain, "Aware that all description represents choices and judgments to some degree--decisions about what to put down, the exact use of words--the qualitative researcher strives for accuracy under these limitations" (p. 112).

My observations included discussions, resource sharing, and other forms of connection between the study participants and the teachers they supervise. Though "it is not possible to observe everything" (Patton, 2002, p. 278), additional cues to cultural competencies used in the practice of instructional supervision may be visible or audible, enhancing collected interview data. I initially wrote field notes in the condensed form of notes and sketches, but within 24 hours I expanded on them so as not to forget details (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). In my observation process I also looked for "absence of occurrence" in which cultural competency components did not exist or did not manifest themselves (Patton, 2002, p. 295).

Documents

Documents are often used as evidence or a resource to support and present research findings (Prior, 2008). Used here as "material culture," documents provided foundational support and added value to the study (Patton, 2002, p. 293). Typically, any "organization's culture leaves its imprint on most of the printed material that is produced" (Heck, 2006, p. 207). Document analysis enabled me to identify areas of growth and areas needing improvement in relation to cultural competency within each school leader's practice. Some participants provided documents such as class walk-through and feedback forms; survey forms related to shared common space in the school, including ideas for class, grade, or content community engagement; and printed district materials. These documents enriched the contextual understanding of these principals' schools.

Data Analysis

I used an inductive, thematic analytic approach to identify frequent, dominant, or significant themes generated from the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Data analysis occurred throughout the research process, immediately following each interview. The interview

guide was adjusted as needed before the next interview occurred. The use of an inductive thematic approach (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) enabled me to condense the data and establish links between the raw data, the findings, and the overall objectives of the research study (Thomas, 2003).

Specifically, analysis included the following steps: First, I first printed out the interview transcripts to read through multiple times. The initial review of data enabled me to put myself back into the context of the interview, recalling where we were and the energy I felt when the interview took place. I worked to hear the participant's voice as I read through each transcript, simultaneously reading my researcher's journal notes. The second time I read through the transcript data, I used a pencil to mark similar words or phrases in the text. Next, I used Microsoft Excel to set up a framework to organize the transcript data. I looked for similar words and phrases in the data, cutting and pasting the text into the Excel cells and organizing rows of participants' words with labeled columns. These data became the initial-level codes or groups.

I then reviewed the data in my Excel spreadsheet multiple times, grouping together like or unlike categories and chunking large sections of data relevant to the research questions (Saldaña, 2009). I coded the transcripts two additional times to ensure that I did not miss any data that might address the research questions of the study. After grouping descriptions of ideas and practices used by the leader participants multiple times, I was able to formulate broader themes capturing what it means to be a culturally competent instructional leader. These themes comprise the findings in Chapter Four.

An additional strategy I used to identify patterns in the data was the use of a Wordle or "word cloud" to provide a visual and special representation of participants' words based on their frequency in the interview transcripts (Feinberg, 2013). The more often the participant used a

certain word, the larger the word appears in the Wordle image. Wordles provided a visual display of the word choices culturally competent leaders used when talking about their supervision practices. I used these images to obtain a more complete picture of the examples leaders shared. These Wordles represent a creative visualization of the generated interview data. While colors, shapes, format, and orientation of the Wordles are arbitrary, what is important about these images are the size of words, as they denote a frequency of word use by the participant. Wordles for each interview transcript are presented in the participant profile section in Chapter Four.

Research Quality

Quality and rigor in qualitative research are often tied to reliability, a post-positivist notion with connections to evaluation and validity (Golafshani, 2003). In this study, quality and rigor were connected to multiple strategies that help convey accuracy in the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1986a, 1986b). "Values for quality, like all social knowledge, are ever changing and situated within local contexts and current conversations" (Tracy, 2010, p. 837). Using Tracy's (2010) criteria for excellence in qualitative research, I focused on (a) a worthy topic, (b) with rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) and resonance, (f) while hoping to make a significant contribution to the field, (g) remaining ethical, and (h) providing meaningful coherence to the reader (p. 840). To ensure rigor, I:

1. Triangulated multiple data sources (interviews, observations, documents) to build justification for themes;
2. Used rich description to set the scene of the research, so as to bring the environment to the reader;

3. Presented negative data findings to offer a clearer picture of all data and experiences; and,
4. Used a peer, along with my major professor and committee members where appropriate, to review the written work and debrief about the project.

These validation measures helped to establish and enhance credibility and ensure accuracy within and throughout the research process (Wolcott, 1990).

Chapter Summary

This interpretivist study used an in-depth interview design to investigate its guiding research questions. I chose to use interpretivism as it explains the differences each school leader experienced while instructionally supervising others in a familiar setting. The primary method of data collection was in-depth interviews supplemented with a researcher's journal, observations, and field notes. I supported the quality of this research study by triangulating multiple data sources and communicating with a chair of my dissertation committee regularly to ensure confirmability, or the ability to draw conclusions based on data (Agrosino, 2007). In the following chapter, I provide a description of each participating school leader and present the study's findings, organized thematically.

CHAPTER FOUR

CULTURALLY COMPETENT INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine cultural competency in the field of instructional leadership by analyzing the experiences and beliefs of K-12 school leaders. Eleven school principals and assistant principals shared stories of experiences that helped form their beliefs of culturally competent supervision. This research contributes to the field of educational administrator preparation through the knowledge of how these leaders' instructionally supervised teachers in a way that promoted the use of culturally relevant pedagogies to enhance student learning. As the researcher, I was particularly interested in the language and actions used by school administrators in their process of culturally competent instructional supervision and each leader's background as to why this type of leadership practice was important. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do instructional leaders engage teachers to improve their pedagogical practice for diverse learners?
2. How do instructional leaders assist teachers to examine their own experiences, beliefs, and attitudes influencing their work with diverse learners?

In this chapter, I provide introductions to the participants of this study including a brief summary of their backgrounds, how they came to the field of education, and the school context in which they lead. Within each participant's description, I include a visual image, a Wordle, created

from the interview transcripts to illustrate the weight of words used by each culturally competent leader. Next, I provide the findings from this study, including discussion about culturally competent practices these leaders used as they led teachers through instructional supervision.

School Leader Participant Profiles

Eleven school leaders participated in this study. Participants represented a variety of grade levels and content area expertise. Three of the participants identified as women, while the remaining nine identified as male. Three participants acknowledged their primary race identity as Black or African Heritage (one female, two male), while the remaining leaders identified as White. Two participants who recognized White for their primary race identity (one female, one male) acknowledged a mixed ethnic and cultural family background that included Latin/Caribbean or Indigenous North American cultures. Similarities existed among leader participants including having early experiences with special education and/or elementary education when beginning their career as a teacher. Three of the participants wanted to be school teachers as a young person, while the remaining eight leaders did not have an early interest in education as a career, although more than half of the participants grew up with a family member who was a teacher.

Of the participants, four were elementary school leaders, four were middle school leaders, and three were high school leaders. The three female participants in this study were all elementary school leaders (two principals, one assistant principal). The distribution of participants' gender to grade level of leadership is comparable to studies reporting more women serve as elementary school principals with more men in roles as secondary school principals (Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Chung, & Ross, 2003; Guramatunhu-Mudiwa & Bolt, 2012; Roser, Brown, & Kelsey, 2009; U. S. Department of Education, 2012). No participant shared his or her

sexual orientation. Three participants (all male) shared a beliefs system identity group to which they claimed membership, (two Christian, one Baptist Christian), while no other participants shared information about this aspect of their identity.

Nine of the 11 participants were working in a school with 55-95% of the student population qualifying for a free or reduced lunch (FRL) program. The one participant who worked in the school with 2% FRL had recently moved to this school from a school that claimed 90% FRL. A summary of the participants' demographics is presented in Table 3 below.

Marcy: Elementary School Principal

Marcy always wanted to be an elementary school teacher. She joined the *America's Choice* education program, a "K-12 comprehensive school reform model designed by the National Center on Education and the Economy. *America's Choice* focuses on raising academic achievement by providing a rigorous standards-based curriculum and safety net for all students" (Corcoran, Hoppe, Luhm, & Supovitz, 2000, p. 1). After working in First, Second, and Third grades, Marcy went to graduate school to get a specialist's degree in special education. From there, she served as a special education teacher in a middle school. Education leadership was not a focus for her graduate studies at the time, as she had already completed some formal leadership training with *America's Choice*. Her first position out of the classroom was as a math and curriculum design coach. Marcy recalled:

> Because curriculum and instruction were my passion, I just loved that aspect [of the work], at that time, my superintendent showed up at my door one day and said, "I'd like for you to go back and get your leadership degree." And they paid for my leadership

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Name	Primary Race Identity	Gender Identity	Title	Level of School Leadership	School Context FRL	Teaching Credential	Subject Taught	Wanted To Be A Teacher As a Young Person	Raised with a Teacher in the Family	Top 2 Wordle Words
1. Marcy	White	Female	Principal	Elementary	90%	Elementary Education/Special Education	K-5 Inclusion	Yes	Yes	Know Think
2. Noelle	Black	Female	Principal	Elementary	95%	Elementary Education	K-5 Inclusion	Yes	No	Think School
3. Tatiana	White	Female	Assistant Principal	Elementary	60%	Elementary Physical Education	K-5 P. E.	No	No	Think School
4. Eric	White	Male	Principal	Elementary	75%	Secondary Social Studies/ Foreign Language	HS Spanish	No	Yes	Things Think
5. Leonard	Black	Male	Principal	Middle	70%	Elementary Education/Secondary Social Studies	K-5 Inclusion	No	No	Students School
6. Alex	White	Male	Assistant Principal	Middle	95%	Special Education K-12	MS/HS Special Education	No	Yes	Know Just
7. Matthew	White	Male	Assistant Principal	Middle	55%	Secondary Mathematics	MS Math	No	No	Know Think
8. Edgar	White	Male	Assistant Principal	Middle	70%	Secondary Science	HS Science	No	Yes	Know Think
9. Burke	Black	Male	Principal	High	75%	Elementary Education/Special Education	MS/HS Special Education	No	No	Know Kids
10. Carl	White	Male	Principal/ Headmaster	High/K-12	n/a	Secondary Career and Technology	MS/HS Technology	Yes	Yes	Know Just
11. Theo	White	Male	Principal	High	2%	Secondary Mathematics	MS Math	No	Yes	Kids School

degree. I ended up through different processes, applying to this county. I was an AP for two years and then, this is my 8th year as a principal.

Marcy said her move into leadership provided a pathway to connect with the additional 480 students in her school of 500. "I love it; it's the best job ever…you get to make a difference everyday."

Figure 1. Marcy's interview transcript Wordle.

Marcy's school, located near a large southeastern city, is 90% Free and Reduced Lunch and has the largest Hispanic population in the system. Of 500 students in the school, 300 students were categorized as English as a Second Language program participants. Marcy's school serves a

student population that was 9% Black-African heritage, 20%, White, 69% Hispanic, and 2% multiracial. The school served 5% students with disabilities and 55% English as a Second Language populations (GA Department of Education, 2012).

Noelle: Elementary School Principal

At an early age, Noelle thought she would work behind the scenes in television or film media, so declared journalism as her college major. Education was not a first choice career option for Noelle as a young adult, although she recalled being interested in teaching as a child. She had a younger sibling with whom she was very close that encouraged her to seek out teaching as a career option. Noelle shared, "my parents were not formally educated, but they had lots of friends who were, and they worked with people who were. And their friends encouraged me to pursue a career other than education." However, Noelle realized her passion for TV and film had waned by the end of her undergraduate years, and decided to continue in school and get certified to teach elementary school. A key factor in her decision to change career plans from media to teaching was her close relationship with her mother. "I'm a momma's girl, still even at my age now, and I didn't want to leave my mom; we have a very special, rare relationship." Noelle took her first position as an elementary school teacher in the neighboring county where she attended school as a student herself.

Noelle loved being a teacher, and soon realized that she had a vested interest and special ability to work as a curriculum specialist. However, her principal at the time suggested this role didn't allow Noelle to use all of her skills, and instead, suggested that Noelle consider the principalship. Noelle taught for 11 years before leaving her classroom for a position as an assistant principal, a role she held for six years before entering the principalship three years ago. "Even thought it's a very, very challenging job; it's very, very stressful, especially in the school

where I am now, but I still love it." Noelle went on to say that challenges come and go in her position and "some days I feel like I'm not the person for this job, but I still get up and do the very best I can for my teachers and my students." Noelle knows that when the day comes that she no longer feels the drive to be a supportive school leader, she will turn around and hand the position over to someone else, "but at this point, I'm not there yet."

Figure 2. Noelle's interview transcript Wordle.

Noelle's school, located in a large metropolitan, southeastern city, is over 95% Free and Reduced lunch, with a student population of approximately 1% Asian, 95% Black-African heritage, 0% White, 4% Hispanic, and 1% multiracial, totaling 500 youth. The school serves 12% students

with disabilities and 2% English as a Second Language populations (GA Department of Education, 2012).

Tatiana: Elementary School Assistant Principal

Tatiana grew up as the fourth of five children, and "the only girl out of the bunch." She became competitive in various athletic activities as she grew up. These experiences shaped her decision when it came time to choose a college major. "I just thought I'll do something where I can play sports and teach sports. So I went into P.E. and spent five years in P.E." After this time, Tatiana took an 11-year break from the school to focus on raising a family. During this time, she volunteered in elementary and middle school classrooms in an effort to stay connected to education, with no interest in working at the high school level.. Yet even with these volunteer opportunities, Tatiana felt as though her first year back in the classroom was challenging. That year was "a big eye-opener, because I had been home and not been around the issues that have developed over the years and the behavior and the academics." With a college minor in science, Tatiana went back to teaching as an elementary school teacher, as she wanted her own classroom, an option teaching P.E. would not provide. Tatiana identified as an educator, mother, family member, filled with integrity and honesty, animal lover, "outdoorsy," and friend.

When she decided to go back to school for a Specialist's Degree, Tatiana never wanted to be an administrator, but "all [her] friends were doing leadership and I didn't want to be without a cohort, so I went along with it. I wanted the education, I wanted the knowledge, and of course, the pay raise." Tatiana was worried that if she left the classroom with a leadership degree, she wouldn't have an opportunity to teach again, which was her true passion. But since she became a school administrator, she has had multiple opportunities to guest teach. Tatiana thought "of the

420 kids in the school, I could probably name at least 400 of them." As a teacher Tatiana wouldn't have such an opportunity to get to know so many students in the school.

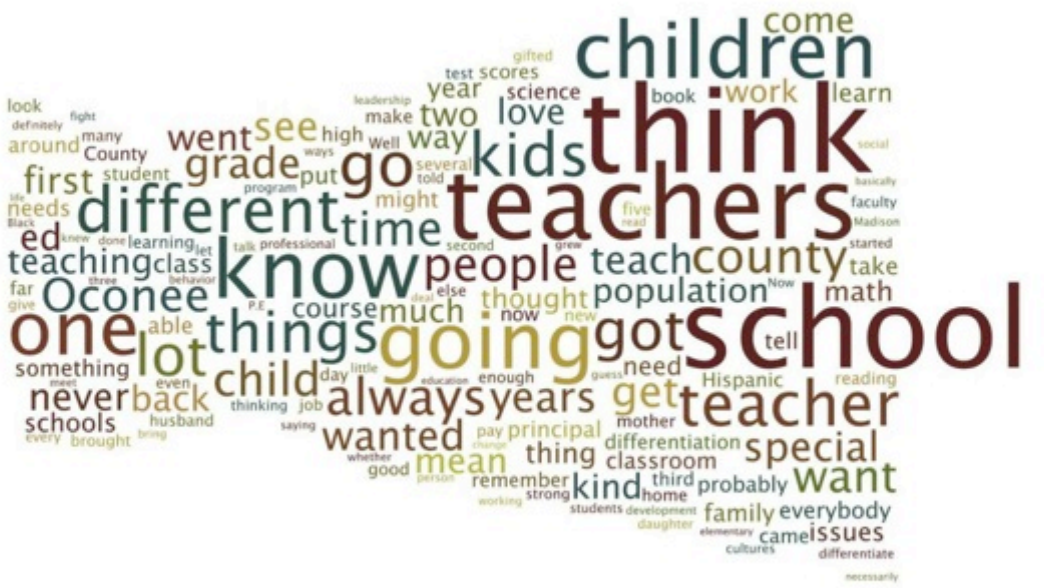

Figure 3. Tatiana's interview transcript Wordle.

Tatiana's school is located in a rural area, known for its close proximity to a large university. The school is just under 60% Free and Reduced Lunch, with a student population that is approximately 0% Asian, 15% Black-African heritage, over 75% White, 6% Hispanic, and 3% multiracial. The school serves over 16% students with disabilities and 1% English as a Second Language populations (GA Department of Education, 2012).

Eric: Elementary School Principal

Eric began a career in education after working as a residential and commercial property manager. After taking a break from property management, he decided to try construction work. When an accident on the job site occurred involving some of his co-workers, he asked himself, "What am I doing here?" and went back to property management. He enjoyed working with others, and with his parent's influence who were former educators, his father a former school principal, he decided to seek an opportunity in teaching. "I had always enjoyed working with young people and anytime I had an opportunity, I would do that." After some consideration, Eric decided it was time to do what he felt as though he was "led to do." Eric wanted to be a social studies teacher, but because those positions were difficult to secure, he became a Spanish teacher in a middle school. After four years in the classroom, Eric moved into administration as an assistant principal. "I felt like if those people can do it, I certainly can." Once in a position of leadership for a few years, he moved into the position of principal within the same district. However, Eric set his sights on central office leadership, and felt that if he were to ever secure such a position, he would need to "move out in order to move up." As a result, Eric left his job in a former school system and took a position as a school principal in the neighboring school district.

Figure 4. Eric's interview transcript Wordle.

Eric's school, located in a suburb of a metropolitan, southern city, is over 75% Free and Reduced lunch, with a student population that is less than 1% Asian, 70% Black-African heritage, 20% White, 10% Hispanic, and 3% multiracial, totaling approximately 700 youth. The school serves 8% students with disabilities and 2% English as a Second Language populations (GA Department of Education, 2012).

Leonard: Middle School Principal

Leonard did not desire to be a teacher as a young person. His early career interests focused on designing and building structures, so he declared architecture as his undergraduate major. About midway through his bachelor's degree, Leonard realized that he did not have the math background he needed to be an architect, so changed his major to focus on his other passion, working with children. He began his career teaching elementary school in an urban neighborhood of a metropolitan city in the southeast, teaching combination classes of high level

4th grade students and lower level 5th grade students. In the years following, he taught a 5th grade and 6th grade combination class. After four years in an elementary school, Leonard transferred to a middle school for two years to teach social studies. He then moved into his first assistant principal position in a rural setting, outside of this same city. Within this same school district, Leonard moved into a principalship, where he as remained for the last nine years.

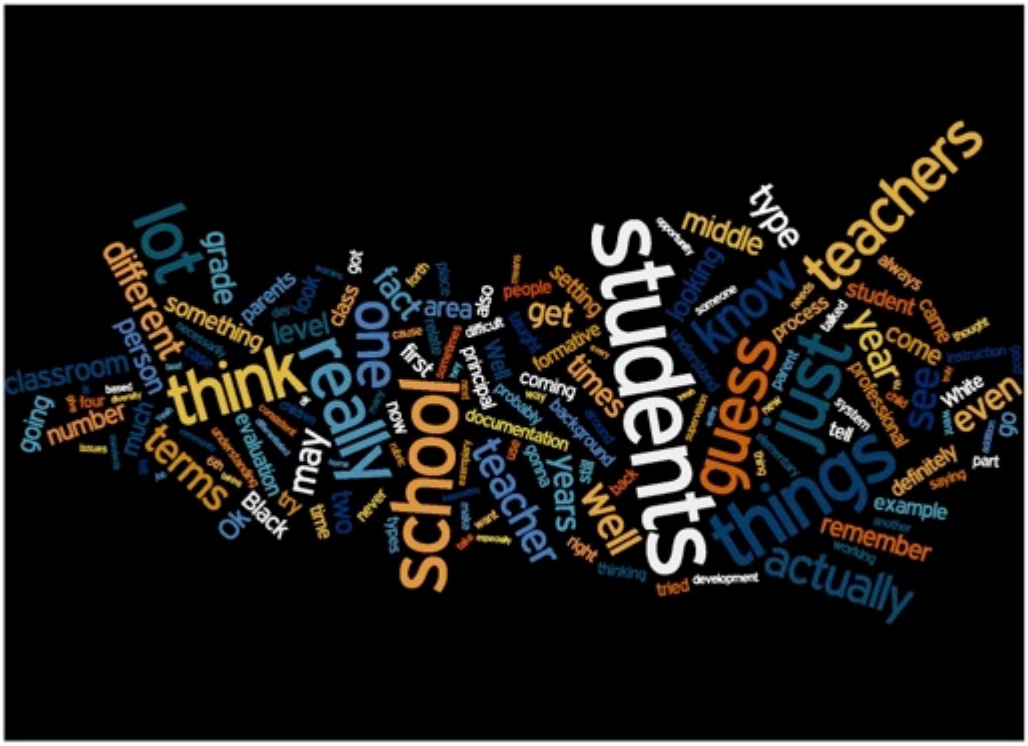

Figure 5. Leonard's interview transcript Wordle.

