

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP IN A CULTURALLY AND  
LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF THE  
PRACTICES OF A HIGH SCHOOL LEADER

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Lewis Madhlangobe, B.Ed., M.Ed.

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Committee Members Approved:

---

Stephen P. Gordon, Chair

---

Clarena Larrotta

---

Jennifer L. Jacobs

---

Miguel A. Guajardo

Approved:

---

J. Michael Willoughby  
Dean of the Graduate College

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Lewis Madhlangobe

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to Odrey and the kids—Shamiso Helen Primrose, Lewis Musa Edwin, and Kundai Audrey Shamiso and to my twin girls Angeline and Angelique whose love drive my working spirit. To my mother—whose love, dedication and support to my development have always motivated me. To Edwin my late brother and his lovely wife Sibulisiwe Vundla, this is for you. To my little sister Helen Nyarai who stood by me under all hardships. I also dedicate this work to my friend and mentor since 1984, Dr. Godwin Hungwe whose love for teaching Mathematics is profound.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP IN A CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF THE PRACTICES OF A HIGH SCHOOL LEADER**

by

Lewis Madhlangobe, B.Ed., M.Ed.

Texas State University-San Marcos

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**SUPERVISNG PROFESSOR: STEPHEN P. GORDON**

The purpose of this study was to describe how a culturally responsive leader conducts her leadership role with teachers, parents and students in a culturally diverse high school. Surveys and interviews in the preliminary study helped to select a leader who best exemplified culturally responsive leadership (CRL) from a pool of ten leaders. The participants in the primary study included six teachers, nine parents, and the leader from a high school in Central Texas. In the primary study, I collected data through focus group interviews with teachers and parents, and additional interviews with the leader (Faith). I also shadowed Faith three times and observed participating teachers three times each. During the shadowing sessions and classroom observations I collected artifacts related to both CRL and culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) respectively. Follow-up interviews after classroom observations and shadowing sessions helped clarify information collected. Examination of all the qualitative data from the participants

revealed that Faith's culturally responsive leadership was influenced by the context, her understanding of CRL, and her philosophy of education. Her CRL included six themes: (a) building positive relationships, (b) being persistent and persuasive, (c) modeling cultural responsiveness, (d) being present and communicating, (e) fostering cultural responsiveness among others and (f) caring for others. Faith performed these leadership behaviors through relating to *people*, promoting *culturally responsive curriculum*, and creating a culturally responsive *school environment*. Findings also revealed that Washington High School is undergoing a process of change leading toward a culturally responsive system. Noted outcomes included students' academic, social, and personal growth and development. These findings support the conclusion that creating positive institutional relationships is crucial to effective leadership in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. Recommendations for further study include replicating this study with a number of culturally responsive leaders and their students.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Research on effective schools consistently emphasizes the significant role of the school leader in determining the success of schools (Andrews & Sonder, 1987; Blase & Blase, 2004; Fears, 2004). Effective leadership is a process of facilitating those activities that promote good teaching and learning processes (Blase & Blase, 2004; Fears, 2004). “The United States is currently experiencing a rapid increase in ethnic and cultural diversity and along with it, a concomitant resistance to these changes” (LaNier, 2006, p. 1). In the U.S., students of color consistently perform lower than their counterparts from the mainstream (Gay, 2000; Fears, 2004; Texas Education Agency, 2005-6). Reasons for such tendencies may be traced to variables such as the school environment, teaching methods, curriculum design, student motivation, evaluation methods, school leadership and educational policies. One expectation of society is that education institutions should find ways of responding to such inequality (Freire, 1998; Banks & McGee, 1999; Gay, 2005; LaNier, 2006). However, little research has been carried out to establish how culturally competent leaders can help teachers to improve the teaching-learning process. Comparisons of schools with high student performance with those with low performing students show that leadership can make a difference (Andrews & Sonder, 1987; Fears, 2004).

After years of work on structural changes—standards and testing and ways of holding students and schools accountable—the education policy world



has now turned attention to the people charged with making the system work... no where is the focus on the human element in public education more prevalent than in the renewed recognition of the importance of strong and effective principal leadership. (Fears, 2004, p. 1)

A focus on how leaders respond to diversity may help improve schools (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1984; Arbuckle, 2000; Dunn, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2007). Generally, studies on effective schools show that their leaders do the following:

1. Facilitate the development of a shared school vision and establish clear strategies needed to create the desired reforms needed in their schools (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1984; Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002; Fears, 2004).
2. Set clear educational goals, explain to both staff and students that they are expected to excel, and participate in the instructional program as learners (Hersey & Blanchard, 1984; Institute for Educational Leadership, 1986; Blase & Blase, 2004).
3. Advocate, nurture, and sustain a school culture and instructional program that is conducive to student learning and teacher professional growth (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996).
4. Collaborate with families and the community in order to respond effectively to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilize community resources to achieve goals (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996; Hofstede, 2003; Banks, 2004).
5. "Support and facilitate teacher efforts to implement change" (Fears, 2004).

6. Understand, respond to and influence the larger political, social, economic and cultural contexts that impact their schools (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996; Gay, 2000; Hofstede, 2003; Guerra & Nelson, 2007).
7. Show interest in using and applying research to improve their schools.
8. Have great love for children in their schools.
9. Possess good conflict resolution skills (Blase & Blase, 2004; Fears, 2004; Gordon, 2004).
10. Practice their leadership duties with integrity and fairness, and follow acceptable ethics (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996).
11. Are reform advocates, good communicators, and have excellent public relations skills (Stronge, 2006).
12. Possess good teacher training skills (Malone & Caddell, 2000).

More research is needed on how effective school leaders facilitate effective teaching and learning for culturally and linguistically diverse students. This study is intended to add to the knowledge base on this topic.

### Background of the Study

“Cultural differences between educators and culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students can have negative effects on the education of CLD learners” (Chamberlain, 2005, p. 195). In the United States, demographic imbalances exist between the percentage of White administrators and teachers in education and the nation’s students (Hodgkinson, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Chamberlain, 2005; Texas Education Agency, 2005-6; Saifer & Barton, 2007). The increasing diversity in our

schools calls for a new approach to multicultural educational leadership in which leaders exhibit culturally responsive organizational practices, behaviors and competences as tools for addressing issues that arise from leading culturally diverse institutions (Freire, 1980). Data obtained from the Texas Education Agency shows that there are currently 7,416 principals in the State of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2005-6). Of these, 65.6% are White; 19.4% are Hispanic; 10.8% are African American; and the remaining 4.2% represent Native Americans and Asians combined. There are 311,654 teachers in the schools of Texas. Of this total, 68.5% are White; 20.8% are Hispanic; 9.3% are African American; and the remaining 1.4% are the Native Americans and Asians combined. The same imbalances exist in positions such as Assistant Principals, Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents (Texas Education Agency, 2005-6).

Current statistics show that 4,594,942 students are enrolled in Texas schools (Public Education Information Management System, 2006). Of this total, 14% are African American, 46% are Hispanic, 36% are white, and 4% are Native American, Asian Pacific Islanders, and others combined (Texas State Data Center and Office of the Demographer, University of Texas-San Antonio, 2007). These statistics show that, when combined, African American and Hispanic students form the majority of the students in Texas.

The TEA academic excellence indicator system for the elementary school level shows that during the 2005-06 period, African American and Hispanic students performed below their White counterparts. For example, using the *All Tests* indicator, both African American and Hispanic students who sat for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade examinations during the 2005-2006 academic year performed at 40% and 46%, respectively, compared

to the national average of 58%. On the other hand, White students performed at 75% compared to the national average of 58% (Texas Education Agency, 2005-6). “Statistics also show that on most education indicators (including school enrollment, grade retention, high school completion, and post secondary enrollment), language minority youth lag behind their peers who speak only English at home” (Saifer & Barton, 2007, p. 24). Thus, White students perform far above the national average as compared to African American and Hispanic students. Other indicators in which students of color perform lower than their mainstream counterparts include homework and classroom participation (Saifer & Barton, 2007). Statistics also show that dropout rates among African Americans and Hispanic students are higher than those for the White and Native American students. According to Gay (2000),

Significant changes are needed in how African American, Asian, Latino, and Native American students are taught in U.S. schools. Two characteristics of their current achievement patterns highlight this imperative. One is the *consistency of performance patterns* among ethnic groups across different indicators and measures of school achievement. The other is the variability of achievement of subjects of individuals within ethnic groups. These characteristics suggest that there is a need for systematic, holistic, comprehensive, and particularistic reform interventions, simultaneously. (p. xiii)

The majority of principals and teachers of these students do not come from the same cultural backgrounds as the students who are performing below the national average (Texas Education Agency, 2005-6). In addition, a number of studies over the last decade

indicate that students' school performance may be linked to lack of congruence between the students' cultures and the norms and values embedded in the expectations and practices in the schools (Cummins, 1986; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Dunn, 2000; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2002). However, there is little guidance for school leaders on how they should help teachers conduct lessons for students from cultural backgrounds different from their own (Ward & Cross, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Saifer & Barton, 2007). The pressure to succeed with students from diverse backgrounds continues to grow stronger, not only because of the introduction of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), but also because the number of students of color in schools continues to increase (Delpit, 1995; Dunn, 2000; Saifer & Barton, 2007). Research indicates that in schools, when members of the mainstream cultural group interact with those from the minority groups, those from the mainstream do so from a position of power and privilege. Hence those from the minority groups will likely be at a disadvantage if any culture clashes occur (Garcia & Dominguez, 1997; Gay, 2000; Bennet, 2002; Chamberlain, 2005).

### The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to critically examine and describe how a culturally responsive school leader performs her leadership roles in a culturally and linguistically diverse high school. In this study I used grounded theory to guide the research.

The foundational question that the grounded theory approach seeks to answer is "What theory emerges from systematic comparative analysis and is grounded in the fieldwork so as to explain what has been described and is observed?" (Patton, 2002, p.

125). By finding answers to this question, grounded theory focuses on understanding how participants from social research understand and define a lived phenomenon (Patton, 2002). “It looks at how ‘variables’ are grounded—given meaning and played out in subjects’ lives.... Their meanings and actions take priority over researchers’ analytic interests and methodological technology” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 524). As a research approach, grounded theory has widely become an approach specific to qualitative inquiry (Glaser, 2000). Throughout any qualitative research process, the grounded theory approach allows researchers to develop analytic interpretations of the data to focus on further data-collection which will be used to inform and refine the emerging themes and categories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Grounded theory gives voice to the participants in the research, “representing them as accurately as possible, discovering and acknowledging how respondents’ views of reality conflict with their own, and recognizing art as well as science in the analytic product and process” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 250). Research based on the grounded theory approach uses first hand knowledge to interpret the phenomenon under study. According to Guba & Lincoln (1994), grounded theory accepts the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the respondent and the researcher and aims at interpreting and understanding the meanings that the respondents hold. “One of the strengths of qualitative methods is the inductive, naturalistic inquiry strategy of approaching a setting without predetermined hypotheses. Rather, understanding and theory emerge from the fieldwork and experiences and are grounded in the data” (Patton, 2002, p. 129).

Grounded theory methods do not detail data-collection techniques, but, as they go through each step, they refine the previous step and collect new data for further analysis

(Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As a researcher, I was able to discover how a culturally competent school leader enacted her leadership roles by observing and interacting with that leader, teachers, students, and parents in the school and community setting. Blumer (1978) sees accuracy of data interpretation as best achieved when the researcher is immersed in the empirical world:

The empirical social world consists of on-going group life and one has to get close to this life to know what is going on in it. The metaphor that I like is that of lifting the veils that obscure or hide what is going on. The task of scientific research study is to lift the veils that cover the area of group life that one purposes to study... The veils are lifted by getting close to the area and by digging deep in it through careful study. (p. 38)

Therefore, grounded theory gives power to research by allowing the researcher to have a more complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied by encouraging researchers to use flexible strategies to collect meanings of data. The researcher moves between the data and the respondents to interpret the phenomenon being studied. A fuller understanding of the data will help the researcher to develop clear guidelines from which to construct an explanatory framework for understanding the meaning of events, actions and words (Schwandt, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

### Theoretical Basis of the Study

This study was grounded in a combination of social constructivist and transformational frameworks. The social constructivist framework of knowing states that effective learning unfolds in the direction of culturally appropriate teaching practices (Vygotsky, 1978; Billings, 1995; Gay, 2000; Chan, 2003). The social constructivist

framework of knowing attempts to understand how people in a particular setting construct their reality, their beliefs and the resultant effects of their behaviors with those that they interact with.