Leonard's school, located in a rural area in the southeastern United States, is over 70% Free and Reduced lunch, with a student population that is less than 1% Asian, approximately 48% Black-African heritage, 45% White, 5% Hispanic, and 2% multiracial, totaling

approximately 500 youth. The school serves approximately 10% students with disabilities and 10% English as a Second Language populations (GA Department of Education, 2012).

Alex: Middle School Assistant Principal

After college, Alex began a career in information technology, but due to the economy, lost his job and was forced to take a sales position that required him to commute 45 minutes each way, daily. This travel time provided space for him to reflect on his professional path. He recalled:

> I had a lot of time to think. So as I was driving back and forth … everyday, I started reflecting and thinking about my life and just sort of felt like, you know, when I look back now, everything I'd ever done had led to some type of service oriented career. And I'd always worked with kids, worked at camps, worked at a daycare center in high school, on and on and on. My father was a minister, my mom was a teacher, and so we were just all about what we could do for others. I wasn't being fulfilled.

So Alex enrolled in a Master's in Education program with a focus in Special Education. "I needed to go back to where I'm being called in school. It's where my heart is." A county high school, located in a suburb of a large, Southeastern metropolitan city, offered Alex a job as a special education teacher while he was completing his degree in the evenings. "They [former school district] offered me a job while I was still in school…they were in desperate need of special ed teachers, so I was doing the "going to school to teach then going to school [at night to learn] thing." Alex has "co-taught in almost every setting imaginable," including math, language arts, science, social studies, self-contained Emotional Behavior Disorder classrooms, and self-contained severe-profound and mild-moderate classrooms. His vast experiences with different

backgrounds in special education prompted him to pursue a degree in Educational Leadership, and a position as a school leader.

When asked how he identified, Alex began to talk about aspects of his personality and related traits that he viewed as associated with an African or Black Heritage culture. "But I'm a White guy." He went on to say "I don't really think of myself as this White guy, because what is stereotypically a White guy is not me. I may come across as that, but…" Alex additionally identified as male, Christian, and southern. However, it was important for him that I understood "I don't want to be classified as an ancestor of a slave holder that was prejudiced and torturous to other people." For Alex, it was important that he was viewed as someone who could connect with the ethnic cultures of his students and friends, most of whom were African or Black Heritage or Latin.

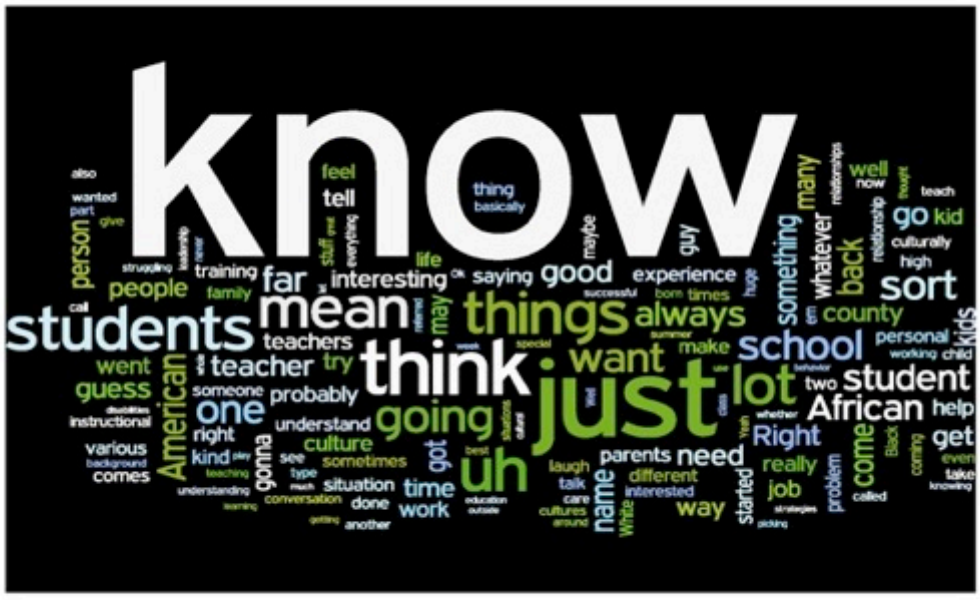

Figure 6. Alex's interview transcript Wordle.

Alex's school, located in an urban, southern city, is known for its close proximity to a large university; however, the surrounding area is rural in nature. The school is over 95% Free and Reduced lunch, with a student population that is less than 1% Asian, over 60% Black-African heritage, 6% White, 21% Hispanic, and 3% multiracial, totaling approximately 600 youth. The school serves 15% students with disabilities and 14% English as a Second Language populations (GA Department of Education, 2012).

Matthew: Middle School Assistant Principal

Matthew began his education career working as a math teacher at the secondary level. After seven years as a teacher, he decided to pursue a Master's degree in Education Leadership. The graduate program and his supervisor at the time were focused on supervision of instruction and empowering teachers through rapport and respect. He described his first supervisor as "my first principal that hired me was a legend, I mean was a 40+ year principal. He did 42 years in the business, 38 of those as a principal. So he was a pro's pro." Through his early experiences with this leader, Matthew realized:

> I've always felt like you can make your style fit or actions fit to others without really giving up what you really believe in. You can maintain your philosophies and things that you're passionate about, but your ways and actions don't always have to be that way [rigid]. You can be flexible.

As a result, Matthew used various leadership elements to inform his practice by "stealing and borrowing from what really good people do." When asked how he identified, Matthew stated he was "a Southerner, native Georgian, Christian Baptist, husband, son, uncle, stepbrother, brother-in-law, raised by a single mom." He felt as though many of these identity characteristics were easily relatable to many of the students and staff in his school.

Matthew's school, located in a seemingly rural area, though is considered suburban, as it is located near a large university and a large, southeastern, metropolitan city. Matthew's school is over 55% Free and Reduced lunch, with a student population that is 5% Asian, 10% Black-African heritage, 70% White, 12% Hispanic, and 3% multiracial, totaling approximately 800 youth. The school serves 10% students with disabilities and 5% English as a Second Language populations (GA Department of Education, 2012).

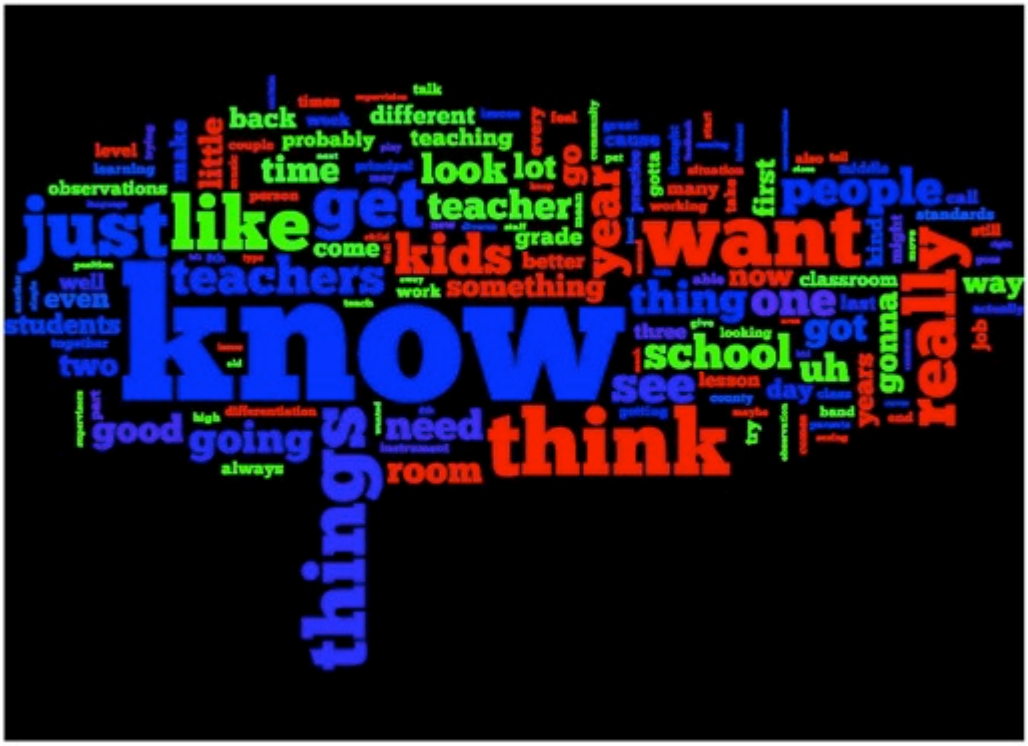

Figure 7. Matthew's interview transcript Wordle.

Edgar: Middle School Assistant Principal

Edgar always enjoyed working with people. As an undergraduate biology major and science tutor, Edgar realized that he felt joy when helping people understand concepts learned in

science class. It made him "feel good when I could teach someone a concept that we were trying to learn." As he moved higher into the sciences, Edgar knew he didn't test well and was concerned about being successful in a science career. Someone mentioned to him the possibility of teaching science in a K-12 setting. "I have a lot of educators in my family. My grandmother was in education for a long time, and all of her sisters were teachers. So, it's in the family." At that point, Edgar declared education as a new major and began a career teaching high school science, a position he held for six years before coming into his first administrative position as an assistant principal, his current position.

Edgar struggles with balancing family life and work life with the demands of the job. "We've got to bring parents in, we've got to bring the community into our schools. But right now, it's just a struggle to do this, work on my doctorate, and see my three-year-old. It's tough." After his first year of teaching, Edgar said "the blinders came off," where he started to see other aspects of the school beyond his own classroom, and signed on to take more of a leadership role in his school. "I don't like the way education is going, I don't' like the direction it's going, so I don't do political, but I'd love to have a position higher up and affect policy…I want to affect change." For Edgar, his interest in helping to make schools better outweighs his inability to be political, a trait he viewed as being necessary for a school leader. "I want to change how schools are run."

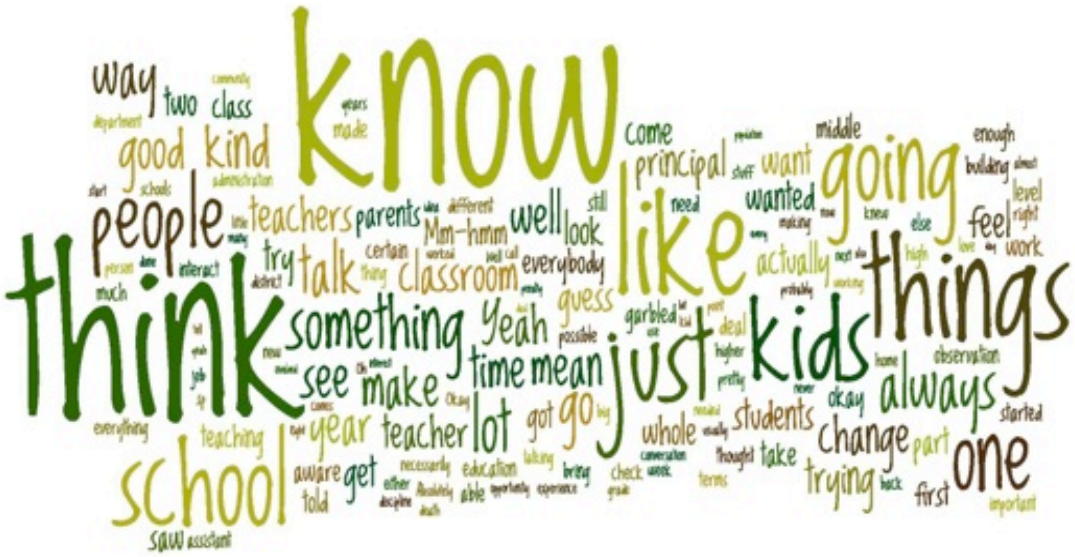

Figure 8. Edgar's interview transcript Wordle.

Edgar's school, located in a small urban district proximal to a large, southeastern metropolitan city, is over 70% Free and Reduced lunch, with a student population that is approximately 5% Asian, 15% Black-African heritage, over 60% White, 15% Hispanic, and 5% multiracial, totaling approximately 550 youth. The school serves approximately 15% students with disabilities and 6% English as a Second Language populations (GA Department of Education, 2012).

Burke: High School Principal

Burke did not seek to begin his professional career in education, but rather had interest as a psychologist working with children, so he entered into a graduate psychology program. Upon entering graduate school for a Master's degree in psychology, Burke changed his mind and switched programs to focus on a degree in special education after reflecting on an undergraduate experience as a camp counselor for "mentally handicapped adults…that really changed me." After receiving his Master's degree in special education, he "was teaching kindergarten, self contained BD, behavior disorder class... I did that for two years." After relocating to a few new cities for work and family, he experienced working at the high school level in a "psycho-education center," which prompted a further interest in psychology and becoming a school psychologist. However, he decided to complete his leadership credential in the state of Georgia and become a principal.

Burke completed a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from a different higher education institution, and works with many who wish to become school leaders and teachers through this same university. "When most people see me, they see this big, Black man. Some see me as intimidating." However, Burke went on to say that he was very successful as an assistant principal of discipline because of his physical appearance; yet, he had a supervisor who made sure he also had experiences with curriculum and instruction. His former principal "made sure I kept my hands in the instructional piece." As a result, Burke viewed his leadership

training as a healthy combination between discipline and instruction.

Figure 9. Burke's interview transcript Wordle.

Burke's school, located in an urban, southern city, known for its close proximity to a large university, is over 75% Free and Reduced lunch, with a student population that is 1% Asian, over 60% Black-African heritage, 20% White, 17% Hispanic, and 3% multiracial, totaling approximately 1,700 youth. The school serves 15% students with disabilities and 5% English as a Second Language populations (GA Department of Education, 2012).

Carl: High School Principal/Headmaster

Carl had always wanted to be in education. From early on in his experience as a career and technology teacher, he pictured himself in the classroom. When his school sought to make

the transition from paper to digital records, he got his first taste of administrative work. Having previously worked in religious, private schools his entire career, Carl used this first experience with supporting his school community to take a position in leadership as Technology Director, a position he held for almost a decade. This catapulted him into the position of headmaster of a preschool, starting him on his path to headmaster of a K-12, private, religious school program.

> Upon recalling his initial leadership preparation while on the job, Carl stated:
>
> I didn't have early, good role models before. [Of] the various leaders that I had, one was not a good decision maker, he couldn't make decisions and that was difficult because I'm a decision maker. The other person I had was confident in certain things, but always made excuses… It was this person who asked me the question "What do you want to do?" So that was the first time I was given an option. This was a genuine, authentic, thorough question versus a rhetorical one. And so, I guess, if anything, that gave me that 'Aha' moment, like 'wait a minute, oh yeah, this is what makes me thrive, what makes me want to be a better person and be empowered.

For Carl, this interaction was the first time he thought deliberately about his path to leadership and the type of leader he wanted to be, the type of legacy he wanted to leave. Carl viewed his role as someone who can help his staff achieve the ultimate goal: "the ultimate goal of education is just transformative thinking in the students."

Figure 10. Carl's interview transcript Wordle.

Carl's private, religious school is located in a suburb of a mid-sized Southeastern city in the state of Mississippi. The high school serves 128 students, with 119 who identify as White and nine who identify as Black or African Heritage. There were no publicly available statistics reporting data similar to the other public schools represented by the leaders in this study.

Theo: High School Principal

Theo was not an education major in college. He laughed when thinking back to his years as an undergraduate, and said, "I was going to go into business and get rich. Both my parents

were teachers, so I was trying to avoid that actually." His first job out of college was as a tutor for a well-known test preparation business. Though he liked tutoring and working with children, he didn't care for the "gym membership" -like system where parents paid a monthly fee and students came and went irregularly. He realized that he enjoyed this work but wanted to work with students on a daily basis so he could see and feel the improvements they were making. "I don't have to sell them on the program, they come everyday, and I get to help them with their math."

Theo realized he didn't just like teaching kids math, "I liked teaching kids who struggled." At the time, he didn't have a teaching credential and it was after Labor Day, school had started two weeks earlier. He looked into the teacher openings offered in the inner city system located in the state of California where he was living at the time, and was hired to teach middle school math. He attended a nearby college to complete his teaching credential formally over the next three years, and stayed in school to get his administrative credential as well. After four years in the classroom, Theo took a job as an assistant principal. He spent the next ten years as an assistant principal and interim principal in elementary, middle, and high schools, before he took a job as principal of a high school all within the same inner city district. Three years ago, Theo moved to become principal of a high school located in a large metropolitan city located in the pacific northwest of the United States.

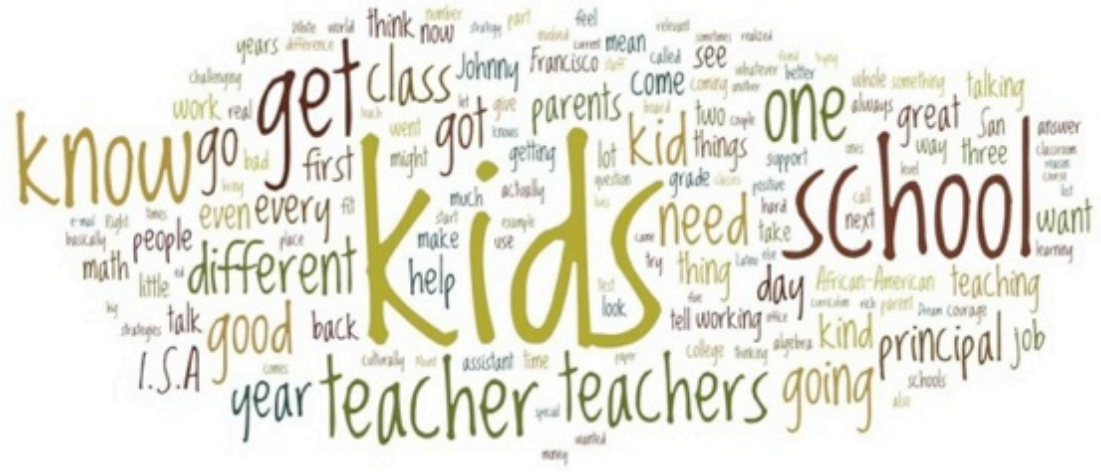

Figure 11. Theo's interview transcript Wordle.

Theo's current school, located in a large, metropolitan city in the Pacific Northwest, is a high performing public school, serving grades 7-12, with a student population of approximately 400. Theo's school is less than 2% Free and Reduced lunch, with a student population that is approximately 33% Asian, less than 1% Black-African heritage, 60% White, 3% Hispanic, and 5% multiracial. The school serves less than 3% students with disabilities and 0% English as a Second Language populations (Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2012).

The school leader participants presented here shared stories of their experiences and perspectives related to culturally competent instructional supervision. Themes from these data

are visually summarized and presented as Wordles above. A written description of these themes are presented below.

FINDINGS

The findings reported below speak to participants' experiences of and beliefs about culturally competent knowledge, skills, and abilities used and modeled in instructional supervision with teachers in a K-12 setting. Six major findings were generated from the data:

1. Leaders encountered inequity and differential treatment early in their lives or as new teachers. This eventually shaped who they became as school supervisors.
2. Leaders used culturally responsive pedagogies as teachers, and now build upon those skills in their supervision practices.
3. Leaders described what it meant to be culturally competent in their practice as a K-12 instructional supervisor.
4. Leaders practiced awareness as a way to "know" their work as an instructional supervisor.
5. Leaders shared the importance of connecting professionally and personally with teachers through relationship building.
6. Leaders engaged in multiple strategies to support teachers in becoming knowledgeable about students and their communities.

Figure 12 provides a model of the relationships among these key findings. Participants became culturally competent instructional leaders as a culmination of their personal and professional experiences. As children, young adults, or new teachers ready to learn from and help others, each of the leaders reported an experience in which they or someone they cared

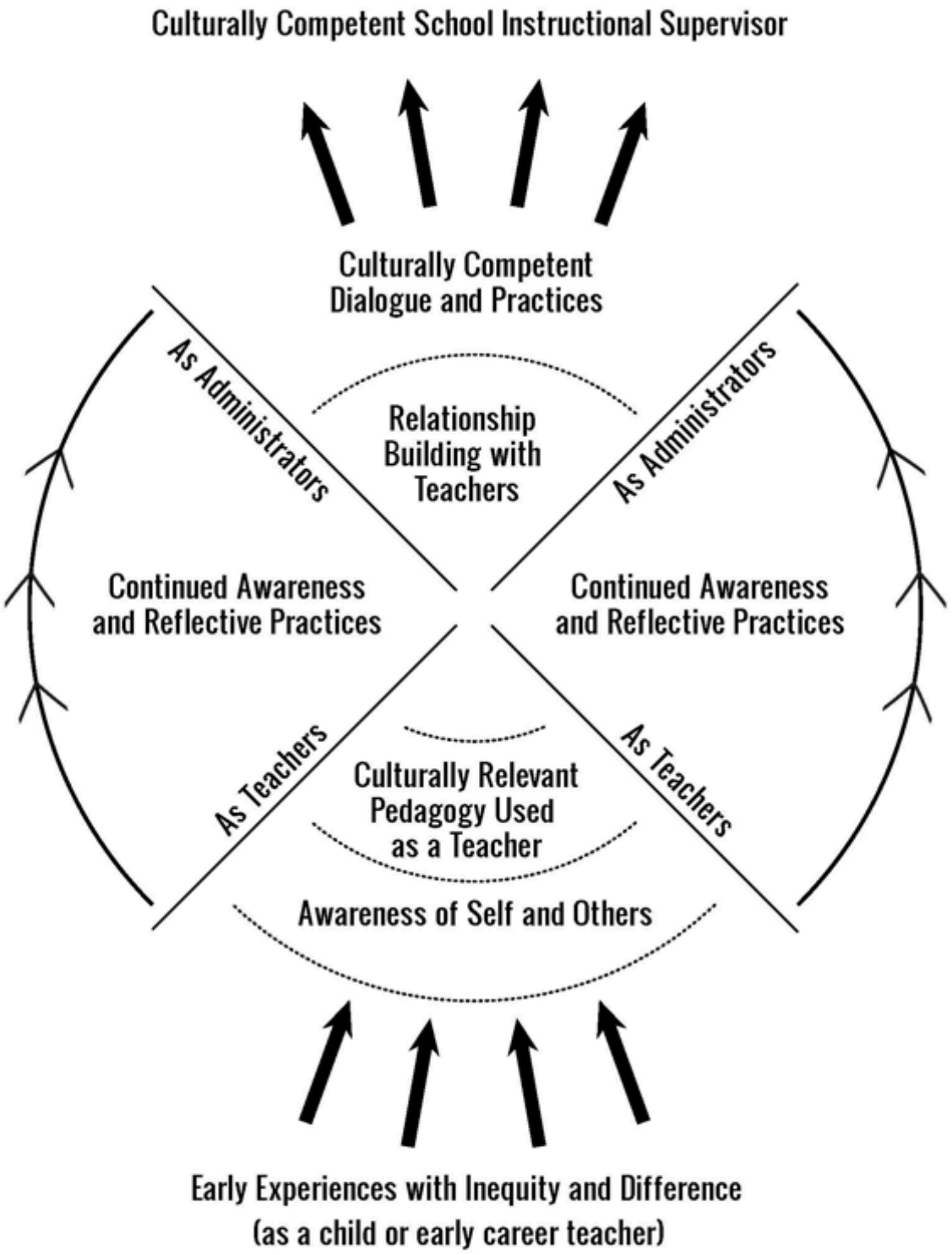

Figure 12. Model of Culturally Competent Instructional Leadership.

about received inequitable treatment in a school setting. Through these experiences participants became sensitized to teachers' actions in relation to race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, ability, and other identity categories in which people claim membership—willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly (Fearon, 1999; NCBI, 2003).

Leaders examined power and positionality using self-reflection and awareness practices in their work as teachers, then applied these same practices to their work as administrators. They spent time building "authentic" relationships with teachers, both personally and professionally, to create environments in which teachers felt safe to engage in dialogue about difference, bias, and their delivery of instruction. Participants encouraged teachers to take risks and attempt new strategies for instructional delivery, and helped them develop as culturally competent educators by engaging in leadership practices exploring identity, power, dominance, and personal bias.

Finding 1: Early Experience with Inequity and Difference: "Why a lot of the parents are apprehensive coming into the school setting 'cause they already feel as if they're being looked down upon."

Participants shared stories from their own school experiences, speaking candidly about the impact of one or more life events involving inequity, difference, and diversity on their development as leaders and on the instructional guidance they provided to teachers. For some, these early experiences with difference recurred over and over in various contexts, such as in the home or at school, where as a young person the participant learned to adapt because a family member or loved one needed instructional support or modifications regularly. For others, the early experience was a one-time event in which an image or discussion was forever burned into their memory.

As a result of these experiences, leaders became more aware of how their own actions and interactions affected young people and their learning in the classroom. Leaders shared stories of experiences related to what it meant to be different, what made people different from one another, and how people responded to differences. In two instances, leaders told stories from childhood involving a parent. Others described experiences involving their own health and well-being or that of their students in the early stages of their teaching career.

Tatiana recounted an experience in elementary school gym class with one of her brothers. She remembered:

> I had a special needs brother, and so I guess I had been around mentally challenged children all my life. And so I wanted to work with the special needs population. My brother and I went to a public school and during P.E., he was asked to pick up towels. And the P.E. teacher wouldn't let him participate in class. He was doing other things, and I remember my mother going off, just furious because he was like everybody else. He could run, he could play, and he [P.E. teacher] was targeting him [brother]. And I just remember that so well, thinking my mother was so upset. And it made me mad to think that he [P.E. teacher] can do that, why was he [brother] isolated?

Tatiana described a connection between this experience and her resulting belief that every student could learn in their own way. Tatiana's memory of her mother challenging the P.E. teacher led her to push for more individualized attention to students' needs when she became a teacher. She now encourages individualized attention for students in all of her teachers' classrooms.

Leonard also shared an experience that occurred in school with his mother. He recalled a parent/teacher conference during high school that shaped his awareness of adults in the school looking down on him and his mother. He stated:

> I will never forget, in 11th grade, I remember a parent conference where the teacher purposefully tried to use words and language that my mother couldn't understand. And I remember leaving the conference and my mom asked me, What did he mean by such and such? and those types of things. I remember feeling embarrassed about that, so I can definitely empathize with what some of the students go through.

Leonard still recalled the concern in his mother's voice and therefore understood "why a lot of the parents are apprehensive coming into the school setting, 'cause they already feel as if they're being looked down upon." As a school leader, it became important for Leonard to support new teachers by providing them with experienced mentors to help them communicate openly and clearly with parents and guardians in a way that made them feel welcome and valued. He sought to help all teachers enhance their ability to talk to students and guardians of various races, ethnicities, and other categories of social stratification. Leonard believed that by helping teachers communicate openly and successfully with students and guardians, he could prevent others from encountering experiences like his 11th grade parent/teacher conference.

Similarly, Alex related a story about receiving differential treatment from teachers and administrators in secondary school based on his own mental health status. He recalled:

> I went through a bout with depression around 8th or 9th grade; I was hospitalized. It was a result of obsessive-compulsive disorder. And I obsessed about perfection and being perfect and always doing right and wanted everyone to like me. So I would compulsively do these things to be a perfectionist. So that got me interested in abnormal psychology,

> students with disabilities, and those kinds of things. Because I went through that struggle and knew what it was like and could relate to being born into a situation where you may suffer from something, it was a life-changing experience.

Alex's feelings of compulsion, needing others to like him, and "obsessing over being a part of the group" ultimately gave way to the realization that his way of being and living in the world did not make him inferior to others, that there is no such thing as perfection, and that individuals can achieve the same goals through multiple routes. He reported that the experiences he had as a high school student with special needs prepared him to work individually with the students in his classroom, tailoring lessons to meet their needs. First as a teacher and later a school leader, Alex suggested that his painful early experiences and feelings of "desperation" helped him to recognize that elements of classroom instruction are more effective when tailored to each individual learner's needs.

Another participant's learning experience related to differential treatment in school occurred as a result of a change in his cousin's health status. Burke spoke about his cousin's hearing loss as a result of the mumps virus when the boys were between the ages of six and seven years old. The two young cousins were close and spent a lot of time together. "He was like a year, a grade or two behind me. And we went to elementary school together." Burke shared memories of his cousin being taken out of the classroom for what he now knows to be part of an intervention plan. He stated:

> They would pull him out and put him in a different class. He wound up going to high school in Washington, DC, but we always stayed in touch. I learned a little sign language. But I always saw a need to help kids with disabilities. Because when I was

> growing up some of those kids were picked upon or called ‘retards,’ and I’ve always been able to befriend ’em.

Burke’s early interest in supporting children who were different or treated poorly was reinforced during his college years, when he worked as a counselor at a boy’s ranch facility for “boys sent away because they had difficult problems at home” and a state summer camp for mentally and physically disabled adults. The camp provided an opportunity for Burke to monitor differences in abilities, which in school contexts often translate into judgments regarding who can do more and who can do less. “I worked with a lot of handicapped adults, so that really changed me. And working with mentally ill people, and thinking, ‘just listen.’ As a result, I think I’m a pretty good listener.”

Burke’s early experiences as a teacher also helped shape his cultural competency in the classroom. He recounted:

> I think it was my first year of teaching, having kindergartners, and these kids were already labeled as behavior disorders, because they were so disruptive they couldn’t even go to their regular schools. They had to be placed at the psycho-education center. And in working with those kids, it was difficult, my first month or so. I learned a lot about those kids. A lot of them just needed structure and [consistency].

These experiences from early childhood and his early teaching career helped shape Burke’s beliefs about treating students according to their individual, specific needs.

Matthew encountered differences with race and an introduction to racism at an early age in his family. He was White, and children from other racial groups were not allowed in his home; “I think I’ll just say that not too far back in my family, there’s quite a lot of racism.” He stated:

> I think it's something I was influenced by as a child, by family members and community members. You know, to be a little racist. And then I think the older I've gotten, the more, you know, kind of moved away beyond that I became. And I don't see that at all now. You know, I think I try, even, to go over the top the other way to be tolerant and accepting and unifying. This community is not necessarily that [tolerant and accepting], to be honest with you. I still run into a lot of racism from a lot of my parents [at the school].

As he got older and determined his own vision of the world, including how he wanted to live in relation to others, Matthew became critically aware of the discrimination and prejudice he learned from his family. His knowledge of inequity and difference were lessons learned at home at a very early age, yet he would determine how these lessons could manifest in his school today. His awareness of difference grew over time as he consciously focused on being an accepting and understanding school leader.

Edgar identified one of multiple "eye-opening experiences" as a new teacher where he learned about students' families and home life structures that were different from his own upbringing. He explained:

> It was one of those things that I first noticed when I became a teacher. For me, I grew up in [name of small town], which is really an upper-middle class neighborhood […] Everybody had two parents, everybody had the same last name as their parents […] here's this child, here's the guardian, and the names don't match up.

He described the importance of him learning that his experience of growing up in the world "is not how everyone else in the world lives. And that makes a huge deal in terms of what the kids come to school with."

Carl scrutinized his background as a religious school attendee, teacher, and leader. He realized, "Hey, wait a minute, we are called to a standard here that better allows and better accepts, with an ability to enter into dialogue versus a judgment, you know, being tolerant." Carl believed "that's just a part of who I am. I call it the 'high value system' in that culturally, we've got to be very sensitive." However, Carl did not learn cultural competence from his former supervisors.

> The first time I encountered good leadership in my own life from a supervisor? I didn't have early, good role models. The various leaders that I had were . . . one was not a good decision maker. He couldn't make decisions and that was difficult because I'm a decision maker. The other person that I [worked for] was confident in certain things, but then he had to always make excuses. There was one leader who was very helpful. He was what I'd call an "empowerment leader;" he would always ask the question, "What do you want to do?" So that was the first time that I was given an "aha" moment, like "Wait a minute, oh, yeah, this is what makes me thrive, what makes me want to be a better person and be empowered."

Carl became culturally competent by asking questions of himself and his faculty. He seeks support regularly from his spiritual guide, asking, "God, make me a great leader." Carl reported that his experience in religious school at a young age molded his perspective on working with others who were different. He was taught that those who need extra guidance and support should be given what they need, when they need it. This was his guiding philosophy to this day, and he encouraged his teachers to adopt it as well.

Culturally competent school supervisors shared stories from their own schooling and early work experiences that led them to become aware of difference, inequity, and the varying

supports needed in a classroom for different types of learners. Instructional supervisors tapped into feelings generated by these experiences that caused to them to reflect on power relationships and how power dynamics enhanced or inhibited learning for themselves, a relative, or another student. By accessing these experiences and their associated feelings, then reflecting back on them critically to examine issues of power and dominance, the participants contributed to their own development as culturally competent instructional leaders. Their practices of deep awareness and reflection enabled the school leaders to create working definitions of what it meant to be a culturally competent supervisor.

Finding 2: Leaders Used Culturally Responsive Pedagogies as Teachers

Several participants drew on their own early experiences as teachers to support those whom they now supervised. These leaders shared stories from their first year as a teacher, when they encountered differences in students' needs and chose to take risks, exposing their students to new information. Participants encouraged the teachers they supervised to take risks in multiple ways, from changing the immediate environment of the classroom to facilitating teachers observing in other contexts. In several cases leaders encouraged teachers to take risks by sharing more about their own racial identity with students and introducing book characters that represented students' identity characteristics. Thus, culturally competent instructional supervisors promoted risk-taking, awareness, and opportunities for outside experiences that would enhance the work done in the classroom.

Noelle recalled her own early experiences as the only Black/African Heritage student in most of her classes. Similarly, as a new teacher in a predominantly White school, Noelle realized how much her students needed exposure to different kinds of people, including her own ethnic and cultural group. She decided to be open with her students when they asked questions

about herself, her hair, or her culture. As a result, she realized how significant a difference this openness made in broadening her students' experiences. This openness also influenced the types of relationships she now builds with fellow teachers, staff, and guardians.

Noelle recalled questions and early discussions following her decision to share her culture with her mostly White students:

> Why was Black people's skin a different color? And I was not offended by that at all. I thought that I was very proud of the fact that they felt comfortable with me to ask me those questions. Because at some point, someone needed to answer those questions for them. And I felt like that was one of the reasons why I was there. And I think that they found that we had more in common than not. And because of that, I think their world got just a little bit smaller. It wasn't as big as they thought it was. You know, there weren't as many differences as they thought that there would be.

When Noelle moved to a school with more Black and Hispanic students, she recalled taking risks with the curriculum to expose students to elements of their own culture. She believed her responsibility was to:

> Help them to learn the advantages of being who they are, and what they believe, and help them build that self-confidence that they need. So that when obstacles come their way, the first thing that they think, it's not because of my color, it's not because of my race, it's not because of my ethnicity, it's not because of the language that I speak, they do have a place in this world. And expose them to their culture, because that's very, very important to who they are and how they fit in this world.

Noelle used elements of students' cultures within her curricula to expose students to new ideas, knowledge, and ways of living in the world. She bases much of her advice to teachers on these

early teaching experiences, encouraging those she supervises to take risks and expose students to information about many types of people.

Noelle's experiences in the classroom convinced her of the importance of including characters in her reading curriculum that better represented elements of the students' identities. She ran her classroom based on the assumption that the more students knew about themselves, the better off they would be. Noelle also applied this concept to her professional development work with teachers, the adult learners in her school.

Noelle recalled buying chapter books for her higher-level third grade readers when she was a teacher:

> I wanted to expose them to lots of different things. So for instance, when I taught reading . . . I'd do a whole lesson teaching, then break them up into small groups; my high achieving students, instead of having them read basically out of the Basal reader, I chose chapter books for them because that's what they wanted to read. I always tried to introduce to them, for some reason, now that you asked me that, I can remember having each one of them read a different book about a different African American. And it was amazing because some of these people they had never heard of before and they found them to be very, very fascinating. And every day they'd read a chapter, and then we'd discuss, and we'd talk about the similarities in the characters, and you know, and that type of thing. So that was one way that I differentiated during my reading block.

Noelle exposed her students to differentiated reading tasks that included characters of similar racial backgrounds. She employed culturally responsive teaching strategies that were relevant to her students, a practice she now used in her mentoring with teachers.

Leonard learned from a mentor teacher early in his career the importance of exposing students to new cultures, people from different backgrounds, and new opportunities, noting:

> I remember that exposure was so important for my students that I had in my urban setting. And that's why we did a number of things. We took them on college tours, and we toured every museum, you name it, we did it. Just planning a lot of field trips. I came early, I stayed late, and once again, it's because of some of the veteran teachers who I worked with.

For Leonard, mentor teachers helped him learn what to do as a teacher. These early experiences of providing exposure for his students taught him how to support the teachers he now instructionally supervises. He suggested he could best support his teachers by providing them with opportunities to expose all students to more.

Culturally Competent Professional Learning Needs of Teachers

When asked, "What is cultural competency in your role as an educational leader and instructional supervisor?" Eric replied, "it's [a] code word for Black or White." Eric went on to say that most leaders and leader preparation programs, and specifically those who have held leadership positions for a long period of time, have:

> no clue what true cultural competency is because they don't when it comes to gay and lesbian kids, they are off the chart. When it comes to people who are not Christian, they are off the chart. They don't know how to handle that. If someone comes in with an odd skin color who is not black nor white, and you're talking about those people coming from the Middle East or the southern Asian continents, they don't know how to handle that.

Discussing the professional learning needs of his staff, Eric acknowledged the need for diversity education to introduce identity concepts beyond race into teachers' classrooms. He argued that

by helping teachers respond to elements of the curriculum that examine characteristics of identity other than race—such as sexual identity, belief systems, nationality, etc.—teachers would become more consciously aware of the whole student and students would become more critical in their own thinking. He asserted, "it's really not a big secret; it's not rocket science. It's rolling up the sleeves and digging in and doing the work," challenging teachers to connect with the students and the curriculum. Leonard said, "the first thing that comes to mind is Black vs. White, and vice versa. But what I've found is a lot of it is based on the individual background of that teacher versus the students' backgrounds."

Noelle encouraged her teachers to learn more about their students' backgrounds, then apply that information and adapt lessons to make deeper connections in the classroom. Such an approach, she believes, enables teachers to:

> appreciate differences in people. I just think that's so very, very important because for so long curriculums have been dictated and they have not been relevant to children of color, and I think it's our job, if we teach children of color, it is our job to adjust that curriculum, to revise it, to make it interesting for our children, to make it relevant to them in their lives. And as a leader, I think it's my responsibility to make sure that my teachers understand what culturally relevant teaching and what culturally relevant pedagogy is.

Noelle viewed her charge as supporting teachers as they adjusted the curricula in ways that facilitated greater student engagement. She encouraged her teachers to make the work more meaningful to the students and, as a result, to the teacher. For Noelle, learning must be made meaningful for children because "if they can see themselves in their learning, or if they can see others like themselves in their learning, if they can see their community in their learning, then it becomes relevant to them."

Theo explained how knowledge of identity differences among his teachers and an understanding of their professional learning needs affected how he supervised. Theo considered teachers' developmental stages in his practice of instructional supervision. He described the various developmental stages of the teachers in his school:

> We had some great new young blood, positive energy, but they were inexperienced, so that was challenging. Then we had some new folks that weren't a good fit. So that also makes it hard when you're trying to solve this diversity challenge, you know, how do we reach all kids at the same time with diversity amongst your teaching staff? It makes it harder because not everybody knows the same thing. Or feels the same way, you know, about helping certain kids. Some felt we should, you know, reach every kid where they are and help to bring them up. Some felt, No, I'm leaving the bar here and I'm teaching my way, and it's up to them to get there; otherwise I'd be lowering my standards. [We] weren't even on the same page. And so as a leader, you're in the middle of that. How do I get my staff on the same page so that we can support this totally diverse group of kids?

Theo explained that cultural competency in supervision required attending to differences in his teachers' developmental needs. He explained how he worked with teachers to help them examine their own position and ideology to better fit the diverse learning needs in the classroom.

Mathew viewed cultural competence in his leadership and supervision practices as focused on supporting diversity and individual differences in learning among his teachers. He observed:

> Diversity is more than just the color of skin. You know, we can have diversity and have people with divergent backgrounds and diverse backgrounds and different experiences. We should recognize that like any two students that look alike, that doesn't mean they are

alike. Every [teacher] is an individual. They have individual experiences. They come from different places. We need to be able to have standards without being standardized.