Transformational leadership encourages continuous evaluation of the organizational situation and then recommends that leadership should move in to change the current framework so that it meets the current needs of its members (Burns, 1979). A transformational leader articulates an appealing vision about what the organization should look like and how it may serve related stakeholders and customers effectively, stimulating an organizational culture that encourages creativity and innovation members and modeling ways of doing things (Leithwood, 1994). In this study, I wanted to understand how principals who lead schools with diverse populations of students and teachers go about influencing teaching-learning processes so that all students benefit equally.

### Research Question

The overarching question that guided this study is: How does a culturally responsive leader of a culturally diverse school enact his or her leadership roles with teachers, students, and parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds? During the preliminary study, I asked participants to tell me if there were any other questions they thought my study should ask in order to capture enough data to describe how leadership in a culturally diverse school is enacted. Their feedback helped to improve my research questions. This approach synchronizes with grounded theory, which encourages researchers to continuously refine their approaches according to the findings that emerge from each step of the investigation. The approach also agrees with



interpretive theory, which suggests that participants' interpretations should be built into the process for the study to create multiple ways of knowing.

### Significance of the Study

The primary significance of this study is demonstrated by the data that reveals that the school communities in the U.S. are rapidly becoming culturally and linguistically diverse, and hence require different leadership and teaching skills (Lindsey, Roberts, & Jones, 2005). Leaders of schools in Texas and across the country need to be cognizant of the culturally responsive leadership proficiencies that can help their institutions meet the challenges of diversity. Currently, there is little information available on culturally responsive leadership in schools. Findings from this study have the potential for adding more literature to the small body of knowledge on culturally responsive leadership in schools. Principals and teachers hopefully will be encouraged to use findings from this study to inform their practice. School leaders may also use the findings from this study to benefit students in their schools. Results of the study have the potential of helping to inform policy development by providing a deeper understanding of how leadership can be influenced by context. Teaching approaches and teachers' staff development hopefully will benefit from the description of the practices of a culturally responsive school leader. Researchers who will read this dissertation will hopefully be able to identify gaps in the research and to do further research that will help to continue to develop theories on culturally responsiveness.

## My Beliefs, Values and Personal Motivation for Carrying out the Study

The primary advantage of a study co-oriented by both the grounded and interpretive theories is that it permits an explicit focus on the researcher's personal experiences combined with those of the interviewees (Geertz, 1988; Smith, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

I strongly believe that any school is as good or as bad as those leading it. I also accept the contention that successful school improvement happens when most members in the school community understand the need to change and are ready to embrace change. Therefore, school improvement involves empowering teachers, parents, the larger community, and students (Freire, 1993; Gordon, 2004). During my 26 years as a teacher and leader, I have also embraced the contention that school improvement is achievable when school leaders and teachers model good practices, and share ideas of success stories about good leadership and teaching practices they witnessed elsewhere (Dewey, 1933). Successful schools that I have seen during my 26 years as a teacher and principal are those in which leaders apply strategies that best fit the school's context and particular needs (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Harris, 2002; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2007).

My motivations for carrying out this study originate from my experiences as a student, a teacher, and principal. As a student, my experiences can be divided into three phases: first, in elementary school I was in a school where most of the students were from the same district of Chibi, where we spoke the same language, shared the same cultural values and beliefs, and somehow were almost all related; second, we moved to a small

mining and farming town where my class was largely immigrant children; and third I was sent back to my rural home village and I continued at my first school. During the first three grades at elementary school in Chibi, my name always appeared among the top five students on the academic roll of honor each semester. My parents were used to being invited to the prize giving ceremonies at the school each semester.

However, when we moved to a small town called Hartley in 1970, the situation was different. The town itself had developed because of the mining and farming activities that went on around it. The majority of the students in the school and in my class were children of immigrants from neighboring countries, including Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi. My fourth grade teacher himself was a Mozambican immigrant who had come to what was then Rhodesia in search of employment opportunities. The teacher identified more with the language and cultural practices of the majority of the students in the class than he did with me. Whenever I stood up to participate in class the students and the teacher laughed at my accent and dialect. I was the only Karanga speaking student in the group. They also laughed at the examples that I gave during my participation. At such an early age, I realized that when teachers explained concepts using curricular materials, examples and methods that matched my socio-cultural background experiences, I made quick connections with the content being taught. On the other hand, when teachers used examples outside my lived experiences, I struggled to understand some concepts, and I withdrew from participation. Although not all unfamiliar examples made me struggle, I sometimes felt that some of my teachers did not accept my ways of knowing. Furthermore, they indicated their attitudes toward me in the way they commented on my written work, through their verbal comments during class participation and through their

body language. An attitude of some of my teachers was that my ways of knowing were meant for low class, poor or ordinary rural citizens. I also understood that, although they accepted some of my examples, they did not give them the same weight as those who used examples borrowed from urban or European cultures. I noticed something that differentiated my classroom from the rural school and the one in town: my urban teacher never asked the students to clap their hands to acknowledge any contribution that I made, although in my opinion I felt my contributions were important. From then on I tried to speak and act like them, somehow realizing that I had to lose my linguistic identity and ways of knowing to be accepted into the classroom in the urban community. I guess that is what helped me develop the skills and positive attitude I needed to learn other people's languages in order to get accepted. In my new school environment I withdrew from participating in class, and I only participated when I was called upon against my wish. My grades dropped and my name only appeared in the top 20 list of academic achievement. At home, my performance caused a problem for me because my father thought that my performance had gone down due to the fact that I was playing with friends in town. At school, my teacher used to beat me, and he would humiliate me in front of the class for giving *poor or wrong* responses to his questions. I would also get the same punishment for lack of participation in class. I began to play truant and I really wanted to drop out of school and start working on the surrounding farms. When my father discovered this, it infuriated him, and he sent me back to the rural school in Chibi. My own interpretation of all that was happening was that I was being misunderstood, misinterpreted and used.

Back in the rural school I picked up my old level of academics, and for the rest of my elementary school years I was always coming second in class. This surprised me greatly. I had lost faith in my own abilities, and I had started to believe that I was not up to par. My movements between these two school environments made me realize that, although they covered the same concepts in the national syllabus, text books in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) at the time were written in dialects of the people in the region. The difference was that rural textbooks used examples from the rural settings and urban textbooks used urban contexts. The teachers also used examples that were nearer to my experiences as a student, were friendly and never laughed at what I said when I participated in class. They did not see anything strange with my accent and my language.

In Zimbabwe, people from the rural settings where I grew up generally have different cultures compared to those who live in the cities. Our national school curriculum was and still is biased towards urban mainstream cultures. National examination results indicate that students from urban settings perform better than their counterparts from rural areas. However, the students from the city performed lower than students from rural settings in the native language examinations because that examination is heavily biased towards the rural and native cultures of Zimbabwe.

After graduating from high school, I joined Mkoba Teachers College and graduated as an elementary school teacher in December 1983. The college recognized me for my outstanding performance in teaching practice during my student teaching. To begin my teaching career, I was deployed to teach in an urban school in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe. The Midlands province in Zimbabwe is in the center of the country, and it shares borders with five of the seven political provinces of Zimbabwe.

One outstanding characteristic of my classroom was that, of the 65 students who were in my class, there were many who spoke in the different dialects of Zimbabwe and mostly in the two main languages of the country. In addition, the new Zimbabwean government had just passed the Education Act of 1983, which allowed all students who had lost opportunities to go to school because of the apartheid system to go back to school and pick up where they had left off. The group had some students who were much older than the expected age level for their grade. At the end of my first two weeks as a teacher, I was convinced that the teachers' college had not prepared me for the reality of a classroom in Zimbabwe. On the other hand, in order to be given a permanent establishment after the first three years of teaching, my students' grades combined with my teaching approaches had to meet a certain standard. My first two years were a major challenge because my students were not achieving good grades. This brought me into a direct collision with the parents, principal, and especially his assistant principal who thought I needed retraining. They decided to assign me to an experienced teacher who in turn helped me understand that if I wanted to do well with my students, I needed to understand the students as individuals in addition to the theory I had amassed as a student. Also, he advised me to avoid sticking to certain educational policy requirements which dictated that I had to teach all students from the vantage of the Shona culture which was being imposed on the minority groups by the new Zimbabwean government. Allowing students to participate in a mixture of both their indigenous dialects and English as an official language gave positive results, and my students improved their grades. However, whenever there were class observations, I had to discourage my students from code switching when they participated in class.

When I was given an opportunity to lead a school, I used my own experiences to allow teachers to help their students do well. My teaching experience taught me that whenever I use familiar examples students make connections with what I am teaching. Since becoming a principal, my interest has shifted to a desire to know how I can help teachers to teach all students effectively. This study connects me directly with that interest and throughout the study I was eager to find answers to my overarching question.

As a graduate student at Texas State University-San Marcos, I felt excluded in some classes when professors and students ground their examples only in United States and Texan contexts I am not familiar with. I also felt uncomfortable speaking during class if I was not called upon to do so by a professor. During certain classes, I felt ignored whenever I raised my hand to ask questions or make contributions and professors did not call on me to speak. In my culture, it is bad manners for a student to speak unless the professor acknowledges the student.

As a researcher, I have a deep interest in discovering new styles of educational leadership that may help teachers to be culturally responsive. For my bachelors degree I carried out a case study to establish why students from two urban schools received low pass rates in their native language as compared to their rural counterparts. For my masters degree I did a comparative study of the administrative functions of five principals from schools in Zimbabwe compared to five from schools in Mexico City. Cultural responsiveness has always been important to me as a student, teacher, and now as a researcher. This study helped extend my knowledge on the topic and, in addition, will create further opportunities for me to carry out studies in related areas in which I still have unanswered questions.

### Assumptions

This study focused on understanding how culturally responsive leadership is enacted and understood in a culturally diverse school. My assumption was that all participants were going to provide accurate and honest responses to interview questions. During the study, I used observations to collect information that helped me to describe leadership in a culturally and linguistically diverse school. I assumed that the school leader and others acted and spoke in a natural and honest manner. Finally, I carried this study with the assumption that the documents and artifacts that I reviewed from the school as additional sources of information were all trustworthy.

### Limitations

In this study I collected data in part by shadowing the school leader I studied. There are certain meetings that I was not allowed to attend during the study. Since I shadowed the leader for only three days, I may have missed some important data that did not coincide with the shadowing sessions that I had scheduled for my study. There could have been some relevant documents and other data that were not provided to me that would have been relevant for this study.

### Definition of Terms

*Culture*: A group's program for survival in and adaptation to its environment. The cultural program consists of knowledge, concepts, and values shared by group members through systems of communication. Knowledge of the concepts and values determines the level of bonding the individual has with the group.



*Culturally competent leadership:* The actions, behaviors and language of the leader that guide the values and behaviors of individuals so that they are able to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment.

*Culturally diverse school:* A school in which the students and the teachers have different backgrounds, racial and ethnic identities, cultural norms, diverse languages, values, beliefs and prejudices.

*Cultures found in schools:* They include race, ethnicity and language, disabilities and exceptionality, class, gender, religion, disability, and sexual orientation.

*Cultural responsiveness:* Involves using prior experiences, cultural knowledge, frames of references, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students and teachers to make learning and teaching encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the vantage of the students.

*Cultural responsive leading:* A leader's actions, behaviors, and language that are deliberately tailored to help both teachers and students to effectively teach and learn by responding to the needs of diverse students. The concept has a connotation of continuous learning both on the part of the leader and those being lead.

*Culturally responsive leadership in schools:* Refers to those skills demonstrated by educational leaders to influence others to know how to respond to the needs of culturally diverse groups of students.

*Culturally responsive pedagogy:* Includes teaching the whole child by validating and bridging knowledge between lived socio-cultural and school experiences or realities.

*Leadership:* A practice of bringing together diverse groups of people into a common cause by making shared center ideas, principles, and purposes a group focus that provides a powerful motive for following the leadership practices.

*Content integration:* Deliberate actions by teachers to use examples, teaching aids, and content from other subjects and cultures that correspond to the students whom they are teaching at a given time.

*Moral leadership in schools:* A leadership practice of bringing together diverse people into a common cause by making schools covenantal communities through use of common ideas, principles, and purposes as a solemn agreement that is binding to all parties.

*Transactional Leader:* A leader who crystallizes what the people desire, illuminates the rightness of what they desire, and coordinates its achievement; and who goes further to create a vision that is capable of guiding the group towards achieving what is best for the organization. The functions of a transactional leader include involve organizing, coordinating, motivating, and embodying desires of the group.