Being culturally competent as an educational leader and instructional supervisor requires taking time to learn about the teachers—in particular the leadership and teaching style of each individual adult learner—and using that knowledge to help advance teachers' professional development.

When describing cultural competency in their practice of instructional supervision, participants considered issues of identity and the professional learning needs of teachers. Initially, participants spoke about cultural competency and diversity as understanding differences about race. However, these leaders believed that getting to know teachers beyond commonly used identifiers such as race or gender served as a starting point for individualized professional learning and instructional supervision. Leaders then expanded their understanding of teachers' professional learning needs to include helping teachers increase their appreciation for individual differences. One leader shared that by making learning more meaningful for teachers, learning would become more meaningful for students. Another leader reported that his work with teachers included attempts to increase teachers' awareness of power and positionality. Finally, one leader suggested that varying developmental stages dictated what constituted culturally competent professional learning needs for teachers.

Finding 3: Cultural Competency: "It's more than the color of your skin."

Participants shared their definitions of what it meant to be culturally competent instructional supervisors based on their experiences as students, teachers, and school leaders. For some, cultural competency meant having knowledge focused specifically on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. For others, cultural competency broadened in definition to

include knowledge of any identity characteristic related to an individual, including religion, family structure, language ability, birth order, etc. that may affect one's interactions with others. Participants spoke of cultural competency as a professional development focus for staff, as self-reflection related to personal biases and discrimination can help teachers increase awareness of and appreciation for others' differences.

Leader Definitions of Cultural Competence

Marcy stated that true cultural competency did not come from learning about race alone, but from embracing the whole of an individual's background. She views cultural competency as having respect for each other:

> I think that one of the bottom lines is respect for everyone, no matter what. I tell my AP too, it doesn't really matter their race; you don't know what people have been through. It's really not about race. Everybody is different. And people come into us with lots of different backgrounds, lots of different needs. I think it's about respecting and embracing [people]. And when you build relationships with people, and you find out about their family and just, you know, the people in general, you find your resources, and you also know the triggers, you kind of know that might be something that would bother that person.

Marcy characterized cultural competency as having admiration and consideration for the many aspects of our identity that make us who we are, and knowing how these aspects can become trigger points for success or failure in the classroom. She described her supervisory approach of appreciating her teachers and rejecting assumptions about what people experienced or what their professional learning needs might be. Marcy defined cultural competence as getting to know the teachers in her building.

Like Marcy, Burke spoke about differences in culture and the importance of learning about others' backgrounds as defining cultural competency in educational leadership. He believed, "Learning about different backgrounds, and people from Africa, Jewish people, gay and lesbian people. People of different cultures. Just learning about that so when I interact with them, I understand what offends you, what doesn't."

It was through interactions with different types of people and asking questions of the people with whom he worked that Burke realized he could have more open, direct, and honest conversations about most topics, particularly a teacher's delivery of instruction. Burke stated:

> when you're interacting with someone of the Islamic faith, what may be culturally sensitive to them, the things you say, or the moves, symbols you use, shooting the bird, as we call it, you know, giving the finger may mean something different in a different [culture], learn about that . . . So when you're there, because you're not always gonna be in the great state of Georgia, or in an area where they're all Black or they're all White . . . I can tell you my first experience when I moved to Alabama. I'm teaching 3rd grade self-contained behavior/disorder classes. And the assistant principal came to me and said, "Did you realize our principal was Jewish?" I said, "No." "You didn't recognize by the last name?" No, I didn't. I'm from South Georgia, where you either had Williams, Thomas, or some, you know, "regular" name for the south. And then I began to learn about, more about the Jewish culture. And learning those things, I'm like learning to respect people from different cultures. Understand your students, where they're coming from. Appreciate them; you may not always agree, but appreciate them. And things will be ok.

Burke defined cultural competence as having the ability and willingness to interact with people from cultures different from his own and to learn from these exchanges. He shared with teachers what he learned from these interactions with a goal for teachers to consider new methods or techniques to use with students.

Alex described culturally competent school leaders as those who reflected on their own backgrounds and elements of identity and considered how these characteristics interacted with those of teachers and students in the classroom. He said cultural competence is "understanding interpersonal relationships among cultures; understanding cultures and what they mean to students or teachers' actions." He communicated the importance of not judging others, asserting, "I really try hard to guard myself against that type of thought process . . . you don't want to put any cultural ideas in a box." Alex tried not to generalize or make assumptions regarding others' needs or strengths based on what a student or teacher looked like or on their family background. He described cultural competency as:

> understanding what their [students'] background is, where they come from, various aspects of culture that would enable you to teach [students] better. So as the instructional leader, you also have to be culturally aware and proficient in working with teachers of different cultures. Then you got to look at the teacher's culture and the student's culture and how those intertwine. And so, I think it's a multifaceted term.

Alex identified understanding other people and recognizing the importance of interpersonal relationships as paramount to creating a strong classroom and a successful school. He asked, "At the end of the day, how can we best serve our students? Despite anything else—not despite; including culture, including home life, including so many various things—how can we best serve and educate our students?" Overall, Alex defined cultural competency as the ability to withhold

judgment and draw on observation and direct communication with students and teachers to connect with others to achieve a stronger, deeper, more successful outcome, whether that outcome relates to increasing test scores, providing another format for evaluating achievement, or connecting with others to build community.

Edgar spoke of cultural competence manifesting throughout his work in the school, even beyond his supervisorial practice with teachers. He concluded:

> I think the whole idea of school, for most communities, disassociates itself from the people that they serve. I really do. I think it's very rare, especially the teachers and the way that the school is run is in a very middle class or upper-middle class neighborhood and serves those kids, it's going to look very different than the kids that they serve, you know what I mean? The values and morals of the school are pretty much set at the middle class, working middle class level. You know, I've always thought that kids that don't fit in the school, that are acting up and the way that they talk, and the way they are always getting in trouble with certain teachers, is because they don't fit that upper-middle class, middle class, working class value.

Edgar detailed the assumptions schools often made about student stakeholders. He defined cultural competence as a leadership style that encourages teachers to consider differences in identity and ideology, to recognize that values and morals may differ between leaders and teachers or teachers and students, and to reflect on how such differences may affect classroom instruction.

Participants described culturally competent instructional supervision as requiring respect for one another, with a focus on getting to know teachers. Definitions encompassed a willingness to engage in dialogue and other interactions with people from various identity groups

as an opportunity to embrace people; an awareness of differing values and perspectives; and an understanding of how to support classroom instruction and the professional learning needs of teachers. These definitions resulted from years of practice as culturally competent teachers.

Finding 4: Practicing Awareness as a Way to 'Know' the Work: "I think you have to know yourself, and you have to know who's in front of you."

Several participants shared opinions about and practices of using awareness to "know" the work of an instructional leader, including knowing oneself and one's teachers, identifying teachers' professional learning needs, and developing empathy and appreciation for the differences between oneself and others. As mentioned above in the participant descriptions, Wordles for nine of the 11 leaders interviewed for this study displayed the word "know" as relatively large in comparison to other terms used by leaders throughout their interviews (Figures 1-11). Participants talked about knowing the self, the teachers, the students, the work, the challenges, and so on in their role as instructional supervisors. For Alex, this included "knowing I've covered everyone's needs" for professional learning. Burke believed it was "my duty to know something about everyone in my building . . . if I took the time to hire you, I should know something about you."

Participants spoke of practicing reflection to build awareness about their work as instructional leaders. They shared experiences of reflection that promoted knowledge of themselves and their teachers, informing their roles as culturally competent instructional supervisors by identifying and examining their own and their teachers' identity characteristics. Participants reflected on their own and their teachers' visible and non-visible identity characteristics (e.g., birth order, survivor of abuse, place of birth, non-visible mental or physical health status), using awareness to know teachers and support their professional growth.

Participants emphasized knowing the self, understanding historical contexts of power and the dynamics of the school and community, and appreciating differences in teachers' and students' cultures.

Awareness of Self

Several participants emphasized the importance of knowing the self in practicing culturally competent instructional leadership. Self-awareness for these leaders included recognizing differences in identity characteristics and communication styles and considering these differences in their instructional supervision with teachers. The practice of self-awareness provided these leaders with a foundation from which to consider actions, behaviors, values, and needs. By identifying and accepting the elements that make an individual unique, one can undertake instructional leadership in the manner Freire described as "a practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (Shaull in Freire, 1970, p. i). These school leaders practiced self-awareness as a method for transforming their schools into more inclusive, understanding environments.

Tatiana described learning to be aware of the self at an early age. She spoke of her practice of self-awareness as a result of her life experiences. "I think it's personal experiences, how you're brought up, where you've been, that makes you more culturally aware and it filters down." Edgar stated, "if you are culturally proficient, you know how to work on a level of heightened self-awareness." Alex's practice of self-awareness led him to a more thorough knowledge of himself. He stated, "I know myself, and who I am as a person."

Using reflective practices to become more self-aware in turn helped leaders to better know their teachers and staff. Noelle used self-awareness practices to know herself while

simultaneously using the practice to know her teachers. For this leader, knowing the self included:

> being aware of who you are, uh, being aware of different ethnicities, and knowing how important that is. And I always tie it back to my work, and basically, it's almost two-fold, because as a teacher, and as a leader, I think you have to know yourself, and you have to know who is in front of you. As a teacher, you have to know yourself, and you have to know your students.

Noelle expressed the importance of knowing herself and those with whom she worked—her students as a teacher, and now her teachers as a leader.

Awareness of Context

Several leaders commented on the importance of knowing the self, the teachers, and the historical context in which supervision and instruction take place. Matthew emphasized the importance of "knowing who you're supervising, and knowing the situation . . . knowing where people are in their lives" to highlight the need for awareness of what is taking place in a teacher's life. Matthew reflected upon this knowledge to influence the way he approached and interacted with teachers.

Carl also emphasized the importance of knowing himself and the historical contexts in which he worked. He believed in the importance of knowing about his school community and how the school is viewed by members of the larger community and society as a whole. He observed:

> Cultural competency is certainly being aware of historical context where those perspectives originate from and then guide people's thoughts and actions. Awareness is very critical. The second part of that, cultural competence, is awareness; it's probably the

> baseline. The next step would be to have a bias for understanding and being able to be conversant with people from a variety of cultural contexts and that's really critical from a leadership point of view. You've got to be multidimensional; you've got to have the compassionate sensitivity, as well as a sympathetic way of knowing that all people are different and then how to best help them grow towards where they're supposed to be. I'd say as a student or as a staff member, we should always be looking for cultural competence. It's just part of who we are and where we need to be as an individual and as a leader.

Carl used self-awareness to gain understanding about the differences between himself and his teachers; he then connected with teachers using what he learned from his self-reflective practice. He advocated for his teachers to become self-aware or build on their current practice of awareness. Carl spoke of his staff striving to be sensitive and empathetic towards people from differing backgrounds. He described helping teachers to think more critically about how students might experience an aspect of the curriculum, a process that enabled him to provide more accurate instructional support tailored for individual learners. In an attempt to be "multidimensional," Carl used self-reflection to increase his sensitivity and empathy related to the context in which he worked; he then dialogued with teachers about this process.

Edgar used a practice of awareness while meeting with teachers where he read body language to help him determine next steps for instructional supervision work. He used the body language of the teacher to determine if the teacher was open to the dialogue. He said:

> Oh body language, facial expressions, things like that. I mean when you approach somebody, I can just sense it. If they're tensing it [jaw line], of if they're ready to smile. So it usually depends on how either their eyes or their jaw looks. If it looks like they're

> tense in their jaw, they look like they're in the zone, or having their thoughts in another place, I won't address things in a certain.

Edgar used body language to help him determine his approach to teacher supervision.

Awareness of Teachers as Individuals: "Everyone's different in their own way."

Participants spoke of practicing awareness not only to get to know themselves, but also to get to know their teachers. Leaders used knowledge gained from the practice of awareness to tailor dialogue, professional development opportunities, and suggestions for instructional support to individual teachers. Additionally, leaders talked about the practice of awareness as a way to build appreciation for the differences between and among teachers and students.

Tatiana used a practice of awareness as a way to "know" her teachers and to learn methods to best facilitate instructional supervision. She noted, "it's been trial and error and then becoming familiar with your teachers and knowing what works for each teacher. All teachers are so different and I know what I can say to some teachers that I have to either be blunt because that's the only way they'll hear it, or I have to offer suggestions of the way it should be done." When offering instructional support, Tatiana was able to tailor her responses based on the style of the teacher.

Carl used awareness to connect authentically with teachers and plan for teachers' professional growth opportunities. He declared:

> I've got to be culturally competent . . . part of [supporting] the growth of an individual, a teacher, is understanding where people are, who they are, and their needs. Whether they're female, male, regardless of ethnicity, educational background . . . the main thing is being aware of how best to communicate, and practice self-awareness.

Using what he learned through the practice of awareness helped Carl to plan for the professional growth of his teachers.

Edgar, too, used a practice of self-awareness when instructionally supervising teachers. Edgar practiced remaining self-aware when he observed and offered feedback to teachers. He explained that there were multiple ways to work successfully in a school. By recognizing the different skill sets each individual teacher brought to the school, differences could be discussed and used as points of departure for professional development. Edgar suggested that as a culturally competent leader:

> You may not know everything about every person in the building, but you're aware enough to know that everyone's different in their own way. And that you are not the person you are observing. You can't project yourself onto them. You are not the person you are observing.

Edgar's use of self-awareness during supervision focused his thoughts and attention on the teacher's needs, matching his professional development approach with the teacher's skill set. Edgar acknowledged that each adult learner in the building had individual needs, and he therefore needed to take a broad view of options for completing a task, introducing a concept, or meeting the learning needs of teachers and students. He went on to say:

> there might be this ideal educator that is in your mind when you're doing the observation, and you compare the two. But the ideal doesn't exist! I can't go into Teacher A's classroom and then go into Teacher B's classroom and compare the two.

Reminding himself that each adult learner is different, Edgar acknowledged each teachers' individual skill sets. Matthew also expressed his effort to prevent teacher comparisons when he said:

> One thing we had to be careful of too is to not say, "hey so-and-so, who's in the room beside you, she's a model teacher, be like her." Different personality. Different person. And we can't tell people to be like other people; we have to take what they have and what they can do but we can refine it.

Like other leaders in this study, Matthew viewed teachers and their skills individually. These culturally competent leaders understood difference and found a way to show appreciation for and work with the different skill sets in the context of their schools. For these leaders, the approach to supervision with each teacher required an effort to forego judgment, and work the skills each teacher brought to the classroom. Alex reminded himself that in such an approach, "you know, you haven't been there, you haven't been in their shoes, so let's not judge." These leaders used self-awareness to avoid projecting assumptions onto the teachers they supervised.

Noelle expressed a similar view of the need for self-awareness among culturally competent school leaders. She noted that practicing awareness as a culturally competent leader meant:

> As a teacher, I think that you have to know yourself, and you have to know your students. And I think as teachers and as leaders, I have to know not only the students, but I have to know the teachers that I have. And for them to realize the importance of empowering children, and making them feel very competent about who they are, regardless of their race or their ethnicity. Because that's the first step, they have to realize they have no reason to feel that they cannot succeed because of their race or their ethnicity. And so it's our job to help them understand that. And to be aware of that. And for us to be conscious about it too.

Leonard likewise spoke of his efforts to practice awareness, appreciation, and empathy when working with teachers from different backgrounds. He described his culturally competent supervision of instruction as:

> not only an understanding but [also having] an appreciation for different cultures, different backgrounds, really being able to empathize with people who are different from you. For the purpose of the school setting, as a teacher, being able to relate to all students regardless of background whether it's race, poverty level, religion, but being aware of how to best meet the needs of students based on whatever type of culture or a level of diversity.

Leonard used self-awareness to build empathy and understanding in himself and with the teachers he supervised. He worked to be reflexive with teachers, guiding them to consider their positionality and membership in identity groups and how those groups were similar to or different from those of their students. Increased understanding helped this leader connect with teachers and, as a result, helped connect teachers with students.

Marcy coached her teachers to be aware of the root causes of students' outbursts, encouraging them to recognize where student support was needed. She recalled an incident in which two of her students broke into the assistant principal's office, stealing his food, and then stole a school bus to get away from campus. She saw the incident as a reason to look further into the students' needs outside of school. She noted that the two students

> had stolen the school bus and drove it around town. They didn't know how to turn it off because it had a "kill switch" so they turned the key off but it didn't turn off, so they ran it out of gas. They'd broken into our assistant principal's office and stolen all of his food. And going through that process, of course, they were in trouble, but I was also thinking

> about, you know they're in his office, there are other things to steal, but what did they steal? Food. And there were other things to steal. And then looking into the home life, and I think that was kind of early on for me, a factor of, you know, I really haven't been hungry to the point that I would do something like that, that I would like break into somebody's office and steal their food. So I guess I had a heart for them although they were in trouble and they still had to be punished, but you know, I needed to make sure that, "Hey, is everything ok at home?"

This incident provided the impetus for Marcy to ask teachers to consider what happens in the home or outside of school that may affect student behavior in the classroom. She used practices of self-reflection and awareness to help teachers consider ways in which they can enact cultural competency in their work.

Burke reminded his teachers to be aware of the bias they may feel towards a student or group of students. He encouraged the teachers to reflect deeply about how they interact with others and to learn from these habits, while developing respect for each other. He would tell teachers, "You need to be careful about how you treat these kids." He acknowledged:

> I had to remind them to treat everyone equally. Because if you get ill and you go to the hospital, it's not your valedictorian or salutatorian that comes around to take care of you. It's that child who struggled or who dropped out of school who you didn't care about. They're gonna be there to give you a bed pan or give you a bath. So be careful how you treat them. You want to be able to say I treated them with respect; I cared for them. Because if you walk into a hospital or you're at a nursing home and that child remembers you as being mean, will they reciprocate what you did to them?

Burke talked with his teachers about how differences in society were reflected in the hallways of the school and the confines of their classrooms. From these discussions he hoped to help his teachers gain a deeper awareness of power, privilege, and positionality, and a recognition of how interactions with and opportunities offered to students now may affect their lives in the future. He continued:

> I had to remind teachers that there was a huge disparity between a college prep [general education class] class and an AP [advanced education level] class. You can walk into those classrooms and all you see is worksheets, no instruction basically. Just a lot of worksheets. In AP class, kids are thinking critically; there's great instruction.

Burke used dialogue to promote a reflexive practice in which teachers considered how they used their position of power as the leader in the classroom, including earned and unearned privileges afforded to them (McIntosh, 1988; Ratcliffe, 2005).

For Eric, practicing awareness with his teachers enabled him to consider how and to what degree a teacher fit the school context. He admitted that in many supervisory situations, his awareness of personality traits in some faculty led to the renewal or termination of the teacher. When supervising teachers, he said:

> Some things are personality based. Some people are cut out for the job. Some people are not. Some people are cut out for certain levels. And some people are not. And once you observe somebody quite a bit and meet with them quite a bit, if you can go ahead and start making some determinations, you have to. It's your job to start making those determinations at some point. And we just could see that, you know, the main things that needed to get fixed, we're probably not going to get fixed; which means we were going to have to part ways at some point.

For Eric, practicing awareness with his teachers led to the creation of a professional development plan for those who needed a structured plan of support. If the learning plan did not succeed, his practice of awareness guided this leader to support his school as thoroughly as possible by suggesting termination of the teacher.

These culturally competent instructional leaders practiced self-awareness while at the same time encouraging their teachers to become self-aware. In doing so they modeled for teachers behaviors such as not judging, not negatively projecting assumptions onto others, and not relying on stereotypes in responding to students' identity characteristics in the classroom. The participating school leaders expanded their awareness beyond themselves to share these practices with teachers. Such reflection and awareness build appreciation and respect among school community members.

Awareness of themselves and their teachers provided these leaders with a culturally competent framework for instructional supervision. Examples included a shared practice of self-awareness and an understanding of how bias emerged in the classroom. Participants understood cultural competence as going beyond knowledge of the stereotypes and assumptions related to race to embracing considerations of both visible and hidden identity characteristics of the self and individual teachers. The practice of self-awareness in an effort to know the work of instructional leadership helped these leaders appreciate and embrace the differences that exist among leaders and teachers, and teachers and students.

Finding 5: Leaders Learn Their Teachers

Participants reported the importance of learning about their teachers. By knowing the teachers, leaders could tailor communication and professional learning that supported each individual adult learner within their school context. These culturally competent leaders focused

their teachers' learning through the practice of relationship building, forming relationships with teachers that enabled authentic professional and personal interactions. Leaders continuously built upon their relationships with teachers to challenge them to increase their cultural competence.

Learning Through Relationship Building Practices

For the participants in this study, building relationships with teachers was central to practicing culturally competent instructional leadership. Supervisors connected with teachers through open dialogue to develop honest and trusting relationships that provided a foundation for critical examination of teaching practices. By building strong relationships with teachers non-academically, culturally competent leaders connected with their teachers beyond evaluation practices in the classroom. When the leaders subsequently suggested professional learning practices and strategies, the teachers did not feel threatened by their requests to read new materials or attempt instructional delivery from a more critical lens.

"The door is always open."

Participants spoke of the importance of having open working relationships with those whom they supervised. A focus on building relationships with all members of the school community, as well as advising teachers to work on building relationships with students and guardians, was frequently mentioned as a priority for these leaders. Relationships with teachers on a personal level was a recurring theme among study participants, with one participant specifying the importance of maintaining distance or professional separation from teachers outside of school. However, most participants spoke to some degree about the importance of maintaining healthy, honest, personal relationships with teachers, as well as students and guardians, even when teachers were away from school during the summer months.

Participants used the phrase "open door policy" to refer to the type of approachable leader he or she hoped to be. They spoke of the importance of keeping their office door physically open to convey accessibility. The power of the physical openness of the principal's office door was important to Marcy, and she found herself regularly reminding teachers that her "door is always open" for them. She had chosen an office space that cut through from a side hallway to the back of the main office. The hallway door provided easy access to the main office for all staff, and whoever used this office space would no doubt have constant traffic crossing the room. Marcy chose this office specifically because she wanted to see people and have others see her throughout the day. If the door was shut, it meant she was in a private meeting and teachers would know to go around to the front entrance of the main office. Marcy provided a literal open door to model behavior that, if adopted by the teachers, would help students and guardians feel more comfortable approaching them or asking for support.

Both Marcy and Noelle practiced an open door policy in their offices as models for teachers to follow. Noelle used her open door as a way to communicate that she was there to provide teachers with any support she could offer. She stated:

> With the staff, that was really important because they had previous administrators who were not very open, who were not very approachable. And that's not, that's not the type of school that I want to run. We have an open door policy. They [teachers] walk right in, and if they need something, let us know, we're very approachable. We're here to help them, to assist them, to give them whatever they need that's gonna make life easier for them.

Noelle described her approach to her open door policy as "upfront." She conveyed to her teachers that her office is a place to seek support. As a result of implementing this open door

policy, Noelle offered, "I think they [teachers] feel like we support them, and that we have their backs, so to speak."

Building a Team That Works Together

Leaders used various phrases to capture the importance of building relationships with teachers and, in turn, with students. Statements such as, "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care" and metaphors of sports coaches captured participants' beliefs in the importance of relationship building with teachers. For Eric, "it's really about relationships, and that's very important. We use the 'Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships'" as a slogan." For several school leaders, building relationships began with getting to know the teachers to determine whether they could fit as members of a teaching team, then continued with challenging teachers and students to meet high expectations.

Alex spoke of how important it was for him to build relationships with those in his school. He acknowledged that the practices he used to get to know his students often work with teachers as well. He stated:

> I'm huge on developing relationships with people. As far as a "reach 'em before you teach 'em," a child will learn a lot more for you than from you, and so in trying to do that, you know, that's been a huge deal for me . . . It's the relationship component, that's true with adults as well as students. So for me, if I don't develop a relationship with you, when it comes time to have that conversation about you maybe having some bias [in your teaching], I'm at a loss. I can't really have a conversation.

Alex described a discussion he might engage in with a teacher with whom he had a strong relationship. He described his practice of instructional supervision as being easier as a result of

strong relationships in which mutual trust and respect had been established. The establishment of trust provided space for Alex to ask of teachers:

> whether they be African American males, your Hispanic females, your students with disabilities, students with English as a second language, "You know, they seem to be struggling here, how do we, how do we combat that? What are some things we can do to improve their learning and the instruction so that they can, can get it? You know, they [students] seem to be struggling here, how do we combat that? What are some things we can do to improve their learning and the instruction so that they can [learn]"?

Alex's practices of relationship building supported his instructional work with teachers.

Several leaders used the metaphor of coaching when talking about relationship building with teachers. Matthew employed the coaching metaphor in reflecting on his team approach to supervision:

> Coaching actually has become a big term in supervision, and I like that. We're coaches here, and we have a team. And what we have to look at are the strengths of our team and see what they do well and put them in a position to be successful. And that's what a coach does, you know. It's the coach term, and the coach relationship is a much more positive way to refer to our relationship with people than just a boss or an evaluator or an administrator; to say that you coach teachers is just, you know, that's just a peer, peers coach each other, is a powerful thing I believe.

Matthew viewed supervision as a form of coaching in which leaders and teachers took on positions where they each excelled. Sharing information about instructional delivery became a powerful motivator for Matthew as he pursued supervision through a team lens. "We want to

adapt to our players. We want to do what our players do well." Like the players on a sports team:

> What happens in practice when we run the play and it's not run that well? Do we move on to the next play? That's what we do in instruction a lot of times. But that's not what you do in practice. In practice, you run it again. Let's run that again, let's do a little mini-lesson, let's do a little modeling, let's do a little let-me-show-you-what-it's-supposed-to-look-like, and let's do it again.

In Matthew's view, a team approach to professional growth provided opportunities for teachers and leaders to work together to address instructional concerns in an environment free of blame. He encouraged teachers, "We have to practice it [teaching] to get better at it." Marcy, too, identified a team approach to instructional supervision as a motivator for improvement in her school. She noted, "it's a team approach, and if [teachers are] onboard, then they'll do whatever you want them to do. The team, I think that is something that is very important."

Theo extended the concept of knowing his teachers using the analogy of a coach knowing his individual players' strengths and weaknesses. Based on the knowledge of how each team member played and their particular strengths and weaknesses, the coach could place his players in the appropriate positions. In terms of doing his best to support his "players"—the teachers—Theo emphasized the importance of:

> Visibility, and then relationships, and relationships with everybody, meaning the parents, the community, the kids, the staff. You've got to have relationships with everybody and be able to, when you think of yourself as like the coach of a team, knowing what your players' strengths are and then kind of massaging that and moving your players around so that your team functions the best it can.

By knowing his teachers' strengths and weaknesses, Theo had a better understanding of how to improve each teacher's overall practice, to create the best "team" he could to ultimately improve the school community.

Noelle spoke of the importance of building relationships with teachers when she first arrived at her current school, three years earlier. The school had seen multiple principals come and go in the previous years, and she was determined to end the revolving door of the principal. Yet she felt haunted by what she called the "ghosts of administrators past." Noelle said:

> Sometimes I feel like I'm living with the ghosts of past administrators. You know, I think that I've cleaned them all out and then something will happen where someone is still in that mindset of someone else's—a previous administrator's—expectation.

In taking over leadership of the school, Noelle knew that building and maintaining relationships to earn respect from and establish trust with the teachers was paramount. To achieve her goal of creating a community of trust that would foster growth, Noelle focused on extending her relationships beyond the school walls. She recalled:

> The very first year, my assistant principal and I, that was one of the main things. We had two primary goals, and that was to build relationships with the staff and build relationships with families. The school quality review that was conducted last spring, we got a rating of distinguished on that, on family relationships. So that really, really felt good, because we have really put in a lot of work in building relationships with our families.

A focus on building relationships with teachers and students' families became a priority for this leader to help improve her school environment.

Marcy believed that by listening to teachers she would achieve a better understanding of their perspectives and struggles related to their daily work. She therefore listened closely to her teachers, modeling what she wanted the teachers to do with the students. She asserted:

> I think as teachers, that is the case a lot of times; if you can build that relationship with the kids, then I think that they do open up, eventually. Or if you go to the house, or if the parents come in, you know, I think that's when you see teachers change. And they will say, "I've just never lived like that before. I don't understand it. And I feel so sorry for them." And what I see is, them feeling sorry to the point where they are willing to help. And they want to make it better for them, because they haven't lived that way before. Or I'll have a teacher that will say, "You know, I really had it rough growing up, and I understand what they're going through," and so with that, they want to help make a difference with the kids.

Exposure to their students' home cultures helped Marcy's teachers gain insight into their students. Through such efforts, Marcy helped her teachers grow in their understanding of the whole student.

Marcy's emphasis on understanding the whole student was mirrored in her efforts to understand her teachers holistically as well. For Marcy, a heightened awareness of her teachers' personalities and character traits helped her group teachers together in teaching teams, a concept she used as a teacher when grouping students for learning tasks. By having greater awareness of her staff, Marcy was able to strategically group teachers and leaders for academic and administrative tasks. This in turn modeled for teachers how awareness of identity characteristics and individual strengths can serve as a tool for classroom teaching.

Many culturally competent school leaders noted the importance of relationships as a source of information when grouping students for curricular activities. Leaders believed the better teachers know their students, the stronger the groupings can become for content acquisition. Marcy noted:

> When you build relationships with people, and you find out about their family and the people in general, you find your resources and you also know the triggers, you know? You kind of know that might be something that would bother that person. One thing I didn't mention is talking about climate and respecting. When I put together a grade level team, I think about that in all areas. Strong personalities and weak personalities, the doers, and build a team that can work together. And not put two strong people together that are just going to butt heads the whole time. It's just not good anytime. And that's how I place kids too.

For this school leader, instructionally supervising teachers included not only knowing her teachers but also modeling for them the concept of purposeful grouping for greater success as a school community. Knowing teachers well enough to place them on the "right" teams meant learning their strengths, weaknesses, personality traits, and identity characteristics. Such knowledge enabled leaders to produce successful academic teams through appropriate matching, pairing, or grouping of teachers. The better leaders know their teachers, the more likely they are to create strong academic teams across all grade levels.

Leonard, too, considered teachers' identity characteristics, strengths, and ability to collaborate when grouping them into teams. He learned to be aware of the intricacies of grouping adult learners from his mentor teachers, who "played a significant role in my formative years as a teacher." He recalled:

> I was coming into a setting where I was replacing a teacher that was non-renewed, so in fact, the summer prior to the beginning of the school year, the team leader got my number from the principal, and I'll never forget, we had a meeting at the Outback Steakhouse, and the meeting was so they could tell me these are their expectations of me when I got on the team. And I was like, "Wow, what have I got myself into?"

This early experience as a teacher helped form Leonard's own ideas about grouping teams of teachers in his current school. He grew to believe that peers with high expectations of one another contributed to a culturally competent school context.

For some culturally competent leaders, the desire and ability to develop healthy relationships with teachers was a natural trait. Alex stated, "I try to cultivate relationships . . . it's just who I am as a leader." Edgar believed his ability to pick up accents enhanced his relationship building capacity. He stated:

> I go to different regions and I pick up accents fairly well. I'll just start talking as if I was born and raised in that area, I guess to make the people feel comfortable. I don't know; because I can see that I can talk to people a little bit better if I do, I can interact with them a little bit better.

This leader's skill in adopting accents made it easier to connect with others. By mirroring whomever he was speaking to, he felt as though his working relationships would improve, allowing him to be a more effective leader.

Leaders grew to know their teachers by cultivating relationships with them. During the instructional supervision process, the leader and teacher become aware of triggers and pitfalls, strengths to be highlighted, and areas for growth to be supported further. Participants described the importance of giving meaningful feedback and modeling what was expected of the teachers.

Participants also shared their views about the importance and appropriateness of connecting with teachers outside the school context.

Connecting with Teachers Non-academically

Some school leaders felt it was important to reinforce their relationships with teachers through acts of kindness that included asking about a sick family member or "sending a card for birthdays, little things like that, to let people know you care." However, other culturally competent leaders felt keeping some distance between themselves and the teachers whom they supervised was advisable.

Several leaders commented on the importance of getting to know teachers outside of their work as leaders in the classroom. Alex acknowledged, "I try to let people know I care about 'em, try to ask 'em what's going on." For Burke, connections with teachers were strengthened by "striking up a relationship outside of school." Burke viewed relationship building as going above and beyond, yet important in terms of creating a staff that will give more to the school community. He stated:

> I have friends who say, "Tell me, how do you make time to do that?" I say it's because when people know you care about them, they're gonna work for you. You're not another number, you're not just another teacher. Uh, and it makes a difference. And so, that's what I think, I can say this staff is one of the most caring staffs that I've [had], or faculty that I've ever worked for.

Burke described his feeling of having crafted a family among his staff by staying connected with them and giving them his time whenever he could, so that he feels as though there is a true team of people that care for the well-being of all school community members.

This was reinforced for Burke in a recent conversation with a department chair in the school. The teacher said to Burke:

> one thing that makes you different from any other administrator is that you really care about our family. You care about us first. But when things go on, you don't harass us about why are you out. You truly care about the family; you understand.

Burke noted that by knowing what was going on with his teachers, he could better prepare others to support the teacher if the teacher needed to be out or if the teacher seemed distant while at work. He supported building relationships with his teachers by:

> Just stopping in [to their classroom]. Don't wanna talk about instruction; I want to talk about you. What's going on in your life? Because people wonder sometimes, Why is this teacher missing so many days? Or why are they so mean to kids? But if you get to know a person, you can understand that. And there are instances where someone says, "This teacher is missing a lot of days, what's going on?" I know because I've had a previous conversation with them that they may be battling, or have marital problems, or there are medical issues, or something is wrong with their kids. And so I can tell you, including the custodians, just taking time out of my schedule to ask, "How are you doing?" and mean it. And not just walking away from it.

Burke took the time to get to know his teachers non-academically as a means to build trust and create a supportive environment. His attempts to build relationships with all staff members fostered a climate in which "we are family, because we spend a lot of time together. We need to know our ins and outs. We may not always agree, but one of the things I say to them in faculty meetings, I do love them." Burke believed that a culmination of many small gestures, such as giving birthday cards or asking about an ill family member, helped establish fruitful

relationships in which engaging in discussions about students' identity characteristics or teacher bias became easier.

Edgar shared there was a line that could be crossed from getting too personal with his teachers. He tries to:

> walk a very fine line, and I feel like I've already crossed that a couple of times this year, and I've had to watch myself. As I've said before: I like to talk to people. And, so, sometimes I take that too far, and I can almost be too chummy with them [teachers], I guess that's something that's going to be very difficult for me, to have those [instructional] conversations, and not necessarily cut up, but to make them [teachers] feel comfortable with me.

This leader acknowledged that building relationships also required creating boundaries. While relationships were important to Edgar, these connections were not to take place at the expense of supervisory practices.

Leaders' perspectives of building and maintaining relationships with teachers varied across the spectrum from connecting personally with teachers over family information or joking, to keeping the relationship completely professional in nature. For example, while relationships were important to him, Matthew followed the rules set by a mentor and current supervisor to maintain some sense of distance and formality in his working relationship with teachers. Matthew declared:

> you gotta be careful of this, you gotta be careful of that. You know it's like, all these rules and reminders and bullets that are going through your head . . . Here's an example. She [the principal] doesn't go to weddings, you know. It's too personal. Don't, you can't go to your teachers' weddings, you can't go to your teacher's hospital when your

> teacher has a baby. You know, you just . . . You're happy for them, you may send them a gift, but it's just certain there's a line you cross of being too personal. You know, and that's just an example but all principals don't follow that, that's not some goal, something written in stone. It's just those little things she keeps bringing up, be careful not to get too close, you got to maintain your role, they have to maintain theirs. Be professional. You know, be formal. I would say she teaches being formal.

Though his supervisor encouraged him to build close working relationships with the teachers whom he supervised, Matthew followed her lead in keeping his relationships with teachers formal and professional in nature.

Communicating over the summer. Several leaders spoke about connecting with faculty over the summer months as a way to support relationship building. Burke said, "I give every faculty member a birthday card. Even during the summer, I send them out during the summer. And you'd be surprised that just a little card makes a difference." A card suggested a more intimate connection between school staff, where the leader reached out to show caring for the teacher even when school was not in session. These leaders also modeled a way for teachers to relationship build with students and their families. Marcy encouraged teachers to write letters to incoming students and their families over the summer, prior to the start of the school year. One leader shared that home visits were also encouraged, but not required.

The culturally competent school leaders in this study engaged teachers by building strong relationships with them, creating a context of respect and trust in which to discuss beliefs and attitudes about diverse learners. Such discussions were then used to inform instructional practices. All participants mentioned the importance of building and maintaining relationships with teachers as a way to enact cultural competency. By building relationships, culturally

competent leaders set a tone of respect and support for all in the school. Relationship building led to improved communication between leaders and teachers, paving the way for open, genuine discussion during formal supervisory practices.

Learning Through Formal Supervisory Practices

School leaders incorporated culturally responsive and relevant actions into both formal and informal supervisory practices with teachers. All participants acknowledged that they followed a specific protocol or framework for formal and informal supervision and evaluation practices as required by the school district or governing body of the school. However, several of the participants asserted that their processes of working with teachers were unique and individualized for each staff member. Participants shared examples of teachers' needs that called for differentiated supervision, similar to individual differences among the developmental instructional needs of students. Leaders used practices ranging from classroom observation involving limited interaction with teachers to weekly, one-on-one book study discussions during a planning period or after school. The following section describes practices of formal and informal instructional supervision through which school leaders guide teachers' learning.

Supervision Protocols

All participants referenced the protocols used for supervising instruction in their schools. The school leaders in Georgia used one of two formal protocol tools to collect data and give feedback to teachers: (1) the Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES) or (2) the Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument (GTOI). Nine of the eleven participants worked in Georgia; therefore, I briefly mention the tools associated with these supervision and evaluation protocols. Carl's private school did not have a formalized protocol, and Theo's district used a formal protocol similar to that of the state of Georgia GTOI. Each leader used an observation

instrument to record their formal visits to classrooms. The TKES and GTOI tools provided space for leaders to record descriptions of classroom observations and evidence of teacher practice. Chapter Five will discuss in greater detail the formal language of the supervision and evaluation policies in education and their influence on school leader practices and tools.

Matthew explained the formal supervisory protocols used by his school system:

> Because [of] the way the GTOI program works, your first three years of teaching you get three observations, three formal observations each year. And then after you have three consecutive years of three observations, you go on a rotating system where you get one observation for two years, and then you get three again. So it basically goes, three-three-three, one-one-three, one-one-three, one-one-three, for your career.

As in many of the participants' school systems, Matthew's protocol for supervision was consistent for all teachers who were deemed "qualified" or "proficient" in their teaching.

Eric described the supervision protocol used in his school as:

> absolutely geared towards what's happening in that classroom. How is the teacher instructing? How is the instruction going on; are they using those best practices? And because there are four informal observations of 10 minutes each and two formal observations of 30 minutes each. That's pretty heavy.

Noelle's district recently changed tools from the GTOI to the KEYS. She described the process of learning to use the new tool as "muddling through." Noelle shared,

> So for teacher KEYS, primarily, it's two formative observations that are a minimum of 45 minutes. And then there's a summative evaluation at the end. And there are four 10-minute walk-throughs. For every teacher.

In describing the observation process, leaders often mentioned the length of time associated with each observation as a significant issue. The amount of time needed to conduct observations presented an apparent challenge for leaders and is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Edgar shared information about an informal supervisory tool his district implemented with short observations known as "walk-throughs":

> We have a teacher observation tool that we use . . . The district created it. And we can use it on our iPads. I have my own personal [iPad] that I have to bring in because we don't have the funds for that. But you collect [observational data] just to give us a snapshot of what's going on in classrooms for quick 10-minute observations.

Participants followed protocols and used tools to collect observational data of teachers' instructional delivery and their own teacher interactions. They commented on the challenges and limitations supervisory processes imposed on their work, while also identifying supports that helped them carry out their instructional supervision with teachers.

Supports for Supervision

Leaders used supports to aid in their supervision work with teachers. A focus for several leaders was managing the amount of supervision required. For some leaders, this meant sharing the workload with another instructional leader. For others, it meant staying organized so as to be thorough and ethical in completing the work.

Sharing caseloads. Each leader was responsible for formally conducting teachers' annual evaluations, and each had a list of teachers scheduled for evaluation during that calendar year. Often the principal and assistant principal shared the responsibility of completing these observations and evaluations. This is known as an instructional leader's "caseload." Several leaders commented on the importance of sharing the caseload with the other instructional

supervisor in the school (e.g., principal or assistant principal). Participants did not mention sharing the responsibility of formal instructional supervision with additional supports, such as academic coaches or teacher leaders.