*School culture:* Is that common way of doing things that serves as a setting to steer people in a common direction, provides a set of norms that define what people should accomplish and how it should be accomplished; and also provides a source of meaning and significances for teachers, students and leaders.

*Transformational leader:* Any leader in a school who articulates an appealing vision about what the organization should look like and how it may serve related stakeholders and customers effectively, stimulating an organizational culture that encourages creativity and innovation members and modeling ways of doing things. Such a leader makes

deliberate moves to change the current framework so that it meets the current needs of its members.

### Summary

This chapter provided a background for this study, described the study's purpose, discussed the theoretical basis, and stated the research question: How does a culturally responsive leader of a culturally diverse school enact his or her leadership roles with teachers, students, and parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds? The significance of the study was discussed, and I stated my beliefs and values as well as my motivation for carrying out this study. Assumptions and limitations of the study were provided, and relevant terms were defined.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Leadership

##### *The Importance of Leadership*

Leadership is often regarded as the single most critical factor that determines the success or failure of organizations (Bass, 1990a). Histories of nations, international organizations, and institutions show that events may be altered drastically by a sudden change in leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 1988; Bass, 1990a; Koestenbaum, 2002; Patterson, Patterson, & Collins, 2002). One important function of leadership is that it provides support for development of values, norms, organizational cultures, diversity and beliefs that enable the success of organizational development (Gardner, 1995; Dunn, 2000; Canabou, 2003; Nahavandi, 2006). Decades of surveys on job satisfaction from the 1930's to recent years illustrate the importance of leadership and report that employees' favorable attitudes toward their supervisors contribute to their job satisfaction, increase their motivation levels and help to improve production in work places (Munson, 1921; Bergen, 1939; Viteles, 1953; Bass, 1960; Veen, 1972; Munson, 1981; Wayne & Ferris, 1988; Bass, 1990b; Burke, 2002; Basadur, 2004; Nahavandi, 2006). A number of studies support the contention that leadership makes a difference in subordinates' work performance, motivation and goal achievement (Basadur, 2004). In education, scholars suggest that principals and teachers as instructional leaders are important variables

that determine school climate and student success (Allen, 1981; Sergiovanni, 2007; Madhlangobe, Johnson, & Gordon, 2008).

Important differences exist among incompetent, competent, and excellent schools and their leaders. Schools managed by incompetent leaders simply don't get the job done. Typically, such schools are characterized by confusion and inefficiency in operation and malaise in human climate.

Student achievement is lower in such schools. Teachers may not be giving a fair day's work for a fair day's pay... Parents may feel isolated from the school. Competent schools, by contrast, measure up to these and other standards of effectiveness. They get the job done in a satisfactory manner.

Excellent schools, however, exceed the expectations necessary to be considered satisfactory. (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 6)

Because leadership in schools deals with a number of stakeholders who may not always agree, school leaders must demonstrate high degrees of political skill to maintain acceptable levels of commitment and consensus for schools to function properly (Sergiovanni, 2007). Leaders must react to situations in their fields to help facilitate necessary organizational adjustments (Bass, 1960; Canabou, 2003; Nahavandi, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2007); they must orchestrate necessary strategies to determine the direction an organization should take to be in line with environmental changes, technological advancements, and changes in population composition and policies (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Hersey, 1997; Dunn, 2000; Gay, 2000; Glickman, et al., 2007). Both theorists and researchers agree that leadership is important, and that the practice of leadership depends

on the organizational context (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Bass, 1990a; Chamberlain, 2005; Nahavandi, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2007). Sergiovanni (2007) emphasizes that,

Schools need special leadership because schools are special places....

Schools also need special leadership because they are staffed by professionals who don't react warmly to the kind of hierarchically based command leadership or hero leadership that characterizes so many other kinds of organizations. (p. 1)

School leadership is unique and important because schools serve young adults and children who in turn will be assigned the responsibility of using their intellectual knowledge, commitment and skills to lead their nation's communities and organizations (Sergiovanni, 2007).

#### *Traditional Definitions of Leadership*

Leadership has been defined as a personality that carries out psychological stimuli on others to condition certain levels of collective responses (Bass, 1990a). Under this definition, leaders must possess some degree of knowledge on how to condition others to gain desired responses; they need to possess specific skills that embody leadership. However, this definition has its limitations; it identifies the leader as the only person who possesses leadership knowledge, and ignores the interactive processes that exist between leaders and subordinates. Such leadership is achieved by domination which resides in using power that overrides the organizational group's collective wishes and goals (Schein, 2004). This definition does not address leadership within diverse contexts.

Munson (1921) defines leadership as "the ability to handle men to achieve the most with the least friction and the greatest cooperation...Leadership is the creative and

directive force of morale” (p. 33). Similarly, Bundel (1930) defines leadership as an art of inducing others to do what one wants them to do. Moore (1927) specifies that leadership is the ability to impress the will of the leader on those led and induce obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation. A critique of such compliance theories suggests that they tend to see leadership as a top down model with little or no contribution from group members (Kemmelmeyer et al., 2003). Compliance leadership therefore sees leading as an act of focusing attention on who is being followed, not on what should be followed (Gay, 2000; Koestenbaum, 2002; Nahavandi, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2007). Basing the definition of leadership on compliance standards considers leaders and their followers as disconnected concerning what common purpose to focus on (Sergiovanni, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2007).

Nahavandi (2006) says leadership is the act of serving others and identifies three elements that define leadership as (1) a group phenomenon; (2) goal directed; (3) creating some form of hierarchy within a group. As a group phenomenon, leadership involves some degree of interpersonal communication between leaders and followers. During interpersonal interactions, therefore, the leader seeks to influence and or persuade the subordinates to take necessary actions to achieve certain goals. Creating a common goal on which the group focuses reduces time wasted on trial and error. Goals define tasks and specify work place behaviors. Hierarchy gives the group the organization that helps them to focus on a common vision and to share ideas (Nahavandi, 2006).

### *Modern Definitions of Leadership*

In defining leadership, earlier theorists and researchers can be differentiated from more recent ones in that earlier researchers and theorists did not consider the interaction between individual and situational variables (Bass, 1990a; Bass, 1990b). Both groups

agree that leadership is a combination of group processes that aim at continuous change or organizational improvement, but modern theorists argue that outstanding leadership is sensitive to the context in which it is exercised (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Kouzes & Posner, 1988; Kouzes & Posner, 1993; Hersey, 1997; Bass, 1990a; Sergiovanni, 2007; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007; Glickman et al., 2007). In the modern definition, leadership is at the nucleus of group processes; therefore, leadership decisions should be influenced by contexts (Hersey, 1997; Hofstede, 2001; Glickman et al., 2007).

Leadership as an action holds the group together, influences decision making and embodies agreed decisions. In school contexts, there is a need for school leaders to use democratic processes to reach students, parents, teachers and all interested parties in powerful ways (Glickman, 1981; Sergiovanni, 2007). Leadership, therefore, is the practice of bringing together diverse groups of people into a common cause by forming ideas with a shared center and shared principles and purposes. A group focus also provides a powerful motive for following the leadership practices (Triandis, 2001; Bennet, 2002; Canabou, 2003; Chamberlain, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2007). In the light of ever-changing demographics in organizations and in schools in particular, there is a need to define leadership to encompass how leadership should be acted out in culturally diverse organizations.

Modern educationists define leadership in various ways, but they agree that societal culture has a significant influence on school organization and leadership because it helps to shape a school leader's thoughts about leading, communicating, teaching and learning (Ezorsky, 1987; Glickman, 1993; Dunn, 2000; Bennet, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2002; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002; Glickman et al., 2007;



Sergiovanni, 2007). Leithwood, et al. (1999) argue that “A comprehensive approach to leadership... is one that explicitly draws leaders’ attention to multiple dimensions of the school organization” (p. 22).

Sergiovanni (2007) believes leadership is a practice defined by schools’ unique contexts, and therefore he contends that it should be seen as that which is being followed or focused on as opposed to a person. This involves conceptualizing leadership as a common vision, purpose, mission or goal followed by members.

There can be no leadership if there is nothing important to follow.

Leadership, in this sense, is more cognitive than interpersonal and the source of authority for leadership practice is based on goals, purposes, values, commitments and other ideas that provide the basis for followership. (p. 2)

Sergiovanni (2007) suggests that leadership is a moral craft, which requires the leader to have strong moral principles and inner characteristics to guide the leader and the followers to achieve successful schooling and teaching. He sees leadership as a process expressed through five leadership roles or skills that include technical, human, educational, symbolic and cultural. According to Sergiovanni (2007), when performing technical duties, leadership involves planning, managing time, defining the organizational structure, and organizing, coordinating and scheduling activities to ensure organizational effectiveness. The leader as human engineer continuously creates workplace relationships and interpersonal competencies that promote effective cooperation and goal attainment. This may involve strategies such as teacher motivation, professional development, team building, coordination, organization, integration and moral support. When performing

their educational role, leaders carry out supervision to improve human performance (Glickman, 1993; Stotko, Pajak, & Goldsberry, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2007), which requires diagnosing teaching-learning problems, suggesting solutions, developing staff, supervising, evaluating and collaboratively developing the curriculum with teachers (Fullan, 2001; Blase & Blase, 2004; Stotko, Pajak, & Goldsberry, 2005; Glickman et al., 2007; Sergiovanni, 2007). During symbolic leadership, leaders model important goals and behaviors (Blase & Blase, 2004).

Leaders should not lose sight of those who execute assignments in order for school goals to be achieved (Glickman, 1993; Dunn, 2000; Glickman, 2002; Gay, 2005; Hall & Hord, 2006). Because leading successful goal achievement teams only happens when each member in the school understands the vision, leaders should understand the individual perspective of leadership and goal achievement (Hord & Hall, 2006; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). School leadership, therefore, involves urging each member of the group to go beyond the routine so that they may break out of the usual routine to produce something that is unique and vibrant to the school (Sergiovanni, 2007).

Four leadership functions emerge from modern definitions of leadership: leaders should (a) help to define and maintain the group structure; (b) help members of the organization to set the goals/vision for the organization; (c) act as moderators during conflicting interests within and from outside the organization; and (d) help members define and clarify how objectives should be achieved. Therefore, the duty of the leader is to facilitate effective communication and group interaction to achieve group cohesion (Kayser, 1994; Gordon, 2004). In the schools of today, a new leadership function which

involves building inclusive organizational cultures and practicing the art of purposing is emerging (Sergiovanni, 2007).

For the purposes of this study, I define “leadership” as a democratic process exercised to encourage willingness from diverse group members to do what is best for the organization, its members and those they serve. Therefore, leaders must acknowledge the importance of group members by paying attention to what they say and to invite them to create a common vision.

Defining leadership this way suggests that leadership *in schools* should perform functions that include (a) fostering a common view of the organization’s vision and mission among all members of the group; (b) equitably distributing organizational resources and opportunities to meet the needs of diverse students and their diverse teachers; and (c) providing conditions that allow teachers and parents to react to the learning needs of diverse students. In short, principals and teachers as educational leaders should act as the nerve center of effective decisions (Bauer, 2003).

#### *Alternative Models of Leadership*

“Leadership looks different—and is different—depending on whether it is experienced in a legislature, on a battlefield, at a rally, on a factory floor or in a school district” (Johnson 1996, as cited in Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 1). Context plays a key role in deciding whether certain approaches to leadership will be effective or not (Vroom & Yetton, 1973; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Hersey, 1997; Hofstede, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2002; Glickman et al., 2007; Sergiovanni, 2007). Although schools share common leadership requirements with other enterprises, they require special leadership because schools must respond to unique realities and politics

that they face (Ladson-Billings & Henry, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2000; Leithwood et al., 2002; Gay, 2005; Stotko, Pajak, & Goldsberry, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2007). This section discusses six alternative models of leadership.

*Managerial leadership.* In managerial leadership, leaders play roles of problem solver and decision maker while the rest of the group is expected to follow the leader's decisions (Bass, 1990a). Managerial leadership tries to ensure that tasks are efficiently completed by employees. Leaders may include persuasive methods such as reasoning logically with subordinates or being assertive and exerting pressure in order to achieve objectives. One characteristic of managerial leadership is that it seeks to be charismatic, with leaders motivating followers and generating high levels of commitment to tasks (Bass, 1990a; Nahavandi, 2006). In managerial leadership, the "leader decides and announces his decisions without consulting subordinates beforehand" (Bass, 1990a, p. 437). Management and leadership are seen as overlapping domains of activity, each concept adding meaning to the other. Management without leadership encourages an uninspired style that maintains the status quo (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003). Similarly, leadership without management encourages a disconnected style that promotes arrogance and isolation. "Management leadership assumes that the focus of leaders ought to be on functions, tasks, or behaviors and if these functions are carried out competently the work of others in the organization will be facilitated" (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 14). Therefore, if individuals complete their tasks successfully, it will facilitate the work of others. In schools, if teachers accomplish their teaching assignments with groups at one grade level, the teachers who receive the same group the following year will find it easier to carry out their teaching assignment. Compared to managers, effective leaders are

expected to facilitate interpersonal interaction and positive working relations; they should promote organizational structure and the tasks that should be accomplished within organizations (Bass, 1990a). Some of their tasks include planning, evaluating, organizing and directing operations (Bass, 1990a; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood et al., 2002). Managers use positional authority to plan, investigate, coordinate, evaluate, supervise, recruit staff, and represent the organization (Bass, 1990a). The difference between managers and leaders is that managers do not lead; leadership creates and changes organizational cultures while management acts within a given culture (Bass, 1990a; Schein, 2004).

Managing capabilities, (Foley & Conole, 2003; Callan, 2005) include change management, development and management of people, performance management, strategic management, organization vision and direction, and innovation and risk taking. The managerial model of leadership clearly is associated with the traditional definitions of leadership discussed previously.

*Instructional leadership.* The emerging knowledge base about instructional leadership provides clues that principals and teachers together can achieve the shared vision and commitment which is necessary for school improvement (Pajak, 1989; Blase & Blase, 2004). One characteristic of good instructional leadership is that it should be geared towards addressing the needs and concerns the teachers and their students (Pajak, 1989; Glickman, 1993; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001; Blase & Blase, 2004). Instructional leadership implies that the attention of leaders is on the “behaviors of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students” (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 8). Results from decades of research on instructional leadership and

instructional supervision show that they have the potential for bringing about effective innovations in such areas as teaching skills, professional development, and instructional technology (Glickman, 1981; Pajak, 1989; Leithwood et al. 1999; Leithwood et al., 2002; Blase & Blase, 2004). A study by Pajak (2000) reveals that “the goal of supervision focuses on helping teachers discover and construct professional knowledge and skills...[in contrast to] reinforcing specific prescribed teacher behavior and skills” (p. 318).

Instructional leadership has been called by other names, such as instructional supervision, professional development leadership and pedagogical leadership (Goldhammer, 1969; Cogan, 1973; Glickman, 1993; Leithwood et al., 2002; Glickman et al., 2001). Regardless of its label, instructional leadership aims at improving student achievement through continuous professional development for teachers (Goldhammer, 1969; Glickman, 1993; Gordon, 2005; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Blase & Blase, 2004). Functions of instructional leadership include defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, addressing staff needs and promoting school climate (Leithwood et al., 1999). Instructional leadership therefore aims at providing teachers with current information about students they teach, and it helps teachers articulate and document how their classroom teaching relates to the school vision (Cogan, 1973; Glickman, 1993; Glickman et al., 2004; Gordon, 2005; Nolan & Hoover, 2004).

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) state that instructional supervision is a moral enterprise in which teachers work together as colleagues using peer supervision and mentoring to improve their practice. Instructional leadership helps teachers to view the mission of the school as a moral obligation. Research on instructional leadership shows a

connection between supervisory actions of the principal and “the professional growth of teachers, teacher commitment, involvement, and innovativeness, on one hand, and increases in student learning, on the other hand” (Blase & Blase, 2004, p. 10). Five instructional supervision tasks include direct assistance, group development, staff development, curriculum development and action research (Glickman, 1981). Pajak (1989) identified 12 supervision practices that benefit practitioners, including communicating, supervising the instructional program, planning and change, motivating and organization, observing and conferencing, developing curriculum, solving problems, serving teachers, personal development, community relations, and evaluating research and programs. Based on the writings of Glickman, (1981), Pajak (1989), and others, effective instructional leadership does all of the following:

1. frames school goals
2. supervises and evaluates instruction by coordinating the curriculum
3. helps to monitor student progress
4. provides students incentives for learning
5. protects instructional time
6. provides incentives for teachers by promoting continuous and relevant professional development (Reitzug, 1994; Hersey, 1997; Glickman, 2002; Glickman et al., 2007)
7. empowers teachers by giving them support and facilitating good teaching through critique (Reitzug, 1994; Gordon, 2004; Blase & Blase, 2004)
8. initiates successful school reforms (Blase & Blase, 2004)

9. turns schools into learning environments for both educators and students

(Glickman, 1993; Blase & Blase, 2004). The “facilitation of learning of learning and growth should be *the number one responsibility* of an educational leader.”

(Blase & Blase, 2004, p. 15).

*Reflection* in teaching is founded on the assumption that the work of teaching is complex and demanding, and teachers require opportunities for reframing their teaching experiences in previously unheard-of or unthought-of ways (Blase & Blase, 2004). Under such circumstances, therefore, increased awareness of one’s professional performance may result in considerable improvement of performance (Dewey, 1933; Blase & Blase, 2004). In recent years, “the process of reflective practice has been acknowledged as a potentially powerful enhancement to supervisor—teacher interaction” (Blase & Blase, 2004, p. 85). Supervisors and other instructional leaders can help teachers develop problem-solving skills, new thinking patterns, and alternative perspectives (Dewey, 1933; Bass, 1990a; Blase & Blase, 2004). This approach is especially necessary considering changing demographics in schools (Ladson-Billings & Henry, 1990; Gay, 2000).

Blase & Blase, (2004) argue that (a) principals should support, encourage and guide reflective teaching; (b) principals should share professional knowledge with teachers during reflective teaching; (c) principals need to support reflective teaching through historical embeddedness and political justice; and (e) principals must help teachers to socially reconstruct teaching ideas and be culturally responsive. “In other words, understanding teaching and learning must be placed in the context of students’ and schools’ social, historical, political and cultural considerations” (Blase & Blase, 2004, p. 92).



Instructional leadership behaviors expected from effective principals include modeling good teaching, making classroom observations, encouraging teachers to reflect on their teaching, praising teachers, giving autonomy to teachers, and engaging in dialogue with teachers. Dialogue may include encouraging, giving feedback, questioning and giving suggestions and praising, all of which help to increase teacher reflection and creativity (Blase & Blase, 2004).

Successful instructional supervision “frequently extends autonomy to teachers with regard to decisions about instruction” (Blase & Blase, 2004, p. 143). Such autonomy includes decisions on the *how* of teaching, program development as it relates to content and instructional methods for subject areas, and the *what* of teaching, which covers any judgment the teacher makes on content to be taught. According to Blase and Blase (2004), “successful principals extend autonomy to motivate teachers (to encourage independence and flexibility and allow teachers to do their level best-to do the best job teachers can) and to encourage innovation in instruction” (p. 144). Extending autonomy, therefore, “recognize[s] teacher and student differences and allows for the teacher’s interpretation of various goals for specific kids and specific classrooms” (p. 144).

*Transactional and transformational leadership.* A “successful political leader is one who crystallizes what the people desire, illuminates the rightness of what they desire, and coordinates its achievement” (Bass, 1990a, p. 23). Such a leader goes further to create a vision that is capable of guiding the group towards achieving what is best for the organization (Bass, 1990b). Leadership functions include organizing, coordinating, motivating, and embodying desires of the group. Such leadership can either be

transactional or transformational (Burns, 1979; Bass, 1990a; Bass, 1990b; Basadur, 2004).

*A transactional leader* makes promises in exchange for improved workplace behaviors with the group. In politics, transactional leaders seek to maximize their political will on the group (Burns, 1979; Burns, 2003). “But transactional theory... must lead to short-lived relationships because sellers and buyers cannot repeat the identical exchange; both move on to new types and levels of gratifications” (Burns, 1979, p. 258). Such exchanges allow transactional leaders to understand what the group’s current wishes are and then to perform their work within the framework of the leader’s interests and those of the group (Burns, 1979; Bass, 1990a; Burns, 2003). For Burns (1978), transactional leaders

approach their followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another; jobs for votes, or subsidies for campaign contributions. Such transactions compromise the bulk of the relationships among leaders and followers, especially in groups, legislatures, and parties. (p. 3)

In the education setting, Sergiovanni & Starratt (2002) say that transactional leadership strategies are

typically based on the belief that the goals of teachers and those of the supervisors are not the same. Teachers, it is assumed, do not care as much about matters of schooling as do supervisors. Thus the basis for motivating teachers becomes a series of trades whereby the supervisors give to teachers’ things that they want in exchange for compliance with the supervisors’ requests and requirement. (p. 294)

Transactions can include extrinsic rewards such as income, position and benefits, while others can include intrinsic exchanges such as affiliation needs and the satisfactions that come with emotional attachments with students or adult colleagues (Leithwood & Aitken, 1995). The transactional approach to leadership in education has been criticized for bureaucratizing teaching, reinforcing the supervisor's superior moral standing and its emphasis on the use of "self-interest-oriented motivational strategies, thus perpetuat[ing] the regressive cycle" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002, p. 294). Extrinsic motivators can have negative effects when teachers perceive them as inadequate. However, the strength of transactional leadership is that when done properly the group tends to be more committed, hardworking, loyal and satisfied with work (Maslow, 1954; Burns, 1979; Bass, 1990a; Leithwood et al., 2002; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002; Burns, 2003). As an approach to motivation, transactional leadership makes teaching "meaningful, purposeful, sensible, and significant and when they view the work itself as being worthwhile and important" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002, p. 295). Transactional leadership also enables teachers to take full control of their work activities and to feel accountable for their work (Basadur, 2004; Stipek, 2006).

In the context of the current study, transactional theory or "exchange theory of sociology" (Burns, 1979, p. 258) does not explain how transactions are carried out to improve teaching and learning in culturally and diverse settings like schools. "The most difficult problem most leaders face is reconciling divergent groups of which the same person may in effect be the leader. As a result conflict takes place *within* such leaders as well as among the groups, classes, or constituencies sustaining them" (Burns, 1979, p. 261).

*Transformational leaders* evaluate the organizational situations and foster needed organizational change (Burns, 1979; Bass, 1990a; Burns, 2003). Transformational leaders engage in (a) inspirational maturation, which involves articulating an appealing and evocative vision about what the organization should look like and how it wants to serve related stakeholders and customers; (b) intellectual stimulation, whereby the leader promotes organizational cultures and opportunities that encourage creativity and innovation among staff; (c) idealized influence, which models the roles for all staff members; and (d) individualized consideration, when the leader engages in coaching and mentoring that empowers staff (Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Safarik, 2003; Avolio, 2005). Kouzes & Posner (2002) explain that, when done properly, transformational leadership emerges naturally as a call to action, and it should exist at all levels of the organization. “The more transformational is the leadership at the higher levels in the organization, the more it is found at lower levels, including in its teams” (Avolio, 2003, p. 23). Transformational leadership, therefore, is motivated by a need to change the current framework to improve organizational effectiveness by meeting the desires of the group (Gardner, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Nahavandi, 2006).

Transformational leadership ensures that organizations and employees capitalize on all the opportunities that are presented by change. This is because the best laid plans for transforming organizations often are not sufficient due to inherent messiness of the change process (Kejriwal & Krishnan, 2004; Singh & Krishnan, 2007). Successful organizations that change readily and successfully have staff at all levels who feel that they have capabilities to capitalize on new opportunities (Avolio, 2003). Leadership is required at the top as well as at different levels of an organization in order for the

organization to stay innovative and competitive today. Transformational leadership is viewed as an act of responding to current needs of the organization. It “represents the transcendence of self-interest by both leader and led” (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 9). From these definitions, transformational leadership can refer to the actions of any person who tries to assist the group to change the framework and to create a new vision for the group. The need to change the organization’s framework is usually motivated by a problem that may arise because of changes within or outside the organization (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2000; Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Inside each school, four main elements interact together in order to impact students learning (Leithwood et al., 2002): organizational structures, leadership and management processes, the curriculum, and teaching-learning processes. All these elements are directly impacted by local cultures, regional cultures, and societal cultures. Leaders need to react constantly to influence the degree to which interactions between these four elements and the outside forces may impact teaching-learning outcomes (Leithwood et al. 2002). The role of a transformational school leader is to continuously empower the school community by inspiring their commitment to the “collective aspirations and desires for personal and collective mastery of the capacities needed to accomplish such aspirations” (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 9). In schools, therefore, transformational leadership refers to processes like building a new school vision, establishing school goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, taking risks, modeling best practices, importing organizational values, demonstrating high performance expectations, creating and sustaining a productive

school culture, and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions (Leithwood, 1994; Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002).