In Matthew's school, sharing the caseload not only helped the leaders complete the work but also offered teachers multiple perspectives related to their delivery of instruction, which they could then apply to their classroom practice. Matthew and his principal:

> divide the faculty in half: the principal takes half, and I take half. We flip flop each year and alternate, so that a teacher who stays here multiple years would get an alternating supervisor every year. We do that for a couple of reasons. You know, it gives them a fresh look every year, a fresh perspective. Also, because this work is completed by the same two school leaders in most schools year after year, exchanging the roster or caseload of teachers provides for some variation in the review of and feedback offered to teachers.

The process of trading the supervision and evaluation caseload every year provided Matthew and his administrative team with a more fully robust picture of the teaching performance in the school, and the teachers with multiple perspectives on their teaching practice and exposure to different instructional leaders:

> Oftentimes, it gets into that they're not just one year or one visit [concerns about teaching], they are multiple year things, by having two different supervisors, or having an alternating supervisor every year, it doesn't come down to a personal issue between the observer and a teacher. So we would alternate out.

When administrators exchange supervision and evaluation caseloads, they give teachers an opportunity to receive feedback and support from varying perspectives while offering school

leaders greater insight to the teaching styles, skills, and professional development needs of the teachers.

Leaders' discussions of instruction with their teachers included reviewing parts of the lesson observed. Edgar offered, "part of the GTOI that I actually like, when you're looking at 'building for transfer,' that whole part . . . it's definitely a teacher-focused lesson, I always try to see, how is this teacher trying to relate this [concept] to these kids?" Tatiana asks her teachers, "Could you have done that activity a little differently?" She detailed a recent experience of a formal classroom observation:

> one class I was in, a social studies class, [the teacher] had three forms of text the children could look up information [in] and she had special ed children in there. It was more of a lower class and the tables were just chaotic. And so in her evaluation I said, you know, have you thought about possibly limiting the number of text for the group of children who are more struggling as compared to everybody else who was able to handle the three different types of text? Had she thought about putting up a peer tutor for that group? And then I'll go back and talk to them on that on a personal basis. I'll put it out there first in their observations and then I send it to them. And they'll either come to me or I'll go to them. So that's kind of how I handle it.

In providing suggestions to improve teaching, Tatiana connected with the teacher to determine what would work best for the individual student. Her approach to supervision was collaborative in that "we'll kind of just sit down and brainstorm some things that we could possibly talk about" that may work for the school context and the teachers' needs.

Edgar described setting supervision and evaluation goals with his teachers at the beginning of every year. He and his teachers:

> talk about the goals that they're going to have for the year. And we talk about the types of things that we expect to see in a classroom, and the types of things that they like to do in the classroom, and their style of teaching, and things like that.

Edgar used dialogue to work collaboratively with teachers to set goals for the year, helping them take ownership of and responsibility for their teaching practice. Edgar engaged his teachers through dialogue about their teaching, then used this dialogue to design instructional support for his teachers.

Leaders used supervision and evaluation as means of identifying teaching practices in which teachers excelled, so skilled teachers could serve as professional learning resources for their colleagues. When a teacher excelled at a particular skill, the leader could reference this teacher in conversations with others who needed work in that area. Leonard said, "I told my teachers, if you're exemplary in an area, that means that you're the one I can tell people who come from anywhere around the state how you conduct yourself or how you conduct your classroom." Leonard argued that successful professional learning for teachers takes place when teachers feel ownership of their work and when colleagues in the building can learn from each other.

Staying organized. Participants devised methods to help stay organized with supervision tasks. Theo kept a running log of all the classrooms he visited, noting the dates and how many times he visited throughout the year:

> I keep a copy of the master schedule, which has all the classes that are offered during the day. When I visit a class, I do a little tally mark next to it, so I have a picture of all the classes that I've been to, which ones I've been to several times, which ones I haven't been to yet.

By staying organized with his supervision responsibilities, he was able to spread out his teacher observations throughout the school year.

Matthew used a concept called a "tickler file" with the teachers he supervised. This folder, unlike the formal district folder, provided informal clues and reminders for Matthew about discussions with and interests of the teacher. He used the information in the file to "tickle his memory" when it was time to observe the teacher again or to check back in with a teacher after they had made an agreement.

Challenges of the Work

Multiple participants identified challenges associated with carrying out instructional supervision. Leaders struggled with completing all required observations and evaluation and finding enough time to visit teacher classrooms while managing their numerous other responsibilities. They spoke of frustrations related to their desire to carry out thorough instructional supervision practices while keeping up with other administrative duties and meetings. However, these culturally competent school leaders made their best effort to do so.

Amount of supervision work. Participants identified the effort of keeping up with the observation work required of them as a daily struggle. Eric characterized the amount of supervision work required as "pretty heavy." Leonard noted, "With the formative evaluation, not only are you looking at a 30-minute observation period, but you're also looking at documentation." Participants acknowledged that thoroughly supervising and evaluating teachers required a considerable time commitment from the school leader, and time was a commodity often in short supply.

When considering the amount of formal supervision work required of his team of two supervisors, Leonard acknowledged, "looking at two administrators and everything that we have

to do, it's been difficult." In his school, Edgar held three conferences with teachers. "Those are absolutely required. Teacher option is before any observation, they can call a conference any time they want to. So that may add to [the time it takes], but if they want to have a conference, they are welcome to have a conference."

Mandatory district-wide testing schedules introduced additional time constraints into the school day. Participants spoke about the lack of time in the school calendar to schedule the required number of observations on days where actual teaching, rather than the proctoring of student exams, would take place. Matthew said, "too often times in school because of curriculum maps and because of calendars, you know, content calendars, we don't have time."

Many participants noted that achieving follow-through from teachers to differentiate instruction for students' individual needs also takes considerable time and effort. Tatiana commented:

> It takes, um, lots of ideas bouncing around. It takes working together as a team. I don't think you can do it. And I also think it's a person's makeup. Some people resent having to differentiate three different ways. That's too much work, you know. I'm either going to give them a multiple choice test for these children and I'm going to give short answers to these kids, and those kids they've got to learn it, they've got to learn it. That's all there is to it.

The need for differentiation in instruction added to the time commitments of teachers and school leaders, and leaders sometimes received pushback from teachers who were asked to provide multiple learning options.

Inflexible language in the tool. A challenge associated with instructional supervision protocols is the inflexible nature of the observation instrument. For example, Matthew noted that quality instructional supervision is difficult to provide given the time constraints of leaders. Moreover, when he enters a classroom to complete an observation, the prescribed tool (GTOI) asks about the "hook" of the lesson, a part of the lesson that connects the content to students' daily lives and is typically found at the start of the lesson. If Matthew arrived after the start of the class period, however, he would be unable to view the lesson's hook. Matthew noted:

> it is very time consuming and it's something that administrators have really taken a while to warm up to just because the demands of time, but you have to keep that into consideration to say, well, "I didn't see any closure." "Well no. You were in a 55-minute class, and you got there in the beginning and you left 25 minutes later, you might not have seen any closure." Or you got there halfway through the class period, you might not have seen the sponge or the intro. You have to keep that in mind. You know, just be mindful it may be that when you mark the section that you saw the beginning of the lesson, you just have to know that that you might not see the closure. That's not something teachers should be dinged for. But you look for things, uh, you follow the instrument, but you're looking for, the instrument is a minimal thing that you're looking for, it's not all you're looking for, it's just the minimum. But you want to look for posted standards and EQs [Essential Questions]; you want to look for, to see that the room is organized for instructional purposes.

Time constraints, in Matthew's view, included entering a classroom for observation later or leaving earlier than was specified by the language of the evaluation tool, and thus missing key elements required by its guidelines.

Leaders also expressed concern about the terminology offered by the observation tools to describe the competency of the teacher. Leonard described:

> The expected level of performance, that's proficient. That's where we would like all of our teachers to be. Um, the third level on the rubric, and in fact before I continue, there's even specific language like with our proficient, one of the buzz words, or one of the key words that you would see in that area of the rubric is "consistently." Teacher consistently uses this, or teacher consistently does so on and so forth. And for exemplary, it's "continuously, just about daily." The third level would be "needs development." And the key word you would see in that area of the rubric would be "inconsistently." And the fourth level would be 'ineffective.' And like I said, that's part of the performance appraisal rubric, that's used in the supervision and evaluation process. . . . And sometimes it feels like a "gotcha" type tool. And that's not what I want for them; that's not how I want them to feel.

Leonard wanted teachers to view him as a source of support for their work in the classrooms, but feared the language required by the evaluation tool might instead lead them to feel threatened or insecure.

Culturally competent instructional supervisors supported their teachers through a formal observation process dictated by their school or district. Each leader's protocol required significant time spent observing teachers in the classroom. Several participants spoke about their partnership with another instructional supervisor in the school that made it possible to complete the heavy caseload of required observations. One leader provided examples of how he assembled a more complete picture of teaching in his school by alternating the supervision

caseload with his principal annually. Leaders adapted supervision tools to meet their own notions of culturally competent supervision language.

Finding 6: Professional Development Strategies for Engaging Teachers to Become Knowledgeable About Students and Their Communities

Participants provided examples of culturally relevant practices they used with teachers during instructional supervision. These practices included supporting teachers through dialogue, maintaining high visibility in classrooms and hallways, attending team meetings, facilitating book studies with small groups, and finding time to meet one-on-one during a planning period or before and after school. The culturally competent examples offered by leaders were not shared across this participant population; instead, each found their own methods of engaging teachers to consider students' cultures and how they might affect students' work in the classroom. Leaders noted that they drew on their established relationships with teachers as a starting point from which to challenge them to consider their interactions with students and guardians.

As a result of the close relationships she built with her teachers, Marcy was able to speak candidly with them about exploring needs for further professional development. She encouraged her teachers to identify their own needs for improvement. She shared, "our students have strengths and weaknesses and so do we as teachers." Marcy supported her teachers in looking inward to consider where personal growth may occur. "If you have an area that you're not strong in, we'll see that, and we can help you. Because the better teachers you have, the stronger your school is. That teacher really makes a big difference." Marcy went on to say that the most important factor in the school is having "good strong teachers."

Leaders Support Teachers to Take Risks and Gain Exposure to Culture and Content

Tatiana described cultural exposure as the key to creating a culturally competent school. "I think that's probably the number one thing--exposure. And if you grow up and teach and live in the country, you're never going to see other cultures." Tatiana believed in the importance of exposing her teachers to varying ideas, methods, places, and people. She declared, "The biggest thing is exposure; teaching with different people, learning different things, going to different places, even if it's just the county next door."

Tatiana attributed much of her knowledge of different cultures to traveling outside her school, seeking her own professional learning opportunities. By traveling outside her home county to observe in other schools, Tatiana offered:

> I think that really helps with culture providing, developing knowledge about different types of cultures, whether it's a free and reduced county, whether it's an all-Black or mostly Black county, whether it's a wealthy county. I think just being exposed to all of that as a leader helps you.

Tatiana advocated leaving the comfort zone of one's immediate school or classroom context and venturing outside one's everyday experience to learn new skills and gain different perspectives.

Leaders described breaking away from the traditional organization of the classroom and encouraging teachers to experiment with new methods for delivering lessons, from rearranging the desks and changing the classroom décor to taking the students outside the building for a lesson. Leaders encouraged teachers to be creative in exploring new ideas by visiting other classrooms.

Burke encouraged his teachers to take risks in delivering instruction, including manipulating the geography of the classroom. "It's not always about the seats all lined up in a

row; [teachers] could be creative in how they deliver . . . call it 'controlled chaos.'" Carl agreed that to best support any student's individual needs, "I encourage [teachers] to take a risk." Carl continued, "teachers need [instructional] support and if you can't give them all the bells and whistles in the classroom and a technology gadget, then at least you can give them time and support for what they have to master."

Marcy also offered support for risk-taking in her school. She told a story about a team of third-grade teachers struggling to teach a unit on habitat. The teachers didn't think they had enough time to teach all the required information with upcoming exams looming. Marcy met with the teachers and recalled:

> They were saying, "It's too much, we can't do all of this," so we just sat down and came up with a plan. So each classroom became a wetland, the desert, you know. So that class was immersed in that habitat, but they studied everything about it. They did presentations, they videotaped, and they became experts and then they picked a day and they traveled to the different classrooms and made the whole hall like a habitat. The teachers said to me, "Well, we didn't know we could do that." You know they were kind of thinking inside the box, and not thinking, Hey, we can do something different. I don't physically have to teach *everything*. We can share, and we can learn from each other, and we can work together, and our scores were great.

By encouraging her teachers to take a risk, Marcy modeled working as a team to plan, learn, and share knowledge and teaching responsibilities. As a result, the teachers were introduced to new ideas and ways of presenting information and the students were exposed to the entirety of the curriculum over which they would be tested.

Multiple participants emphasized the need to support both new and veteran teachers. While all leaders expressed a need to support teachers throughout the supervision process, several participants also noted the importance of supporting teachers at the beginning of the school year, well before any formalized supervision took place, or possibly even earlier upon first meeting in an interview. Other leaders showed support for teacher risk-taking by being present and available to talk when needed.

Noelle believed mentoring teachers was paramount for developing a healthy working relationship with teachers in a challenging and diverse school context. Noelle asserted, "my school is a tough school. It is a really tough school. And I actually think that in a way I start sort of supporting and mentoring during an interview." Marcy likewise believed that supporting teachers throughout the year and across the career continuum made for a healthy, successful school. She suggested:

> I think you have to be very careful about the actions that we take. Because you always want to keep your finger on the pulse and make sure, because it's like it has to be a balance at school. And if your teachers aren't happy, you're not going to get the kind of instruction that you need, because they are negative. You know, and I think that we all have to think positively. You know, and encourage each other.

A focus for leaders seeking to instruct teachers in cultural competency was helping them learn to relate to and work with low-income or impoverished children and families. Leadership strategies included encouraging and engaging teachers to learn about their students, increasing teacher practice of awareness, and building relationships with families. Commonly mentioned resources included reading works by author Ruby Payne, riding the school buses, and engaging in poverty simulations.

The Student Commute Experience

When asked about professional learning activities related to culturally competent supervision, several participants described taking school bus rides with their teachers at the start of every school year. The intent of these bus rides was to provide a simulation experience for the teachers in which they could experience their students' daily commute, including a sample of how long it took the student to get to school and what was visible and/or accessible along the route. Leaders encouraged teachers to observe neighborhoods and other aspects of travel associated with the daily school commute. Such details were used as points of interest in discussions about instructional delivery, including how to support students who arrive to school tardy with no breakfast or limited sleep.

In Marcy's school, teachers were encouraged to journal during and after the bus rides. She expressed:

> During our preplanning, we usually will take a bus and we will ride through the neighborhoods of our school. And we have a trailer park here that serves six of our 10 buses to that trailer park. And it is very rural—it's not uncommon to see trailers with no windows; they have rugs for their doors. The dogs jump in and out of windows . . . where 19 kids are living in one trailer. When you see that, and when you see where your kids live, and you see where they're coming from, then I think that gives you a heart for kids. And I think that gives you a perspective, and I'm not saying feel sorry for them, that they get to do what they want to do. But it gives you a perspective of, they get here 10 minutes late, and the time is cut off for breakfast. Do you tell them you missed breakfast, or do you go in there and get them a breakfast, and let them eat it?

Marcy used the bus rides to initiate a dialogue with her teachers that continued throughout the entire school year about student needs and the types of support teachers can provide. The physical and visual experiences of these bus rides helped teachers gain awareness of the contexts from which students come into their classrooms. Culturally competent instructional supervisors help teachers learn more about the whole student so as to better serve students as they move through the school year.

Eric reported that he rode the school buses regularly, "I try to ride a bus at least once a week to get a feel for the neighborhoods and different things; there's such an *array* of housing." He acknowledged the vast differences in socioeconomic backgrounds of the students in the school, often visible from the windows of the bus. He also recognized that students themselves viewed these vast differences in how others lived on their daily commute to the school. "You've got people who are multimillionaires living in this attendance zone and their kids come here, and you have kids who can't afford to pay their lunch bill." Eric passed on this knowledge to his teachers, asking them to be cognizant of their students' awareness related to access to resources associated with their home lives. Eric felt the differences between students' experiences outside of school manifested within it, and he challenged his teachers to meet the differentiated needs of each learner.

Theo recalled his experiences of riding city buses used by his students for their own school commute. He acknowledged that a city bus ride was more than a commute; a student's bus ride meant safety or harm depending on the bus line. He reminded teachers what it meant for students who may come to class late or need to leave early to catch a particular bus, concepts he did not learn in his leadership preparation program but on the job. He shared:

> I mean you do like the budget, you do general instruction [in a preparation program] but how do you do defiant teachers? And how do you do culturally relevant information for teachers? You have the special ed class that teaches you about compliance and how you have to follow IEPs and final fours, but it doesn't tell you how to convince teachers that learning disabilities are real [laughs], and how to hold teachers accountable for enforcing IEPs. So it's very base level and you get the rest on the job. And then you throw in gangs and you throw in kids that steal, and you throw in kids that threaten principals and kids that bring guns to school, and other kids who are afraid [to come to school] because of the route of the bus, right. You can pick them up in [one neighborhood] but then they have to go across a different street on the way to school so now they can't take that bus, so they have to walk 10 blocks down to catch a different bus because that bus goes through this neighborhood they can't go through without getting beaten up – what class is that? Right. And I bet you could line up 100 principals who don't even know what I'm talking about.

Theo learned on the job how to help support teachers and his school community by learning about elements of school transportation that may impact students' attendance, health, and well-being. In this case, Theo engaged his teachers to reflect on how the daily school commute could become either a safe or a threatening part of the student's school day.

Poverty Simulations

Leaders participated in and/or facilitated poverty simulation exercises through a professional development opportunity with the Northeast Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (NEGA RESA) or through their own design. Exposure to living in poverty provided

leaders and teachers with a socioeconomic perspective that was unfamiliar to them, yet all too familiar for many of the students and their families.

Participants in poverty simulations survived on limited funds and other resources for one week. Activities included negotiating for food, room and board, or access to additional resources. Burke said:

> many of the teachers do not come from, they come from middle-class backgrounds, so they don't understand poverty. They've never experienced poverty. They don't understand what it means to go to bed at night without eating or to have your lights turned off for a couple of days or weeks and you still survive. One of the things that has been beneficial, I think, in this district is the poverty simulation that they do at the university or RESA has done it here. As administrators, I think it was three or four years ago, we had to do a poverty simulation. Principals got together for one day and they gave us different scenarios. And they gave you, you and your wife, you only earn maybe $60 a month, you're gonna have to catch the bus all week. This was my first time ever riding public transportation. And going to a counseling center and having to bargain to receive counseling. But you also gotta pay this bill and that bill. A lot of people have never experienced poverty.

The experiment of living in poverty afforded participants a brief glimpse into what many students and guardians experience daily. As a tool, this simulation provided additional perspective for leaders and teachers to connect with each other and with their students.

Eric asks his teachers to consider the resources needed for various student assignments. He notes:

> my family background, we weren't exactly middle class, at best we were probably lower middle class. We didn't have the money and weren't able to do certain things the average kid got to do . . . So those things kind of came to bear for me. And I could relate to that and try to help teachers understand. How do you expect a kid to go home and build a dough model of Georgia? That mom may be looking at, "I've got this amount of flour in my house and I don't have money or food stamps to go get anymore. So do we do the homework or do we not?"

Eric wanted his teachers to consider expectations they put on the students. What may seem as a basic request for homework, might prove to be a challenge for some households to provide. Eric felt it was important for his teachers to keep their requests in perspective.

Additional culturally competent strategies offered by participants included using a nearby park as the location for various school activities such as an extracurricular picnic, parent/teacher meetings, or classes offered to parents. Marcy explained:

> You know 'cause a lot of our parents don't drive, and even with that, a lot of them are not legal. And so it's $25 for them to get a taxi [to the school]; so if their child is sick, then that's $25 to come pick your child up, you know. It's just a cultural thing that I think we all need to be aware of and embrace and support, you know. I do think it's powerful when you see where [students and parents] are coming from.

Marcy encouraged her teachers to be open to holding school functions in areas close to student housing, especially when families had limited or no access to transportation. She talked with her teachers about considering how families transported themselves to and from school events such as parent/teacher conferences.

Working with Immigrant Populations

Tatiana spoke of a new student immigrant population that had recently joined her school system. Her small school district had limited access to translation services for students and their families. She described the professional development needs she and her principal felt her teachers needed at the beginning of the school year to support instructional delivery to this new student population. The teachers, she explained, needed to be

> more open-minded about why these kids look different . . . wear multiple, different types of clothes, you now. Don't worry about that. They're still a child that needs to be loved and nurtured, but here they are in an environment without their own people, without their own [language], for eight hours a day. They don't even speak a lot of English and yet, we don't really embrace them. And I think that is definitely a culture thing. [Teachers] have not been around.