*Moral leadership.* Moral leadership is a substitute for bureaucratic tendencies that compel people to respond to internal reasons only (Sergiovanni, 2007). Leaders who practice moral leadership bring together diverse people into a common cause by making schools covenantal communities (Gay, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2007). Such leadership uses common ideas, principles, and purposes as a solemn agreement that is binding to all parties. This way all members are motivated to carry out their duties by a common vision/covenant that binds them together. “Leaders in covenantal communities function as head followers” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 2). For this study, the importance of moral leadership is its ability to bring together all members to a common cause by creating a “shared followership” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 2). Under moral leadership, followers create shared meanings through their interactions, and those meanings become their reality.

Moral leadership focuses attention on (a) bringing together people from diverse cultural backgrounds to work on a common goal; (b) what is being followed as opposed to who is being followed; and (c) all members, including the head-follower, playing followership roles in the process of trying to achieve organizational goals. Moral leadership as a cognitive concept means that, even when the head-follower is not present at a given time, leadership continues to be effective in form of commonly shared covenants that continually motivate loyalty from all members (Leithwood et al., 1999; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007).

There can be no leadership if there is nothing important to follow.

Leadership, in this sense, is more cognitive than interpersonal and the

source of authority for leadership practice is based on goals, purposes, values, commitments and other ideas that provide the basis for followership. (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 2)

The power of moral leadership rests on four leadership pillars: leaders, followers, ideas and action (Sergiovanni, 2007). Since action is a product of leaders and followers working together on common ideas, the resultant product is likely to be desirable because the leaders and the followers are connected to each other by the same commitment (Greenfield, 1995; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2002). In moral leadership, each member uses collective moral standards to guide his or her performance in order to achieve organizational goals (Sergiovanni, 2007).

What makes moral leadership different from all the other models of leadership is the use of symbols and cultural leadership (Sergiovanni, 2007). When leaders use commonly accepted symbols, they clarify goals, define consensus and keep reminding members of their commitment to organizational purposes (Leithwood et al., 1999; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007).

They use easily understood language symbols, which communicate a sense of excitement, originality, and freshness. These efforts provide opportunities for others in the school to experience this vision and to obtain a sense of purpose so that they might come to share in the ownership of the school enterprise more fully. (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 10)

Moral leadership seeks to clarify school values, beliefs and cultural standards that give each school a unique identity (Dewey, 1933; Sergiovanni, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2007). Moral leadership behaviors include articulating the school vision and goals, counseling,

telling stories, rewarding, orienting new members into the school culture, maintaining traditions and beliefs and developing and displaying symbols of the schools. Telling stories is a means by which people attach meaning to experience by telling and retelling personal stories to evaluate the past and create purpose for the future (Dewey, 1933; McGregor, 1960). Therefore, deliberate narratives of cultural stories are a fundamental method for personal growth and creating commitment (Dewey, 1933; Gardner, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Burns, 2003). In this study, it was important to determine what symbols unified students and teachers with culturally responsive leader, and how such symbols were established. Using common cultural symbols in schools is important because

school culture serves as a compass setting to steer people in a common direction, provides a set of norms that defines what people should accomplish and how; and provides a source of meaning and significance for teachers, students administrators, and others as they work.

(Sergiovanni, 2007, 12)

One task of moral leadership is to create a strong functional culture that encompasses the interests of all and binds them around that culture. This enables the organization to move in the same direction because all members understand and identify with that school culture.

*Participative leadership.* Leadership effectiveness depends in part on the degree to which employees are allowed to participate in decision making (Bass, 1990a; Hammonds, 2000; Hammonds, 2001; Nahavandi, 2006). The level of participation occurs on a continuum,



On one end, the leader retains all control and makes all decisions without consultation or even information from subordinates; on the other end, the leader delegates all decision making to followers and allows them the final say. (Nahavandi, 2006, p. 200)

Bass (1990a) explains that “Participative leadership, ...can take many forms... drawing others out, listening actively and carefully, and gaining acceptance through engaging colleagues in the planning or decision-making process” (p. 436).

Participative leadership requires leaders to possess specific skills that help in team building (Kayser, 1994; Gordon, 2004). Participative leadership is also referred to as democratic leadership and shared decision making. Employee participation and involvement, which includes group decision making, group empowering, sharing of information and group planning, provides positive impact, increases production and creates a nurturing environment (Leithwood et al., 1999; Wright & Kim, 2004; Parsons, 2004). Participative leadership increases subordinate participation and allows some degree of ownership of decisions (Wright & Kim, 2004). In participative leadership, authority and influence are available to all stakeholders in the school (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Some of the factors that determine when to use participative leadership include complexity of the task, the level of group commitment required for successful implementation, availability of time for task completion, and preparedness of both the leader and followers to participate (Nahavandi, 2006). Complex tasks require higher degrees of expertise; thus, leaders may need to choose people with special skills to participate as opposed to allowing all teachers to participate (Nahavandi, 2006;

Leithwood et al., 1999). If a task requires total follower commitment, this requires an increased level of participation by all those who will implement decisions. Decisions that require quick responses may not be appropriate for a time-consuming participative decision making process (Leithwood et al., 1999; Nahavandi, 2006). Nahavandi points out that participative leadership in culturally diverse groups requires special leadership skills:

These cross-cultural differences in team behavior create considerable challenges for leaders in culturally diverse teams. Success depends on accurate perceptions and careful reading of cross-cultural cues. Leaders must be flexible and patient, and be willing not only to listen to others, but also to question their own assumptions. (p. 2004)

*Contingent leadership.* Since the 1960's, the contingent leadership models have influenced the understanding of how leadership situations determine effective leadership styles (Fiedler, 1967; Vroom & Yetton, 1973; Fiedler & Chemers, 1974; Vroom & Jago, 1988; Chemers, 2000; Miller, Butler, & Cosentino, 2004). Fiedler's contingent model of leadership posits that effective leadership "is a function of the match between the leader's style and the leadership situation. If the leader's style matches the situation, the leader will be effective; if the leader's style does not match the situation, the leader will not be effective" (Nahavandi, 2006, p. 134). Several models of contingent leadership focus on task and relationship behaviors. When a leader is task oriented, the leader focuses primarily on achieving specific tasks and measures organizational success by the number of tasks achieved (Nahavandi, 2006). Task-oriented leaders draw self-esteem from tasks completed effectively; therefore, they can be very strict with low performing employees

(Nahavandi, 2006). Task oriented leaders tend to pay attention to detail, ignoring the group's needs and working conditions (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974; Chemers, 2000; Nahavandi, 2006). Task-motivated leaders often make decisions without consulting the group (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Lunenburg, 2004; Nahavandi, 2006).

The second type of leadership in the contingent model is relationship motivated (Nahavandi, 2006). Relationship motivated leadership emphasizes the creation and maintenance of interpersonal relations with the group. Such leaders draw their self-esteem from interpersonal relationships by focusing on the group first. They prefer to place others ahead of task achievement. Relationship motivated leadership considers group loyalty as key to goal achievement (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987). Unlike task motivated leaders, relationship motivated leaders involve group members in decision making (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974; Chemers, 2000; Nahavandi, 2006).

A popular leadership model related to the contingent theory is Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership. Hersey and Blanchard (1988) argue that "The contribution of a leader's actions to the effectiveness of his organization cannot be determined without considering the nature of the situation in which that behavior is displayed" (p. 106). Leadership effectiveness is influenced by the environment, the interaction between the leader and the followers, the associates, time constraints and job demands (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Hersey, 1997; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2007). If change occurs in anyone of these situations, the rest of the situation's variables may be affected. Leaders and their followers bring their own attitudes and behaviors to the situation, and this affects the leadership situation. Situational leadership therefore is based on an interplay among (a) the amount of task behavior a leader provides for task

completion; (b) the levels of relationship behavior a leader provides to accomplish a task; and (c) the readiness level that the followers demonstrate in performing a specific task or activity (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Hersey, 1997; Glickman et al., 2007). Task behavior refer to “the extent to which the leader engages in spelling out the duties and responsibilities of an individual or group” while relationship behavior is the “extent to which the leader engages in two-way or multi-way communication with individuals or group” (Hersey, 1984, p. 31). Relationship behaviors include active “listening, encouraging, facilitating, providing clarification and giving support” (Hersey, 1984, p. 32).

The main components of situational leadership are the leader, the follower and the situation (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). Therefore, effective situational leaders know how to tailor their styles to specific situations when attempting to influence the behaviors of others. “An understanding of follower needs is important.... As people grow in their task-specific readiness, the behaviors they need from the leader also change” (Hersey, 1997, p. 67).

Hersey and Blanchard combine task and people into a two-by-two leadership grid which offers leaders four possible leadership styles that include telling, selling, participating and delegating (Hersey, 1997). The decision to use each style depends on the group’s level of readiness. This implies that during planning a leader should match people with specific tasks only when those individuals posses relevant skills, attitudes, knowledge and motivation to carry out the tasks. Subordinate readiness levels refer to four levels of preparedness to execute tasks, and leaders need to know this information about their followers before they can assign them to any tasks (Hersey & Blanchard,

1988; Hersey 1997; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001; Glickman, 2002; Glickman et al., 2007). The model distinguishes four levels of group readiness and four styles that match each level of readiness.

When a group's readiness is classified as *high*, (R4- High readiness, where R means readiness) the group is considered able, willing and confident. There are two levels of *moderate* readiness, R3 and R2. R3 refers to a group that is able but unwilling and insecure. R2 is when the group is unable but willing and confident. When subordinates are unable, unwilling or insecure, their readiness level is classified as low (R1). "If a group lacks either task or person behaviors, the leaders can choose a style that will fill the void...Situational leadership matches leadership styles to the readiness levels of the group" (Glickman et al., 2007, pp. 327-329).

The four situational leadership styles include S4, S3, S2, and S1. Theoretically, when each style is used appropriately with a group of teachers, it will help them to develop professionally from one level of readiness to the next upper level. S4 should be matched with teacher readiness level R4. S4 is a style where the leader *delegates*. "This is a hands-off or laissez-faire style whereby the leader turns over the task to the group and does not participate in any manner. The leader tells the group what the task is and then physically or mentally removes himself or herself from further involvement" (Glickman et al., 2007, p. 328).

S3 leadership style is matched with R3 level of readiness for the teacher or group "This is an encouraging and socializing style whereby the leader promotes cohesion, open expression, and positive feelings among members but does not influence or interfere with the actual decision" (Glickman et al., 2007, p. 328). When performing S3 style the

situational leader's role is nondirective, but the leader actively participates by clarifying and encouraging. The behaviors are generally low task and are inclined more towards creation of high relationships.

Situational leadership uses the style S2 by matching it with teachers who operate at readiness level R2. This style is focused on high task and high relationships. "The leader actively participates with the group both as a facilitator of the decision-making process and an equal member contributing his or her own ideas, opinions, and information" (Glickman et al., 2007, p. 327); the leader persuasively tries to influence both the processes and the content of the decision making (Hersey, 1997; Glickman et al., 2007). With this style, the behaviors of the leader include the *selling* approach in which the leader is democratic and collaborative.

The S1 style is an autocratic approach recommended for use with R1 readiness level groups, whereby "the leader tells the group members what is to be done, when, and by whom. The leader makes decisions for the group" (Glickman et al., 2007, p. 327). This is a management approach where the leader is in control. R1 readiness subordinates are unable to carry out the task, are unwilling to do the job, and feel insecure of themselves as it relates to carrying out the task. Under such circumstances, situational leaders are encouraged to use such leadership behaviors as *telling*—being directive, high task but low relationship—because the aim is to fill the gap caused by lack of knowledge and direction about the procedures (Glickman et al., 2002; Glickman et al., 2007).

The philosophy underlying situational leadership is that leaders should help teachers to develop through the levels of readiness, beginning with the level at which the group is currently functioning (Leonardo, 2004; Glickman et al., 2007). Another

assumption is that by filling any void that subordinates exhibit, the leader helps the group to grow professionally (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Hersey, 1997; Glickman, 2002; Glickman et al., 2007).

Developmental supervision is another model of instructional supervision closely related to contingent theory. It operates under the belief that teachers go through three stages of conceptual development: low, moderate, and high (Glickman, 1993; Glickman et al. 2001). “Teachers with low abstract thinking ability are not sure if they have a classroom problem or, if they do, they are very confused about the problem. They don’t know what can be done, and they need to be shown what can be done” (Glickman, 1993, p. 46). Teachers operating within the moderate level can define the problem as they see it. They identify a few alternative solutions to the problem but have problems identifying comprehensive plans for handling problems. Finally, teachers who operate at high abstract thinking ability can suggest many alternative perspectives of looking at a problem, generate a good number of possible solutions and select the best solution which they can define clearly through each step (Glickman, 1993). Such teachers are willing to change if they perceive that the plan may not work or if a better suggestion is given.

Developmental supervisors use interpersonal approaches that match teachers’ developmental levels (Glickman, 1993; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001; Glickman, 2002). These approaches include directive supervision, collaborative supervision and nondirective supervision (Glickman, 1993; Glickman et al., 2001; Stotko et al., 2005). Teachers operating at a low level of abstract thinking are matched with a directive approach; those at a moderate level of abstraction are matched with collaborative supervision, and highly abstract thinkers are matched with a nondirective

approach (Glickman, 1993; Glickman et al., 2001). The long-term goal of developmental supervision is to foster teacher growth toward higher levels of abstraction and autonomy.

*Summary of alternative models of leadership.* In this section I described six leadership models. Managerial leadership focuses on efficient completion of clearly specified tasks by employees (Bass, 1990a; Leithwood et al., 1999). Instructional leadership uses expert knowledge about teaching and learning to influence the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom. Transactional leadership exchanges rewards for support. Transformational leadership raises both the leader and the followers toward a higher purpose. Moral leadership uses symbolic means to influence members of the organization, while those who practice participative leadership promote mutual influence. Contingent and situational leadership match leadership behaviors to the existing situation and to the needs current of teachers, but also seeks to promote teacher growth toward more autonomous behavior.

Both managerial leadership and contingent leadership suggest that for leadership to be effective, it should focus on specific behaviors that help achieve needed change. The modeling and sharing of ideas fostered by both contingent and transformational leadership help teachers to understand the required skills for addressing unfamiliar situations and tasks (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Nahavandi, 2006). Effective leaders help teachers to become aware of the value of teaching diverse student populations. In addition, culturally responsive leaders can help teachers learn teaching strategies that address diversity. Using the transformational approach to leadership in culturally diverse schools can help change the school culture, making diversity an asset for all students. Finally, contingent leadership can address the fact that teachers function at different



stages of cultural awareness and competence, just as they operate at different conceptual levels. In short, the leader can draw on different leadership models to assist teachers toward higher levels of cultural sensitivity and cultural competence.

### Culture

Institutional characteristics of schools may systematically deny certain groups of students' equal educational opportunities, while other groups have better learning opportunities in the same schools (Banks, 2001). Students from certain cultural, religious, and ethnic home backgrounds are sometimes socialized in ways that are different from the school's culture (Banks, 2001). Educators, therefore, face challenges of how to help children who come from diverse groups to "mediate between their home and community cultures and the school culture" (Banks, 2001 p. 7).

Culture is defined as "a group's program for survival in and adaptation to its environment. The cultural program consists of knowledge, concepts, and values shared by group members through systems of communication" (Banks, 2001, p. 8). Other aspects of culture include beliefs, symbols and interpretations within a particular group. Schein (in Erickson, 2001) identifies four critical elements that define culture:

1. *structural stability*: refers to the fact that culture defines how the group is organized and how its values give stability to the group. That stability is the base on which members construct new knowledge;
2. *depth*: when a member is socialized into a culture, the concepts of how to act, behave and think will determine how the individual may adapt to new ways of doing things. The level of immersion of the member into the norms and values of

the group culture determines how much that individual holds on to a particular belief;

3. *breadth*: refers to the size of the group that shares the same culture or values;
4. *pattern of integration*: this characteristic takes into account aspects that include rituals, group climate, values and behaviors. These critical elements come together to give the group the overall stability and the individual a sense of belonging.

Just as hammers and languages are tools by which we get things done, so is culture; indeed, culture can be thought of as the primary human toolkit...By analogy to computers, which are information tools, culture can be considered as the software—the coding systems for doing meaning and executing sequences of work—by which our human psychological and cognitive hardware is able to operate so that we can make sense and take action with others in daily life. Culture structures the “default” conditions of the everyday practices of being human (Erickson, 2001, p. 32)

Both Banks (2001) and Erickson (2001) agree that culture is a pattern of shared knowledge, values and assumptions that interact when people communicate. Such knowledge is considered valid by the group and is systematically taught to all other members as a correct way to view the world, think and relate to others (Ramasamy, Ling, & Ting, 2007). If culture is removed from the human social interactions, it affects all current and future communication, interactions and construction of knowledge. “When

we examine culture and leadership closely, we see that there are two sides of the same coin; neither can be understood by itself” (Schein, 2004, pp. 10-11).

Culture is a set of underlying assumptions, norms, and beliefs shared by the group. It marks and specifies theories and behaviors or mental programs that are shared by a group to construct shared meaning (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Kejriwal & Krishnan, 2004). If a group has a common way of viewing events and objects, members of the group are able to interpret and evaluate practices in a common or consistent fashion. “Culture becomes important in understanding leadership because leadership is essentially a social phenomenon” (Singh & Krishnan, 2007, p. 220). By understanding the culture to which followers belong, leaders will be able to understand the underlying assumptions, beliefs and values of their followers and thereby develop greater awareness about the followers (Triandis, 2001, Triandis, 2002).

The implications of cultural diversity for school leadership are significant in that, to transform schools, leaders need to understand the true needs of the followers by understanding their values, norms, and beliefs (Bass, 1997; Banks, 2001). Bass (1997) proposes that a leader needs to act in different ways within differing cultural contexts in order to be transformational. Teachers from different ethnic groups, for example, have different teaching styles and different ways of understanding students’ cultural backgrounds different from their own. Conversely, students of different ethnicities, gender, social class and religion have learning styles which are influenced by their cultural contexts and may have difficulty understanding teachers who do not use symbols that appeal to their senses (Banks, 2000; Banks, 2001; Erickson, 2001; Triandis, 2001). Therefore, knowledge of characteristics of groups to which teachers and students belong,

the importance of each of these groups to students and teachers, and the extent to which individuals have been socialized within each group will give school leadership important clues to teachers' and students' behavior (Erickson, 2001).

The more we know about a student's level of identification with a particular group and the extent to which socialization has taken place within that group, the more accurately we can predict, explain, and understand the student's behavior in the classroom. (Banks, 2001, p. 14)

Similarly, knowing teachers' characteristics will help instructional leaders to understand their teaching behaviors (Hersey, 1984).

#### Cultures Found in Schools

Cultures found in schools vary (Banks, 2001; Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 2001; Banks & Banks, 2004). Some cultural variables include race, ethnicity and language, class, gender, religion, disability and sexual orientation (Banks, 2001). These cultural variables facilitate or impede interaction among students and teachers, and they should be understood by teachers and their leadership in order for them to understand how groups teach and learn.

#### *Race, Ethnicity and Language*

Race and ethnicity are socially determined categories that relate to physical characteristics of human beings (Hofstede, 2001; Banks, 2001). Criteria for determining the characteristics for particular races vary across cultures, and racial categories in some societies reflect social, economic and even political characteristics of a society (Banks, 2000; Banks, 2001; Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 2001). Some of the characteristics that define race include skin color, facial form and shape of the eyes (Random House, 1993).

Different societies can classify differently individuals with nearly identical physical characteristics (Banks, 2001).

### *Social Class*

“Social scientists find it difficult to agree on criteria for determining social class. The problem is complicated by the fact that societies are constantly in the throes of change” (Banks, 2001). Characteristics such as income, education, employment, life-style and values are among those aspects most frequently used as indices to determine social class in the United States (Banks, 2001). There is no agreed criterion on how to define people according to their social standing. Variables change according to context.

### *Gender*

This refers to “socially and psychologically appropriate behavior for males and females sanctioned by and expected within society” (Banks, 2001, p. 17). However, such roles differ across cultures and at different times in the same societies. Such roles and expectations also differ across classes within the same society (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996; Banks, 2000; Banks, 2001; Triandis, 2002). Gender diversity “consists of differences between the two sexes and of the socially and psychologically appropriate behaviors for males and females as sanctioned and expected within a society” (Walker Fillon, 2007, p. 39).

### *Sexual Minorities: Gays, Lesbians, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT)*

Recently the definition of multicultural populations has expanded to incorporate groups other than ethnic and racial minorities, including *sexual minority people or people with other sexual orientations*. Sexual minority people are people whose sexual orientations are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. They are considered minorities

because their population is estimated to be 10% of the U. S. population (Van Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004).

### *Disabilities and Exceptionality*

Each society develops criteria for accepting individuals as exceptionally gifted and or disabled (Banks, 2001; Triandis, 2001). Specifically, disabilities are not necessarily conditions of being handicapped. “A disability or combination of disabilities becomes a handicap only when the condition limits or impedes the person’s ability to function normally” (Shaver & Curtis, 1981, p. 1). Disability can either be physical or mental. Mental retardation can be a disability in one situation but may not be classified that way in another situation. Therefore, “mental retardation” is not an observable characteristic of an individual but a socially determined status. In some places, retardation may be seen as a case of race (Banks, 2001). “Many African American and Latino students who are labeled mentally retarded function normally and are considered normal in their homes and communities” (Banks, 2001, p. 19). The most important thing is to know who is qualifying that retardation and for what purpose. Giftedness is another social category for classifying people, especially in schools (Banks, 2001). “Many students who are classified as gifted do have special talents and abilities, and they do need special instruction” (Banks, 2001, p. 19).

### Multicultural Education

“Multicultural education needs to be more broadly defined and understood so that teachers from a wide range of disciplines can respond to it in appropriate ways and resistance can be minimized” (Banks, 2001, p. 20). Multicultural education is a broad concept that consists of a wide range of important dimensions that include (1) content

integration; (2) the knowledge construction process; (3) prejudice reduction; (4) equity pedagogy; and (5) an empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 1995; Olneck, 1995; Adams 2000; Banks, 2001; Banks & Banks, 2004).

### *Content Integration*

Content integration refers to those deliberate actions by teachers to use examples, teaching aids, and content texts from the cultures of the students whom they are teaching at any given time (Banks, 2001; Freeman & Freeman, 2004). This helps the teachers “to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations and theories in their subject area or discipline” (Banks, 2001, p. 20). Banks (2001) warns that use of examples from ethnic and cultural content into the subject area should be logical and not artificial. When choosing texts, teachers should make an effort to select those that draw from the students’ backgrounds and culture. This is important because it helps the student to construct meaning using the content that is already familiar to them. The approach also helps students to construct their own predictions and possible inferences about what the teacher will be teaching. While it is important to know what teachers need to do, it is also important to know how leadership helps teachers to achieve content integration (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Banks, 2000; Freeman & Freeman, 2004).

### *Knowledge Construction Process*

The knowledge construction process includes teachers helping students understand, investigate and determine how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives and biases within a specific discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed (Banks, 1996; Banks, 2000; Banks, 2001). In each subject, there are strategies that teachers can use to help students examine the

construction of knowledge as they study different units and topics. The implication of this for educational leadership is that leaders need to help their teachers access these ideas and teaching skills through appropriate professional development. They also need to legitimize teaching about knowledge construction process (Banks, 1995; Banks, 2000; Hofstede, 2001; Freeman & Freeman, 2004).

### *Prejudice Reduction*

The premise for the prejudice reduction contact hypothesis is that students come to school with many negatively preconceived ideas towards different racial and ethnic groups. Therefore, in prejudice reduction teaching approaches teachers are expected to use lessons and activities that help students develop positive attitudes towards other racial, ethnic and cultural groups (Banks, 2000; Banks, 2001; Bloch, 2005). Strategies that can be used to improve inter-group relations include equal status, cooperation as opposed to competition, sanctions from authorities such as teachers and administrators and interpersonal interactions to improve acquaintance with other groups (Nelsen & Glenn, 1997; Banks, 2001; Obadiah & Teel, 2001; Carl & Gupta, 2004).

### *Equity Pedagogy*

When teachers consciously analyze their teaching procedures and styles to determine if the content reflects multicultural issues and concerns, their teaching is regarded as equity conscious. “An equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender, and social-class groups” (Banks, 2001, p. 21). This may include modifying teaching approaches so that they are consistent with the wide range of learning styles of various cultural and ethnic groups (Gracia & Dorminquez, 1997; Banks, 2000;



Banks, 2001; Fullan, 2001). In successful equity pedagogy, the role of the leader is to help teachers to become aware of the presence of diversity among the students so that they may avoid possible biases. The leader should also be aware of diversity among teachers in order to help teachers according to their needs (Johnson, Johnson, & Zimmerman, 1996; Kuperminc, Leadbeater, & Blatt, 1997; Bauer, 2003).