Book study

Noelle encouraged her teachers to expose themselves to information to help them learn about their students. She recalled a book she had begun reading, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Payne, 2005), and mentioned to one of her teachers:

> It's about children that live in poverty. It's a different take on looking at the reasons behind poverty. And I started reading it. I got about halfway through it, and one of my teachers saw the book and asked me if he could read it. And I said "sure." This was probably on a Thursday or Friday. He came back that Monday and asked me if I had any other copies, because he wanted to share it with his grade level.

Noelle worked to create the type of environment in which teachers were exposed to new ideas and new ways to deliver content, and where they would share their knowledge and resources with one another and use what was learned in the classroom.

Noelle envisioned her school staff to be similarly involved with differentiated book studies as a faculty. She declared:

> I love book studies. I think it is one of the best ways to learn and to grow as a staff. My vision for my school is for us to always be reading something. It may not be that we're all reading the exact same thing, but there are times when I think we need to read a book as an entire staff. I think there are times when we need to, my grade levels need to read books based on what their interests are. I think sometimes departments, like my special ed department, might need to read a book. I think it empowers us. I would love to see the day when everybody is reading something different, and we come together for a faculty meeting and we sit around and talk about the books that we have read, and someone else will say, "You know what, we did have that problem on our grade level. What's that title again? I think now we need to read that."

Noelle used the idea of differentiating the assignment for the reading needs of her students to differentiate book study assignments with her teachers. She used what she learned in the classroom to expose her teachers to new forms of team learning through a differentiated book study approach.

Classroom Visibility, Talking with Teachers, and Pride in the Work

Participants spoke of their pride in having a leadership role, which they viewed as honor to hold. Some participants expressed how they valued the role of leadership and the importance of the position. Leaders sought to model desirable behaviors to their teachers by being visible in

hallways and classrooms, by maintaining high expectations of teachers, and by leading through example. Eric learned early in his career:

> You're the principal. As the leader, visibility is key. Don't be willing to ask someone to do something that you yourself aren't willing to do. And you're the one pitching in every time there's a job to be done. And you're in the classrooms. You gotta be in the classrooms.

Visibility in classrooms and teacher team meetings was a common theme for several participants. Leaders commented on honoring the work they asked teachers to perform. Burke added:

> The other piece with the instruction is being there. Monitoring what [teachers] are doing. For instance, we have data team meetings, and now they've moved to blogs. It's not unusual for me to stay up late and read through every data team's minutes, including the three math data teams, maybe four or five science [teams], and make a comment back to read the Freshman Academy minutes. And when they talk about students, and say to them, "Have you called the parent? Have you met with this child before you say this child is, uh, terrible in class, disruptive? Have you met as a team with this child? Have you brought in the parent? Have you called the parent? What interventions?" And I think they appreciate it, they know, they think, "Gosh he actually reads these things." If I'm going to ask you do it, I'm gonna read it.

In an effort to model practices with his teachers, Burke followed through by reading and commenting on the work he asked his teachers to complete.

Burke shared a story about his efforts to model culturally competent behavior for a teacher:

I'll give you a great example. It happened about a month ago. We had one Hispanic student got angry with this teacher. Threatened this teacher, threatened to kill him or something. We had to take him to a hearing. But I know the kid. I had him in middle school. And when he was in security they were talking to him and I sat right beside him. Even though he was "hot." And I said, talked to him very calmly, I said, "Tell me what happened. Explain the situation." And I looked at him, I said, so, cause it was his cell phone. He had it out in class. He was texting or something and the teacher took it up from me. And he threatened the teacher. And I said to him, "Tell me why you did this." I said, "I've had you for six years, you've never acted like this before, tell me what's goin' on."

He looked at me and said, "Dr. Burke, I have to have my cell phone when I leave school. From 5-11, I go to work at a restaurant. From 11-5, I go to the next, another restaurant and prep for them to be prepared in the morning. Then I come to school." And I looked at him and I said, "First of all, you're tired. Look at your body." And I looked at him and I said, "Look at your body. Your eyes." I said, "You never used to get angry." And he looked at me, and I said another thing, "How could you have handled this?" He said, "I don't know, he was angry." I said, "How long have you known me?" He said, "six years." And I said, "If you would have come to me and explained this situation to me, I would've given you the phone that afternoon." He looked, and said, "I know."

But what I didn't know after I had taken him to a hearing is that, we found out in the hearing, he had gotten fired from one of the jobs for being late. But had been doing this for three to four months, and coming to school every day. And he was working, his

> mother worked two jobs. But he was helping her to meet, to get ends met at the home. And he's 18. So you think, Hell, I couldn't have done that. Two jobs? And school. Right! And preparing for a graduation test.

For Burke, it made a difference to sit down and have a conversation with this young man. He modeled the type of communication he wanted to see his teachers use with students.

Using different communication styles with students based on context and ability level was an important tool for these culturally competent supervisors. Tatiana suggested multiple options to present to teachers through instructional supervision that support student learning. She recalled adjusting lessons for different learners early on in her teaching career. She recounted:

> Long before that was a buzzword, I was differentiating in my classroom. I have three different types of tests. I have more hands-on stuff. And so I've just always been aware of it since those incidents with my brother. And truly, that is the only way to teach, is through differentiation, because I see it in the classroom with children who just can't get it. And they need that hands-on or they need that verbal, they need to hear it over and over and over again, they need to see it. So, you know, I see it and I really do talk to my teachers about, you know, not everybody's going to get this. They complain that the child's failing and I say, Well, have you given them two questions as opposed to four questions? Have you taken your vocabulary words and drawn lines between every five words and these questions go with these five words? You know, how can you differentiate? Well that's too much work. I said, but every child can learn. You have to be able to reach those children.

Tatiana used examples from her own teaching experiences to provide guided supports for her teachers as they made connections to the needs of each student. She encouraged her teachers to consider the specific learning needs of each student. She would suggest to teachers:

> How about giving them an oral test if they learn better, as opposed to a written test? How about taking somebody out and using your para-pro to give them a test? How about letting them take it on the computer? There's so many different ways that you could reach those children. So I guess I've always been aware of differentiation because of my own brother. But now it's a big, big thing.

Using lessons learned from having a brother with special needs, Tatiana learned to differentiate as a teacher, and now supports her own teachers to take risks in the work they differentiate with students.

Chapter Summary

Participants shared their experiences and beliefs about what it meant to be a culturally competent instructional supervisor. Data generated from in-depth interviews detailed how participants' early experiences with inequity and difference, either as a student themselves or as an early career teacher, impacted their leadership, practice of instructional supervision, and overall support of teachers in their work today. Several similarities existed among participants, including limited desire to be a teacher as a young person, early experiences as a teacher in the elementary school, and early exposure to students receiving special education services in their classroom. Several leaders were influenced by someone who worked as a teacher living in the home while growing up. Participants represented a variety of grade levels, content areas, and school contexts.

Based on leaders' early exposure to inequity and diversity, these supervisors learned to talk openly about differences that existed within the school. These early conversations helped them craft their own definition of what it meant to be a culturally competent instructional supervisor. These experiences also facilitated a heightened sense of awareness and capacity for reflection, guiding participants to be reflexive in their work with teachers. Leaders apply these skills to instructional supervision by encouraging teachers to take risks in the classroom and to expose themselves and their students to a greater variety of information in traditional and nontraditional formats.

Participants advocated for teachers to think beyond the parameters they had traditionally relied upon in the past—to move furniture, redesign classrooms, and transform the curriculum. When leaders offered risk-taking support, relationships continued to grow and trust was established. Culturally competent leaders referenced various activities and supervisory practices they used to engage teachers. They shared stories of providing enrichment activities for students and promoting differentiated professional development experiences for teachers.

These leaders laid a foundation that encouraged teachers to engage in risk-taking behaviors in the classroom by building relationships and trust with their teachers before challenging them in their delivery of instruction. While Noelle noted that, "the area that needs the most work is probably differentiated instruction," Carl suggested that gaining insight into his teachers' supervision needs required, "Just spending time with [teachers], asking them questions. That's the principal in you, just spending time asking them questions, learning about them, asking them their perspective gives results." By spending time with teachers and offering support, school leaders build relationships that facilitate a more open dialogue about cultural competence in teaching practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine culturally competent instructional leadership through interviews with principals and assistant principals known for their commitment to culturally responsive supervision. Eleven participants were either nominated by an educational professional in the field or recommended by other participants, based on criteria culled from the literature on culturally competent supervisory practices from outside the field of education.

The questions guiding this study concentrated on how instructional supervisors engaged teachers in improving pedagogical practices by examining the experiences, beliefs, and attitudes that influenced their work with diverse learners. Inductive qualitative analysis focused on how these leaders explored and incited a deeper understanding of culturally competent instructional supervision. No previous empirical studies on the culturally competent beliefs and practices of K-12 instructional supervisors were found in the literature. As a result, this study sought to provide insight into culturally competent leadership practices for interested stakeholders (e.g., central office and building-level administrators, teachers, students, guardians, and other educational actors) and to inform policies associated with K-12 school leadership preparation, professional development, and succession planning.

This final chapter of the dissertation provides a summary of the findings, how the findings of the study relate to the existing literature on culturally competent leadership, and how these findings might inform instructional supervision for K-12 educators. I then recommend

avenues for future research regarding culturally competent instructional leadership. Finally, I discuss the implications of the study for working with school leaders and for developing policies related to administrative preparation programs.

Summary of Findings

The findings presented here encompass the experiences and beliefs of the 11 culturally competent instructional leaders interviewed for this study. Six major findings were generated from this study:

1. Leaders encountered inequity and differential treatment early in their lives or as new teachers. These early experiences informed who they subsequently became as school supervisors.
2. Leaders used culturally responsive pedagogies as teachers, and now build upon those skills in their practice of supervision.
3. Leaders described what it meant to be culturally competent in their practice as K-12 instructional supervisors.
4. Leaders practiced awareness as a way to "know" their work as instructional supervisors.
5. Leaders shared the importance of connecting professionally and personally with teachers through relationship building.
6. Leaders engaged in multiple strategies to support teachers in becoming knowledgeable about students and their communities.

Through interviews, study participants shared their experiences and beliefs related to culturally competent instructional leadership practices. These findings offer implications for research and practice in the field of instructional leadership.

Leaders encountered inequity and differential treatment early in their lives or as new teachers. These early experiences informed who they subsequently became as school supervisors. Based on interview data, leaders experienced situations either early in their personal lives or early in their teaching careers that helped them better understand inequity and difference and their negative consequences. The leaders shared personal stories that prompted feelings of pain or heartbreak when asked when and how they learned to be culturally competent. Several participants commented on how they appreciated recalling these stories that made such a difference early in their lives and had such a profound impact on their teaching practice and ultimately on their approach to supervising teachers.

Several leaders commented that the interview process itself helped deepen their awareness of the culturally relevant approaches they had integrated into their leadership practices. By recalling these early stories of inequity and difference, leaders recognized the origins of their belief in the importance of differentiating tasks to meet individual learning needs. Additionally, early experiences that provided a framework for appreciating individual differences and needs led these school leaders to practice greater self-awareness and self-reflection, both as teachers directly supporting students and later as leaders supporting teachers.

Leaders used culturally responsive pedagogies as teachers, and now build upon those skills in their practice of supervision. A majority of these leaders initially held positions as elementary school or special education teachers. They recognized the individual learning needs of their students and began tailoring lessons to meet these needs. These leaders used culturally relevant practices to differentiate their delivery of instruction regardless of grade level, content area, or student ability.

As teachers, participants exposed their students to course content that represented their own cultures or that of the teacher. These leaders expressed the importance of providing students with as much information as possible in an effort to expose them to the world, giving them every opportunity to succeed in their K-12 experience. Leaders used various types of groupings to engage students of all levels and abilities. They applied these same concepts in their supervision process, using various groupings in constructing teaching teams and to prepare for other professional learning experiences.

Leaders described what it meant to be culturally competent in their practice as K-12 instructional supervisors. Based on their early life experiences, participants crafted an understanding of what it meant to be a culturally competent instructional guide for teachers. The leaders identified cultural competency as moving beyond understandings of race, gender, and socioeconomic status to include all elements and characteristics of identity that affect our beliefs about other people. While leaders spoke about accounting for multiple elements in differentiating instruction, however, professional learning activities used to connect teacher professional learning to student cultural diversity often focused primarily on socioeconomic status, family structure, and race. Multiple leaders characterized their practices as supporting learning in diverse contexts, while helping teachers increase their awareness of and appreciation for individual differences in the classroom.

Leaders practiced awareness as a way to "know" their work as instructional supervisors. Leader narratives displayed a commitment to being reflexive in their supervision work. Themes of knowing the self, knowing the context, and knowing teachers were a focus for practices of awareness. Self-awareness provided study participants with the confidence and insight to use their own knowledge and abilities to connect to and support teachers as

instructional supervisors. Using practices of self-awareness afforded leaders the opportunity to discover their own biases and explore how they might affect their interactions with teachers. This awareness also helped them guide teachers to practice greater self-awareness.

Several participants identified awareness of context as an important factor that contributed to their supervisory work. By knowing local history and what was taking place currently in the community, these leaders felt they could proceed more effectively with their work. Finally, participants pointed out the importance of genuinely getting to know teachers, rather than projecting or making assumptions about them. When discussing or offering support for a teacher's delivery of instruction, leaders repeatedly commented on the importance of approaching teachers with a philosophy similar to that of a teacher engaging students. Adult learners need differentiation and support just as younger learners do; each individual is unique and therefore requires developmentally appropriate, individualized approaches.

Leaders shared the importance of connecting professionally and personally with teachers through relationship building. Culturally competent school leaders built upon their relationships with teachers while supporting teacher risk-taking in the classroom. The dual approach of supporting teachers and building relationships led school leaders to challenge teachers to think reflexively and engage in dialogue about their practices. All participants agreed that building strong relationships with all school constituents (teachers, staff, students, guardians, and the local community) was paramount for successful school leadership. Connecting with teachers academically and non-academically was also important for many participants. Leaders reported that time spent building relationships with teachers made it easier to discuss challenging issues related to instructional delivery, make strategic plans for improvement, and design professional learning opportunities.

Leaders engaged in multiple strategies to support teachers in becoming knowledgeable about students and their communities. Participants spoke of experiences and challenges with formal supervision and evaluation practices required by their school or district. Leaders expressed concern about the amount of time needed to perform the required number of formal observations. Some leaders shared ways in which teams of instructional supervisors supported one another by sharing the work or exchanging caseloads every other year. Though most leaders identified challenges with supervision, all agreed that good supervision was integral to a healthy school faculty. Leader reflexivity nourished relationships, which in turn strengthened risk-taking, dialogue, and the overall practice of instructional supervision.

Leaders provided examples of how support for teacher risk-taking helped teachers feel safe when trying new methods of implementing curricula and delivering content. By creating an atmosphere in which risk and creativity were valued, these leaders supported teachers in experimenting with new ways to fit content into a calendar year filled with prescheduled state- and district-wide test dates. Professional learning activities such as bus rides and poverty simulations, facilitated in groups or with individuals, helped leaders educate teachers about students' cultures. Discussing these activities and the feelings associated with them helped promote the healthy growth of collegial relationships between leaders and teachers. Leaders reported that strong relationships with teachers made it easier to enact supervision strategies.

Discussion

The findings from this study contribute to the knowledge base about culturally competent K-12 instructional leaders in several ways. First, they contribute to our knowledge about the origins of culturally competent strategies among instructional leaders. Second, findings presented here offer ground level insights into the day-to-day "how to's" of leader practices of

awareness and relationship building with teachers. Finally, this study contributes to the literature on preparing future school leaders. While these implications are listed separately, it is important to note that these three areas are interconnected: Suggested policy changes will directly affect the practices of leaders, which will likely affect educational research carried out in the future. These implications are described below.

Based on the interview data, cultural competence among instructional supervisors originated in school experiences as a student or early career teacher that involved inequity and difference. Leaders noted that feelings associated with these early events helped them recognize the importance of differentiating lessons for their student learners. When they became instructional supervisors, this awareness translated into the practice of encouraging teachers to be creative and individualized in their delivery of content. The literature defines social justice (Jean-Marie, 2006; Rhodes & Calderone, 2007; Theoharis, 2008) and transformative leaders (Brown, 2004; Cooper, 2009) as those who engage in self-reflection, confront stereotypes related to identity characteristics, and enact activist-oriented practices. Thus, as Shields (2010) asserts, "transformative leadership and leadership for inclusive and socially just learning environments are inextricably related" (p. 559).

While these school leaders' beliefs, experiences, and practices align with the literature on social justice and transformative leadership, there is nevertheless limited information available on culturally competent instructional supervisors in K-12 settings. The characteristics displayed in these leaders' backgrounds and practices are consistent with the literature on culturally competent supervision in the fields of health care, social work, and human resources and organizational development, as discussed in Chapter Two. Yet while research on cultural

competence exists in the teacher education literature, there is limited information available on this skill within the realm of K-12 leader preparation.

Organizationally, cultural competence is defined as the ability to work in diverse teams, as a system or as individuals, with effective outcomes (Egan & Bendick, 2008). Yet there is little information available on how leaders within educational organizations pull their teams together to move forward. The body of research on educational leadership has been characterized as "incomplete, unorganized, and may lack relevancy and applicability for practicing school leaders" (Brown & Irby, 2006, p. 7). Often missing from research studies is the "how to" application of theory for practitioners. In this study, leaders provided evidence of several day-to-day practices that constitute culturally competent manifestations of their supervisory approach.

Shulman, Sullivan, and Glanz (2008) report that facilitating instructional supervision in ways that meet school needs requires a collaborative effort between supervisors and teachers. The findings of this study support those of previous studies emphasizing the importance of relationship building between leaders and teachers, as healthy, trusting relationships between administrators and teachers facilitate contextually appropriate cultural competency skills, knowledge, and abilities (Adler & Bartholomew, 1992; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2011). Leaders in this study observed that creating strong relationships provided a foundation for authentically engaging with teachers and challenging them to individualize their work with students.

Banks (2001) argued that cultural competence enables leaders and teachers to engage critically with notions of race, culture, and ethnicity. The literature base in multicultural education offers evidence that school personnel who promote diversity help to provide equitable, desirable educational opportunities for all students (Brown, 2009). The leaders interviewed in

this study engage in the type of dialogue with their teachers that Banks would consider a reflection of the social realities of their schools and society. These leaders use practices such as awareness, checking in with teachers non-academically, and using poverty simulations and bus rides to help their teachers engage in and connect with themselves and the cultures of students. Giroux (2006) argued for a need to find a common place for theory and practice to meet and support one another. The findings from this study illustrate the intersections between the practices school leaders use with their teachers and the theory underlying cultural competency and instructional supervision.

Ross (2008) observed, "To some cultural competency *is* just another buzz word. To students, all students, it is the gatekeeper to their attaining successful tools to navigate through an inequitable multicultural society" (para. 10). Cultural competency has become a trendy term used by many school leaders and policymakers. But what does it mean to be truly culturally competent? There is no way to master all aspects of every culture, ethnic group, and belief system in a single community, let alone in a country or the world. No one can claim to know what is needed or culturally appropriate for all teachers or all students. Moreover, Bennett (2006) notes that most definitions of cultural competency lack consistency.

Given these challenges, what we can learn from these educational leaders is that a practice of cultural consciousness emerges as school leaders remain reflective and aware of the dynamics of power, committed to constantly examining how interactions and biases may inhibit or enhance an experience for others. An important part of this practice includes looking at the stereotypes we hold and examining how and when we began to think this way, what triggers these thoughts, and how we can expose them so as to eliminate them from our work with teachers and young people.

Ultimately, each individual must choose whether to make the effort to acknowledge the biases, values, and beliefs that may impact leadership and instructional practices. Only by recognizing such influences can one make fair and equitable choices as a community leader, teacher, or instructional supervisor. Self-reflection supports cultural competency by recalling the details of a teaching experience, connecting with the feelings this memory invokes, and evaluating the experience to distill new knowledge and incorporate it into practice (Sewall, 2009; Zepeda, 2007). Through self-reflection, we come to understand the ethnocentrism that results from the biases and judgment within us (Fox, 2005). Brown (2009) asserted:

> critical inquiry involves the conscious consideration of the moral and ethical implications and consequences of schooling practices on students. Self-reflection adds the dimension of deep examination of personal assumptions, values, and beliefs. Critical reflection merges the two terms and involves the examination of personal and professional belief systems, as well as the deliberate consideration of the ethical implications and impact of practice. (p. 95)

We are not neutral beings; we have biases that we must learn to identify and regulate (Lichtman, 2010). Culturally competent instructional leaders practice awareness of the self and the context and emphasize knowing their teachers to monitor this bias and prevent it from limiting their effectiveness through judgments, assumptions, or expectations that one teacher will be just like another. This study provides examples of how leaders conduct their work while reviewing their own biases. These leaders developed an ability to think critically about themselves and their own work, while encouraging teachers to be self-critical in their own classrooms. While this work is indicative of culturally competent leadership in other fields as well, the work of a culturally competent instructional supervisor supports the tasks charged of all

school leaders.