### *An Empowering School Culture*

A good school culture should promote gender, racial and social-class equity (Cummins, 1986; Banks, 1996; Banks, 2001; Basadur, 2004). It is achieved by allowing all members of the staff participate in creating and organizing the school culture so that it reflects their interests (Banks, 2000; Peterson & Skiba, 2001; Bauer, 2003). Variables that promote an empowering school culture include grouping and labeling practices, sports participation, disproportional achievement, disproportional enrollment in gifted and special education programs and the interaction of staff and students across ethnic and racial lines. These variables must be examined to create an enabling school culture that empowers students from diverse racial, gender, and ethnic groups (Banks, 2001).

Multicultural education starts with the belief that all students, regardless of their ethnicity, race, religious affiliation, gender, cultural orientation, language spoken, social-class or exceptionality, should be given equal opportunities to access school knowledge (Banks, 1996; Banks, 2001; Bennet, 2002; Basadur, 2004; Chamberlain, 2005). To achieve multicultural education, schools require transformational leadership to foster strategic changes to certain school variables, leading to the empowerment of students and teachers from diverse cultural, racial, and social groups. The variables include the curriculum and curriculum materials; teachers' attitudes towards race, gender, and other

cultural groups; reforming power relations of the school; and institutional norms of the school that include cause-belief statements, values, and goals. Additionally, “Major attention should be focused on the school’s hidden curriculum and its implicit norms and values” (Banks, 2001, p. 22).

### Cultural Responsiveness

Education is a socio-cultural process (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Banks, 1996; Dunn, 2000; Gay, 2000; Erickson, 2001; Bennet, 2002). Culturally responsive approaches connect people to the topic or content that the other is trying to express to the audience’s real lives. Examining the role of culture in human life is crucial to understanding the role of culture in the education processes (Banks, 1995; Banks, 2000; Gay, 2000; Banks, 2001; Erickson, 2001; Hofstede, 2003). Cultural responsiveness should be at the center of efforts to improve performance of underachieving groups in multicultural societies (Giroux, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Banks 2000; Zepeda, 2005). This section explains what culturally responsiveness entails.

Culture is a dynamic, complex, interactive, and changing, yet stabilizing force for human life (Gay, 2000; Erickson, 2001; Gay, 2005). Both ethnicity and culture are considered foundational anchors for all other behaviors that affect learning and teaching in school settings (Gay, 2000; Freeman & Freeman, 2004). Therefore, cultural diversity in schools is a powerful and persistent vitalizing force which makes it a useful resource for improving educational effectiveness for all students. Culturally responsiveness can be defined as the process of

using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students [and teachers] to make

learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches *to and through* the strength of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. (Gay, 2000, p. 29)

In the same vein, Ladson-Billings (1992) suggests that culturally responsive teachers help their students develop intellectual, social, emotional and political learning by “using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 382). Both Gay, (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1992) agree that culturally responsive teaching involves teachers being comprehensive, validating, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory.

*Comprehensive.* Teachers should teach the whole child; this refers to the idea that skills should not be taught separately but as part of meaningful learning. Additionally, teachers should encourage students to function together as one group, supporting each other and assist each other (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Freeman & Freeman, 2004). This gives students a sense of belonging; they are encouraged to rise together since everything in the class is designed to be in the best interest of the group.

*Validating.* To meet this criterion, teachers:

1. acknowledge the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students’ dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be included in the formal curriculum (Ladson-Billings & Henry, 1990; Gay, 2000; Erickson, 2001; Freeman & Freeman, 2004);
2. build bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities. This includes

involving parents and the surrounding community in school activities. Such relationships act as indicators of legitimatizing other cultures;

3. use wide varieties of instructional strategies that connect to different learning styles;
4. teach students to know, accept and praise their own and each others' cultural heritage;
5. incorporate multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools. Resources may refer to cultures of students which teachers use to simplify explanations for students (Gay, 2000).

*Multidimensional.* When teaching is multidimensional, it “encompasses curriculum content, learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques and performance assessments” (Gay, 2000, p. 31). Students are encouraged to understand meaning in the way students from different cultural backgrounds express ideas. Multidimensional teaching allows students to help teachers understand how they want their performance to be “evaluated, whether by written tests, peer feedback, observation... presented in one expressive form and transferred to another, or some combination of these” (Gay, 2000, p. 31). Culturally responsive teaching focuses teaching practices on cultural socialization which, in turn, affects learning in the classroom. “It helps students clarify their ethnic values while correcting factual errors about cultural heritages” (Gay, 2000, p. 32). Teachers require guidance in tapping into wide ranges of cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives.

*Empowering.* According to Gay (2000), cultural empowerment means that teachers help students to be more successful learners, and instill in them the confidence, courage and will to act on their own behalf and on behalf of others. Students require someone to model culturally responsive learning (Leithwood, 1994; Gay, 2000; Leithwood et al., 2002; Freeman & Freeman, 2004). Teachers should create infrastructures to support the efforts of students so that they will persevere towards high levels of academic achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Fullan, 2007). When they are empowered, students are able to: (a) explain their problem-solving techniques to other students; (b) spend time together with students from other cultural backgrounds, sharing ideas and displaying their own cultural logos; and (c) develop skills that help them to succeed in school. Empowered students are in control of their learning, how they learn and when they learn. They become the “primary sources and center, subjects and outcomes, consumers and producers of knowledge” (Gay, 2000, p. 33).

*Transformative.* Cultural responsiveness respects the cultures and experiences of other ethnic groups and integrates those cultures and experiences in the instructional process. Students are allowed opportunities to develop learning ideas following the paths that they better understand, and the teacher supports them (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Freeman & Freeman, 2004).

*Emancipatory.* Culturally responsive pedagogy is both psychologically and intellectually liberating (Erickson, 1987; Ladson-Billings & Henry, 1990; Au, 1993; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2002) in that it allows the students from minority groups to view knowledge not from mainstream ways of knowing but from their own contexts.

Culturally responsive pedagogy lifts the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truth typically taught in schools. It helps students to realize that no single version of *truth* is total and permanent. Nor should it be allowed to exist uncontested. (Gay, 2000, p. 35)

This broadened cultural lens allows teachers to see students for what they bring and use student knowledge and contributions as a bridge for teaching and learning. As a result, students feel valued and are engaged in learning, leading to higher achievement. (Guerra & Nelson, 2007, p. 60)

Cultural responsiveness validates the student's ways of knowing and therefore allows students freedom to focus more closely and thoroughly on academic tasks (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Au, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Joyce & Calhoun, 1996; Gay, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Guerra & Nelson, 2007). When students are able to concentrate they also are better able to find their own voices, contextualize issues in multiple cultural perspectives, achieve higher levels of understanding, practice insightful thinking, and become more active participants in shaping their own learning (Ladson-Billings & Henry, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1992). These ideas about knowledge mirror Freire's (1980) notion that critical consciousness and cultural emancipation are the authentic routes to humane interpersonal skills and better understanding of the interconnections among individuals, cultures, and societies. In this context, cooperation, mutual aid, reciprocity, community connectedness and interdependence are increased as students become accountable for one another's success (Freire, 1980; Ladson-Billings & Henry, 1992; Au, 1993; Gay, 2000; Noddings, 2007).

## Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is also referred to as cultural sensitiveness or cultural proficiency (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2000; Brown, 2004; Guerra & Nelson, 2007). Despite all these different labels, the purpose is the same: to guide the values and behaviors of individuals so that they may be able to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment (Guerra & Nelson, 2007). This definition acknowledges the contention that in the U.S., communities, and schools in particular, are becoming increasingly diverse (Howard, 2006). Eight indicators for culturally proficient schools include (a) high levels of achievement for all students; (b) minimal failures; (c) reduced levels of dropouts; (d) equitable enrollment in gifted and advanced placement classes; (e) few and more valid referrals to special education; (f) fewer discipline problems; (g) teachers who feel empowered; and (h) greater parent community involvement (Guerra & Nelson, 2007). High levels of achievement for all students result from understanding their current situations and offering them relevant curriculum and personal assistance. From a transformational leadership perspective, current frameworks should be changed to address the needs of a diverse student population (Hersey, 1997; Glickman et al., 2007; Guerra & Nelson, 2007). To achieve equitable placement in gifted and advanced placement classes, for example, schools need to understand cultural matters (Guerra & Nelson, 2007). In agreement with this notion, the moral leadership model suggests that leaders should bring together diverse people into a common cause by making schools covenantal communities (Garcia & Dominguez, 1997; Gay, 2005; Richards, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2007). The indicators identified by Guerra & Nelson (2007) add the

important perspective of including the community in ownership of the school enterprise by understanding diverse cultures from the community served by the school.

Without this cultural understanding, teachers may misinterpret student behavior. When a student sits quietly during class discussions, the teacher may assume the student doesn't have anything to say or is not very bright, rather than considering the alternative explanation of cultural difference.

(Guerra & Nelson, 2007, p. 59)

Cultural proficiency means that the school should reinforce what children bring to school (Guerra & Nelson, 2007).

#### Culturally Responsive and Culturally Competent School Leaders

Definitions of leadership generally agree that one objective of effective leadership is to respond to current needs of the organization and, when necessary, to change the current framework to improve the organization (Bass, 1960; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004; Kejriwal & Krishnan, 2004; Nahavandi, 2006; Singh & Krishnan, 2007). Inside the school, effective leadership should exist at all levels of the school organization; the more effective leadership exists at higher levels the more it will be found at lower levels, including in teams (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Leithwood et al., 1999; Sergiovanni, 2000; Avolio, 2005). In this sense, therefore, this study considers school leadership as action taken by persons at any school level, including the principal, teacher-leaders, counselors and parents. Culturally responsive school leaders are those who know how to develop teacher capacities to work successfully with diverse student populations (Banks, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2000; Triandis, 2001; Lipton & Wellman, 2007).



Increasing use of the term *cultural responsiveness* in education corresponds with the rising awareness that schools in the United States are becoming more diverse in many different ways. Culturally responsive leadership in education refers to those skills demonstrated by educational leaders to influence others to know how to respond to the educational needs of culturally diverse groups of students (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Arredondo et al., 1996; Gay, 2000; Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004; Gay, 2005). Culturally responsive leaders display the following characteristics: well articulated personal beliefs/attitudes about diverse groups, knowledge of those groups, and skills related to dealing with people from other cultures (Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004).

*Personal attitudes and beliefs.* “Attitudes about a particular cultural group can play a significant role in motivating a practitioner to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to be effective with clients of that culture” (Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004, p. 226-227). The following steps are recommended for working with groups who come from different cultural backgrounds than the leader: (a) self-reflection of one’s own orientation in terms of how it may affect the client; (b) reflection on one’s previous experiences with people from other cultural groups; (c) evaluation of how one’s reactions to meetings with other minorities may affect them positively and or negatively; (d) participation in professional development activities that foster a greater understanding of the needs of minority groups; and (e) evaluation of one’s cognitive and behavioral components as they relate to unfamiliar cultural groups (Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004; Giroux, 2004).

*Knowledge about groups.* A second skill that is required of culturally responsive leaders is a sound knowledge concerning the different groups within the organization. School leaders should not automatically assume that all students are the same. When a

student demonstrates problems, leaders should show positive attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lunenburg, 2003; Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004; Delpit, 2006; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2008). To do this they need to possess knowledge in the following seven key areas: demographics and diversity, cultural traditions and history of the minority group, experiences with oppression, impact of social policies, community resources that are available to support the groups and knowledge of culturally sensitive practice models (Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004). Additionally, knowing key terminology related to cultural group helps to avoid bias in language reduces negative stereotypes.

Cultural minorities are gradually increasing in number and are demanding education services. Their demographic characteristics are very diverse because they reflect multiple ethnicities, ages, religions, sexual orientations, languages, occupations, social statuses, incomes, abilities, relationship, family choices and political persuasions. School leaders should know about the history and traditions of cultural groups, including their past experiences with harassment and discrimination, so they will understand the reasons for certain behaviors they may exhibit (Banks & Banks, 2002; Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004). Culturally responsive leaders know that in certain places there are no social policies that relate to the protection of minority groups, and it is their duty to protect them. Being knowledgeable of models for affirmative practice found in the literature is key to practicing cultural sensitivity with minorities (Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004).