Little educational leadership literature exists in the area of succession planning, the process that prepares schools for transitions in leadership by connecting position openings (e.g., for a principal or assistant principal) with the right person for the job (Bengtson, 2010; Fink & Brayman, 2004; Parylo, 2012). The culturally competent leaders in this study identified a need for additional training within educational preparation programs to prepare a new cadre of school administrators to work in changing and increasingly diverse contexts.

Research studies on principal preparation often criticize educational leadership programs for bias and exclusion of women (Brown & Irby, 2003; Logan, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1985; Sklra, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000), and for privileging male-dominated discourse (Grogan, 1999; Iselt, Brown, & Irby, 2001). Brown and Irby (1995) indicated:

> current theories taught in administrative preparation programs are negatively impacting the field because they (a) do not reflect currently advocated leadership practice [or organizational paradigms]; (b) do not address the concerns, needs, or realities of women; (c) perpetuate the barriers that women encounter; (d) do not prepare women or men to create and work effectively in inclusive systems; (e) assume that male experiences can be generalized to explain all human behavior; and (f) are not applicable to all students and are especially irrelevant to females. (pp. 42-43)

Though only three of the 11 study participants were women, their voices provide an important contribution to the literature on leadership preparation. Leaders in this study shared their perspectives on what principal preparation programs can do to improve the preparation of the next generation of school leaders. For example, Tatiana suggested that preparation programs "need to have more information, classes, or programs for teaching differentiation because

teachers don't know how to differentiate."

Some leaders shared feelings of disappointment when describing the quality of their preparation for educational leadership. Tatiana, Matthew, and Theo used phrases such as "My admin prep and my teaching prep were minimal and inadequate for the job," and "we need to have supervision as part of the conversation." If leaders do not learn to lead until they reach a position of school leadership, what does that say about preparation curricula? Matthew advised a need to:

> take instructional supervision serious because I think it's easy in our position not to. It's easy to be an administrator or a manager and not a supervisor. It gets pushed to the back, and I think that we tend to talk to our colleagues about discipline, not supervision. Let's get it part of the conversation.

Participants identified the need to strengthen their preparation for and continued dialogue about instructional supervision practices. Every year teachers prepare to become new educational leaders, yet little literature exists on the preparation of school administrators (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004). Administration preparation programs are called on to prepare school leaders annually, and such programs have an obligation to train leaders in the skills needed for success in diverse contexts (Brown & Irby, 2006; Lopez, 2003). However, institutions of leadership preparation have long been criticized for "how prospective leaders have been selected, weaknesses in the curriculum and pedagogy, and inattention to program effects" (Barnet, 2010, p. xi). The practices of these programs do not necessarily need to focus on social justice, but they must prepare leaders to facilitate what Ladson-Billings (2002) calls "good teaching!"

Leadership preparation programs must respond to the needs of school administrators in

today's changing world (Jean-Marie, 2010). Adapting principal preparation curricula to address the needs of diverse populations is a key to effectiveness and success (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). This study offers an opportunity for programs to adopt what California Health Advocates (2007) have called *cultural humility*. Cultural humility offers preparation for cultural competency. It emphasizes the use of awareness and reflection to understand one's own culture from a broader perspective. "The most serious barrier to culturally appropriate [education] is not a lack of knowledge of the details of any given cultural orientation, but the failure to develop self-awareness and a respectful attitude toward diverse points of view" (California Health Advocates, 2007, paras. 6-7).

Similar to instructional supervision and attending to the professional learning needs of teachers, cultural competence is developmental in nature, requiring leaders to practice self-awareness as a means to gaining greater awareness of others. "Cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period. Both individuals and organizations are at various levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills along the cultural competence continuum" (National Center for Cultural Competency, 2003, p. 6). The literature of instructional supervision should reflect not only the developmental stages of awareness of practice (Glatthorn, 1990; Glickman, 1985; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2005; Zepeda, 2010), but also the stages of self-awareness and awareness of identity characteristics of the teachers whom leaders supervise.

Implications for Future Research

As the role of the administrator continues to evolve, it becomes crucial for programs to remain relevant and current, with an ability to provide best practices in a given context. In her review of principal preparation programs, Parylo (2012) described "calls for redesign and

restructuring" initiatives in principal preparation curricula. School leadership preparation programs, professional learning initiatives, and personal practices would benefit from a shift in focus to cultural humility as a foundation for cultural competence. For "with so many factors to consider, how does one move forward with developing cultural competence without being overwhelmed with the complexity and the dangers of stereotyping, or reifying the culture of others" (California Health Advocates, 2007, para. 6)?

As in other fields (Sumpter & Carthon, 2011), little is known about students' perceptions of integrating cultural competence into the preparation of educational administrators. Though there is an acknowledged need for trained leaders who can lead in a diverse environment, little research has investigated what sort of training is needed and when or how it should be incorporated into educator preparation curricula. Therefore, more research is needed to identify the kinds of training students in such preparation programs need to be prepared to engage teachers during times of demographic change.

Implications for Practice

Our culture is made up of who we are and what we do; culture "is hidden and internal, yet it is what helps shape our behaviors and interactions with others" (California Health Advocates, 2007, para. 2). As the cultures represented in K-12 schools grow increasingly diverse in many parts of the U.S. there is a demand for change in leaders' roles and the work they are asked to accomplish, with increasing importance placed on the cultural competence of K-12 instructional leaders. The findings of this study suggest implications for practice related to the daily work of school supervisors and instructional leaders.

This study illuminated the qualities and practices of culturally competent instructional supervisors as they engage with teachers, providing a very deliberate look at what these leaders

do in the schools. The model used to describe the theory of culturally competent instructional supervisors provides suggestions for improving the process of identifying and selecting future leaders. In light of the need for more research and awareness surrounding school leader succession planning (Bengtson, 2010; Fink & Brayman, 2004; Parylo, 2012), the model presented here provides insight to this population of leaders who are recognized for their skills in culturally competent supervision, have had experience leading in diverse school communities, and have then demonstrated abilities to reflect as a cultural being. Through self-awareness and relationship building, such leaders encourage and guide their teachers to interact with their students in ways that involve cultural responsive pedagogies.

Cultural Concepts Within the Language of Formal Supervision Protocols

Leaders in this study followed the protocols of formal supervision and evaluation required by their school systems. Schools in the state of Georgia typically use of one of two tools to collect observational data on teacher instruction: (1) the Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES), or (2) the Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument (GTOI). The TKES, known as the "Keys," was "developed on behalf of the Georgia Department of Education to assist with the implementation of Georgia's Race to the Top (RT3) plan" (GA Department of Education, 2012b).

Forms of the word "culture" appear three times within the official policy language of the TKES. First, under *Performance Standard 7: Positive Learning Environment*, the TKES cites contemporary research on teacher effectiveness (Weinsten, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003), noting that an effective teacher "seeks to know about the cultures and communities from which students come" (p. 46). The policy specifies further that effective teaching practice "Promotes

respect for and understanding of students' diversity, including – but not limited to – race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or disability" (p. 46).

In the second appearance, under *Performance Standard 10: Communication*, the guidelines state that a teacher who "communicates effectively with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in ways that enhance student learning," is regarded as "culturally competent" (GADOE, 2012, p. 49). The language of the policy describes an effective teacher as one who "Listens and responds with cultural awareness, empathy, and understanding to the voice and opinions of stakeholders (parents, community, students, and colleagues)" (p. 49). The glossary of terms did not define culture, cultural awareness, or culturally competent actions for teachers (GADOE, 2012, p. 80). In both instances, the policy handbook acknowledged that teachers rated exemplary in this area often serve as leaders within their school and district, modeling for others what to do in their own classrooms. The Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument (GTOI) is an older tool that was created to help systematize the evaluation of teaching performance as part of the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP) (Pioneer RESA, p. 24). The GTOI does not include any form of the word "culture" in its official policy language.

The participant who worked in a private religious school in Mississippi used an internal document for evaluating teachers, as he was not subject to state requirements. The participant working in the state of Washington used an instrument adopted by the school system governing his public school; however, his system was undergoing changes related to teacher evaluation in the next school year. His district had been using an evaluation instrument similar to that of Georgia's GTOI, which required several short observations with one or two longer observations taking place throughout the year, depending on the evaluation cycle. The new system to be

adopted for the 2013-2014 school year established a four-tier process that provided a more comprehensive look at teaching performance. The instruments used by these school leaders attempt to tie accountability to teacher professional growth using the language of leadership standards.

All of the participants reported that they were required to follow a specific framework for formal and informal supervision and evaluation established by the school district or governing body for their school. However, several participants asserted that they employed unique and individualized processes when working with teachers, ranging from having little interaction to holding one-on-one weekly meetings. Participants identified actions performed in their roles as instructional leaders that they regarded as culturally responsive and relevant. In Table 4, the culturally competent practices reported by the participants in this study are presented alongside their corresponding policy standard. Each practice corresponds directly to a function listed in the *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: 2008* (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 19). I have included a description of each standard's function to illustrate its connections to leader practices. Table 4 thus connects the "on the ground" actions of the culturally competent instructional leaders in this study to the corresponding national standards for educational leadership.

Connecting Participant Practices to Leadership Standards

Accredited post-secondary programs in educational leadership align their curriculum with the *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: 2008*, an update of the 1996 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's (ISLLC) *Standards for School Leaders* (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). These leadership standards "have been shown to be essential tools in developing effective pre-service training programs for principals. Therefore, incorporating clear

Table 4

Educational Leadership Policy Standards and Participants' Culturally Competent Instructional Leadership Practices

ISLLC Standard	Culturally Competent Leader Practice
1. Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders	• Asks teachers to lead in the supervision process • Develops action plans with teachers • Checks/reviews lesson plans regularly • Provides exposure for students and teachers (going outside context for a lesson/observation; controlled chaos) • Checks log of guardian correspondence
2. Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth	• Employs differentiation • Facilitates book studies • Uses purposeful grouping • Offers ongoing mentoring/Mentors teachers with new teachers helping them to talk to parents • Practices supervision as supportive tool, not a "Gotcha" • Asks teachers to consider historical contexts to connect with students • Rides bus or conducts poverty simulations
3. Ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment	• Guards against developing some type of stereotype • Supports changing the classroom space • Maintains visibility in classrooms, hallways, and teacher team meetings • Helps with any job needed in the school
4. Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding, to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources	• Builds relationships with teachers; spends time with teachers • Embraces the whole of an individual • Refrains from making assumptions or judgments about others • Connects openly and honestly with teachers • Remains careful of becoming too personal with teachers
5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner	• Practices self-awareness and reflexivity • Encourages teachers to practice self-awareness and reflexivity
6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context	• Considers how power and positionality influence their work with teachers and students • Encourages teachers to think critically about their own bias and positionality

and consistent standards and expectations into a statewide education system can be a core predictor of strong school leadership" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, pp. 3-4).

In terms of the educational practice of leaders, this study demonstrated how these participants enacted the national standards in their practices, particularly as related to diversity and cultural competency. As illustrated in Table 4, the study showed how these particular leaders created school cultures that facilitated culturally competent supervision practices. It is essential to know more about what leaders do and why they do what they do, such as spending time building relationships or working with teachers through to build understanding of their students' cultures. The leaders in this study have built learning cultures in their schools to create safe environments for risk-taking. By engaging in reflective practices with teachers, these leaders have incorporated culturally relevant pedagogy into their instructional supervision and furthered this work by providing ongoing professional learning opportunities for teachers. By infusing their culturally competent beliefs into their practice as leaders, they model the work they wish to see teachers perform in their classrooms. The result is to move their schools closer to the goal of improving classroom learning for all students. I suggest that the culturally competent instructional supervision practices used by the participants correlate to each of the six standards adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA).

Concluding Thoughts

The practices enacted by the leader participants within this study speak to Ladson- for any and all students, and I argue, any and all adults. During the last interview for this study, I was struck by the words of a participant who commented on what he had learned as a result of participating in the study. Reflecting on our interview, he noted, provided him with insights

Billings' (1995) early work, culturally competent work in schools is "just good teaching" related to his new school context. Theo shared:

> what I realized—and to be honest with you, I just realized it, meaning this interview helped me realize it—the difference between when I'm the principal of [his former inner-city high school], I am firsthand working with teachers and kids to support those kids that are right in front of me. And I'm having a direct effect on their lives. When you work at a rich, affluent school like I currently am, it's not as direct, but what your work then can be is to help the rich, affluent, smart, future leaders that are right in front of you, help them to understand that they have a responsibility, and that it is to make the world a better place for all the people who need it. And they're not the ones that need it. So it's a different route for the same kind of goal. Because if you don't do that then you don't feel needed, and you feel like it doesn't matter if you're a great teacher or a crummy teacher, I'm still going to college because I'm an affluent White kid. So as the principal, the different question is: How do I get these future leaders who get a perfect score on their SAT and go to Stanford to make a difference in the lives of kids and adults in neighborhoods that need it?

School leaders in this study used their understanding of differences to guide their work with students when they were teachers, and now employ these same skills as they instructionally supervise teachers in their respective schools. Imbued with a heightened sense of awareness and reflection, these school leaders championed Freire's (1970) call for consciousness by acting as those who "authentically commit themselves to the people" (p. 60). By pursuing social justice in their own leadership practice these school leaders demonstrate not only competence, but cultural

consciousness as well. Such school leaders, who delve deeply into self-reflexive practice and encourage their teachers to do the same, represent culturally conscious instructional supervisors.

As educational leaders guide our schools into a more diverse future, they will undoubtedly face new people, lead teachers to reach students, and be aware of how differences in identity manifest in the classroom and within their dialogue about teaching. The findings from this study can inform ongoing professional learning for and preparation of school instructional leaders. Critically conscious, reflexive leaders examine personal and professional beliefs, attitudes, values, and morals regarding deficits, inequities, and imbalances of power, then take action to discontinue this imbalance and inequity (Brown, 2006; Woods & Hauser, 2013). This research enhances our understanding of what culturally conscious instructional supervisors do in diverse school settings, and how they help teachers work with student populations whose backgrounds are often very different from those of their teachers. The study not only illuminates what these leaders do, but identifies as well the various qualities they possess that assist them in accomplishing this work. By broadening our understanding of what it takes to be a culturally conscious instructional supervisor, we can expand the use of the educational activities and practices that foster the success of culturally diverse students.

So where am I and what have I learned at the end of this particular study? Being culturally competent is a trajectory, a goal. It is a course, and each of these leaders remains at different places on the course as they move forward working in their schools. What I take away from the experience is the need for leaders to be aware of the process and the journey. It is not a race; it is a marathon.

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APPENDIX A

Letter to Educational Professionals Seeking Study Participants

Dear Dr. _____.

Thank you for your continued support of my doctoral program goals as I enter the dissertation data collection phase. I am writing to ask for recommendations of school leaders (e.g., principals and assistant principals) to be interview participants in my study. I am currently seeking a school leaders who:

- Formally supervise teachers;
- Work in a K-12, public or private school setting with high levels of student diversity; and,
- Considered effective supervisors who use culturally competent practices.

Such culturally competent practices include:

1. Display behaviors and attitudes of interest in working with teachers to integrate ideas of equality, civil rights, and multiple cultures into content delivery and knowledge construction;
2. Participate with and lead teachers to discuss aspects of identity and how difference within and among identity enhance or inhibit classroom engagement and learning;
3. Build close, trusting, working relationships with teachers enabling them to discuss social justice issues of race, gender, ethnicity, SES, gender identity, orientation, religion, etc.;
4. Be viewed or considered by teachers as a collaborator, rather than only as a supervising evaluator;
5. Encourage teachers to connect with students' prior knowledge, values, and experiences, and models incorporating these notions into all aspects of the curricula; and,
6. Seek opportunity to engage teachers through professional development specifically targeted to surface issues of stereotypes and dynamics of power.

Through this study, I aim to understand more about the culturally competent skills used by the participating school leaders, where these skills were learned, how these skills are modeled with teachers in practice, and what elements are needed for creating an environment conducive to these practices.

Any recommendations you can offer to me at this time would be wonderful. Please email me names and email address contacts for your suggested study participants. I seek to make initial contact with potential participants as soon as possible, so thank you for your immediate attention.

Thank you again for your time and efforts. I look forward to talking to you soon.

Sincerely,
Lauren Moret
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APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol for Instructional Supervisors

Name/Position of Interviewee:	Time/Date/Location of Interview:	Other:

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. I know how busy you are, and I really appreciate the time you are taking to sit down and meet with me. The purpose of me being here with you today and over the coming weeks is to learn more about your beliefs and practices about instructionally supervising teachers in a way that promotes cultural relevancy in the classroom.

At any time in the interview if a question or story becomes uncomfortable or for whatever reason, you can choose not to answer any question or discontinue the interview at any time without any penalty or risk whatsoever. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Classroom diversity has grown dramatically over the past decade, while teacher diversity has not. I know in my classroom, I saw great amounts of diversity in and out of the room during every bell period. I had such a different background and upbringing than my students and by taking extra measures to connect with them on levels related to their background and interests, family life, and personal culture, I was able to get to know them better and tailor my delivery of instruction more effectively. You were recommended as someone who leads and guides teachers to consider this type of work, I want to know how you connect your instructional supervision practices to culturally relevant teaching practices.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

This first set of questions focuses on your background in education, your school, and demographics of your school's population.

1. Tell me about your career in education as a teacher and administrator.
    a. How long have you been in education?
        i. Probing questions for clarification:
            1. How long have you been in this district? School? Position?
            2. How did you come to choose education as your profession?
            3. What guided you to become a school leader/administrator?

2. Describe your school for me.

3. Tell me about the strategic focus of the school this year.
    a. Is this a new goal or was this goal established prior to this year?

   b. How do these goals relate to cultural diversity?
   c. What will you use as evidence that you achieved these goals?

4. Tell me about how or why culturally relevant leadership, in this context, culturally relevant instructional supervision, is important to you.
   a. How does culturally relevant instructional supervision help you to achieve your strategic goal(s)?

5. Has your instructional supervision practice has changed given the diversity in your school. Tell me about that.

This next set of questions focuses on instructional supervision of teaching staff and supporting teachers to meet the needs of all students.

1. Tell me about how you learned to instructionally supervise teachers.
   a. Were there differences between what you learned during your preparation to become a school leader vs. what you learned once you were on the job?
   b. What are some of those different skills and abilities that you learned along the way?

2. Tell me about your practice of instructional supervision as it relates to leading teachers in a culturally relevant manner.

3. Walk me through a typical supervision experience with a teacher.

4. Tell me about professional development offered to your teachers here that has a focus on culturally relevant instructional delivery.
   a. How do you link this professional development to your instructional supervision?
   b. Possible follow-up – Who offers this PD?: internal vs. external to the district.

5. Think of a time when you were providing instructional support to a teacher related to cultural diversity. Tell me about this experience.
   a. What helps you to engage with your teachers?

6. Tell me about your practices, skills, and abilities that enable you to guide teachers to reach diverse learners.

7. Tell me about a time when you helped a teacher "see" an inherent bias affecting the delivery of instruction.
   a. What did you do to instructionally support this teacher?

This last set of questions focuses on relationship building with staff you instructionally supervise.

1. Tell me about your process of getting to know a teacher as an instructional supervisor.
    a. What do you continue to do to build rapport with that teacher?

2. How have you seen your relationships with teachers evolve over time as you've become more skilled as an instructional supervisor?

3. Tell me about a time when you guided a teacher through discussion to deeply consider an aspect of their practice and make changes for greater student gains.
    a. How did elements of your relationship support or aid in this deep discussion?

4. What would you say are the most important aspects of being an effective instructional supervisor in a diverse school setting?

5. If you could leave every teacher with one or two pieces of advice about how to work with a varied group of learners in the classroom, what would you tell them?

6. What would you like to tell me that we haven't talked about?

Thank you so much for your time. Those are all of the questions I have for us today. Is there anything else that you think I missed or that you would like for me know? If that is all, then I will go ahead and conclude this interview and turn off the audio recording device. Thank you again for your time with me today. I'm looking forward to learning from you and of your practices of instructional supervision.