*Skills for culturally responsive leaders.* Culturally responsive educational leaders exhibit certain skills, including skills for (a) creating a safe educational environment (Delpit, 1995; Arredondo et al., 1996; Benson, 2003; Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004; Delpit, 2006); (b) examining the pressing challenges in the context of the students' life as a

member of a minority group (Banks, 1996; Arredondo et al., 1996; Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004); (c) including family members in the educative process (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2000; Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004); (d) helping the student to know the affirmative resources relative to his or her needs; and (e) encouraging practitioners to engage themselves in ongoing and continuing education around minority issues (Derman-Sparks, 1989; Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004).

### Culturally Responsive Schools

The presence of diversity in schools today is an important variable that calls for attention to be paid to “how these contexts can promote social norms for cohesiveness and mutual understanding” (Madsen & Mabokela, 2005, p. 1). Culturally responsive schools establish an organizational culture that provides us with ideas on how members of the school community will approach issues of diversity: “school norms and their cultural nuances establish the work climate that will accommodate and lead to greater flexibility on diversity-related issues” (Madsen & Mabokela, 2005, p. 3). To achieve cultural responsiveness at the school level, there should be a general agreement that cultural differences in among leaders, teachers, parents and students may explain underachievement or high rates of failure among some students of color (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003). A culturally responsive school culture influences how minority groups will be treated by their mainstream counterparts, and it also influences how minority groups will respond to situations. Culturally responsive schools (a) use diverse approaches to school curriculum reforms; (b) promote content integration; (c) emphasize multicultural education; (d) recruit and continuously staff develop

teachers to prepare them for diverse learners; and (e) build partnerships with diverse families and communities (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003).

*Diverse approaches to school curriculum reforms.* The aim of curriculum reform is to help teachers teach students to understand different ethnic, racial and cultural groups and to help students to improve cultural relationships in the school and, ultimately, in society. Gay (1995) suggests that modern schools should reform their curricula so that they can teach content about the contributions of different cultures to human kind, and engage their students “actively and interactively with their own cultural identity and the cultural identity of others” (p. 29). The benefit of curriculum that helps students approach knowledge from a pluralistic context is that it will motivate the students to develop societal responsibilities and political activism that promote equality, truth, inclusion and justice (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003). An inclusive school curriculum prepares teachers and students to question inequalities and injustices that exist in the school and the local community.

*Promote content integration.* Freire (1998) asks questions that illustrate what cultural responsiveness in schools might look like:

Why not take advantage of students’ experience of life in those parts of the city neglected by authorities to discuss the problem of pollution in the rivers and questions of poverty and the risks to health from the rubbish heaps in such areas? .... Why not discuss with the students the concrete reality of their lives and that aggressive reality in which violence is permanent and where people are much more familiar with death than life? (Freire, 1998, p. 6)

Content integration includes careful selection of teaching methods, content that will be taught and the use of teaching materials. The essence of culturally relevant content integration is found in the following question from Freire (1998): “Why not establish an intimate connection between knowledge considered basic to any school curriculum and knowledge that is the fruit of the lived experience of these students as individuals?” (p. 36). Children can vicariously experience others’ lives and develop empathy for people of diverse cultures through carefully selected literature (Savage & Savage, 1993; Campano, 2007). Proponents of content integration suggest that culturally responsive schools identify child and adolescent literature that is “both be well written and sensitive to cultural and societal realities” (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003, p. 34). Guidelines used by outstanding culturally responsive schools when selecting literature include the following: (a) omit books in which verbal or visual stereotyping exist and (b) select books that include realistic fiction with social conscience, melting pot fiction, and culturally conscious fiction. “Realistic fiction attempts to create a social conscience,...to encourage [students] to develop empathy, sympathy and tolerance for [students from other cultures] and their problems. Melting pot books communicate that all people are the same, ignoring all differences except physical characteristics” (Taylor & Whittaker, p. 34).

*Emphasize multicultural education.* Culturally responsive schools hire teaching personnel that can relate to diverse groups (Donaldson, 2007). Leaders of culturally responsive schools frequently organize staff-development to help their teachers understand that students from different cultural backgrounds require relevant teaching approaches in order to make connections with the content being taught. One such

approach involves “celebrating the human and academic value of their stories” (Campano, 2007, p. 48).

*Recruit and develop culturally responsive teachers.* Culturally responsive schools, also referred to as culturally relevant schools, have been defined by researchers as places of learning where teachers and their leaders begin “with what the students bring to school—the knowledge, themes, cultures conditions, and idioms” (Shor, 1992, p. 44). Therefore, leadership in culturally relevant schools avoids leadership approaches and practices that are leader-centered or teacher-centered. Culturally responsive schools begin from the students’ contexts. Teachers in culturally responsive schools “avoid teacher-centered syllabi and locate [teaching content] in the students’ cultures” (Shor, 1992, p. 44). Leaders of culturally responsive schools not only emphasize multicultural education but also aim at recruiting culturally responsive teachers, and continuously develop their teachers to be responsive to diverse learners (Gay, 2000). Staff development focuses on changing teacher’ attitudes towards students of other cultures, a pedagogy of student empowerment, and sharing stories and experiences with diverse students (Shor, 1992; Gay, 2000; Taylor & Whittaker, 2003).

*Build partnerships with diverse families and communities.* Proponents of multicultural education agree that frequent family and community participation in the schools is of critical importance (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Epstein, 1995; Heath, 1995). The way schools care about the students they teach is reflected in the way the schools care about the families from which their students come (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003). “Appropriate education for poor children ... can only be devised in consultation with adults who share their culture.... Parents, teachers...and members of poor communities

must be allowed to participate fully in the discussion of what kind of instruction is in their children's best interest" (Delpit, 1995, p. 45). This is a necessary strategy not only for children from poor families but for building culturally responsive school-community relationships. The content taught and teaching the strategies used by teachers should be congruent with the learners' cultural frames of reference (Vygotsky, 1978; Freire, 1998; Banks, 2001; Delpit, 2002). This agrees with the social constructivist framework of knowing which holds that effective understanding unfolds in the direction of culturally appropriate teaching practices (Vygotsky, 1978; Billings, 1995; Chan, 2003). Frequent communication among school officials, families and the surrounding community helps students to receive a common message about the importance of school, working hard, thinking creatively, helping one another and staying in school (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003). Leadership in culturally responsive schools makes sure that the content being taught is meaningful to students. This is consistent with Reynolds, Murrill, & Whitt's findings that, "To learn, people must be at certain readiness levels, be open to learning, be responsive to teaching, feel empowered and appropriately challenged, and know a sense of safety and trust" (Murrill, & Whitt's 2006, p. 125).

Leaders in culturally responsive schools also model the development of school-community relationships that promote cultural responsiveness. Taylor & Whittaker, (2003) suggest that "School-family-community partnerships can improve school programs and climate, create a family like school, provide support and family services, increase parent and family skills and leadership, serve as school-community liaisons, and help teachers" (p. 49). Some of the leadership behaviors that promote positive school-community relationships include:

- a) Constant reviews of the school curriculum so that it continues to address issues related to cultural responsiveness. In culturally responsive schools, families and community provide educators with the necessary “support for school reforms, curriculum reform, assistance in learning about the cultures of students, and support for immigrant families and students” (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003, p. 49)
- b) organizing meetings with parents to discuss teaching and learning problems that the teachers and students are experiencing (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003; Borko, 2004; Madsen & Mabokela, 2005)
- c) regularly reviewing school policies to make sure that they address issues of concern to parents and other community members. Low-income and minority parents see education as a means to a better life for their children, and thus desire to participate in school related business (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Banks & McGee, 1999).
- d) recognition of the family as part of the school and acknowledging its strengths, cultural beliefs, expectations and economic constraints help the school facilitate the family’s involvement. Specific behaviors associated with celebrating family involvement include frequent meetings in community facilities rather than in school, allowing parents and guardians to be involved in setting the agenda for school-community meetings, attending meetings conducted by parents/families, arranging meetings at times that are convenient both to the school and the parents, showing deliberate acceptance of language differences, creating community liaisons, facilitating supportive networks for parents and guardians and providing



families with opportunities to share their strengths with other families (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003).

#### Gaps Found in the Literature Reviewed

There are some gaps in the literature reviewed for this study. Both traditional and modern definitions of leadership do not address culturally responsive leadership. In the light of the ever-changing demographics, there is a need to define leadership in terms of how it should be carried out in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. The models of leadership reviewed in this chapter seem focused on goal achievement, but they do not say how leadership should respond to the current demographic changes that characterize today's educational institutions. Because of my experiences as a student, a teacher and now a researcher, I strongly believe that the success of any school leader depends on the leader's accurate interpretation of cultural cues. Most of the literature that I reviewed was on culturally responsive teaching and counseling rather than culturally responsive leadership. This gap provides me with an opportunity to carry out a study on culturally responsive leadership. The small body of literature on culturally responsive leadership indicates that school leaders need more information to improve the ways they lead teachers and students in schools with diverse demographics and cultures. Research on culturally responsive schools provides no clear description of how leadership helps such schools to be inclusive thus more research is needed on how effective school leaders facilitate learning for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

#### Summary

The review of literature covered four broad areas: the concepts of leadership in general and school leadership in particular, alternative models of leadership, the concept

of culture, and cultural responsiveness in schools. Both traditional and modern definitions of leadership were discussed. Six alternative models of leadership were discussed, first from a general perspective and then from a school leadership perspective. Multicultural education as well as cultural responsiveness and its variations were described. Culturally responsive schools were described. Finally, gaps in the literature related to this study's research question were identified.

### CHAPTER III

#### RESEARCH METHODS

This research used an in-depth case study to critically analyze and describe how leadership in a culturally and linguistically diverse public high school is enacted. The study used the grounded theory to guide its methodology. In this study, I wanted to understand what things mean, how they happen, and the different ways in which the events in the school could be understood.

Using the grounded theory lens includes interviewing people, analyzing their responses, observing them, and listening to their social interactions (Patton, 2002). The grounded theory approach to research ensures the accuracy of the information used to describe the phenomenon under study. In this study, I used grounded theory to enhance the analysis of the data that I collected for this study. “When researchers use the term *grounded theory*, they are usually referring to ...analytical steps, but the term can also apply to a method of inquiry itself” (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 42). As a research methodology, “the grounded theory approach is a way of conceptualizing the similarities of experiences of an aggregate of individuals. It is a discovery-oriented approach to research, which offers a set of procedures for collecting data and building theory” (Rudestam & Newton, 2002, p. 43). For this study, I collected data from teachers, parents, and the culturally responsive leader. In addition, I also reviewed institutional artifacts related to culturally responsive leadership (CRL) and pedagogy. Throughout the study, I used grounded theory to inform the analysis of data. One of the follow-up

questions that I consistently asked the participants was to explain to me why they acted in the ways that I observed or said something that I heard. I also paid special attention to the context in which actions and statements were made. Because grounded theory focuses on generating theory from social research (Patton, 2002), responses to this persistent follow-up question helped to clarify what I observed and listened to and kept me grounded in the realities of the participants' lived experiences. The data that I collected spoke to the research question. For comparative purposes, I wove my past and present experiences into the analysis of the data that I collected. According to Denzin & Lincoln, (2003) the strategies of grounded theory include (a) simultaneous collection and analysis of data, (b) a two-step data coding process, (c) comparative methods, (d) memo writing aimed at the construction of conceptual analyses, (e) sampling to refine the research's emerging themes and categories, and (f) integration of theoretical framework. Likewise, for this study, I derived meaning and concepts for this research from the information that was systematically collected and analyzed.

Categories must be developed from analysis of the collected data and must fit them; these categories must explain the data they subsume. Thus grounded theories cannot shop their disciplinary stores for preconceived concepts and dress their data in them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 251)

For a qualitative study like this one, any concept that was identified had to earn its way into the analysis, categories, and themes that emerged from the data (Glaser, 1978). By getting close to the persons and activities in the school that my dissertation committee and I selected, I was able to collect data from multiple sources—observations, conversations, formal interviews, public records, institutional artifacts, and journals—all

of which helped to describe how culturally responsive leadership was acted out in a school.

In this study, I explored culturally responsive leadership in a culturally diverse school, elicited multiple constructed realities by studying the situation holistically, and delved in depth into complexities and processes of this little-researched phenomenon (Marshall, 1985). The leader that I observed and shadowed in this study worked in a school with a culturally and linguistically diverse student and teacher population. The community from which the students come is also linguistically, economically, and culturally diverse. I also learned from all participants that the community had a large number of single-parent families, most of them headed by women.

Surprisingly, little is known about leadership in culturally diverse educational institutions. Therefore, it was vital for me to collect the perspectives of teachers, parents, and the school leader when trying to describe how leadership in culturally diverse schools is acted out. Mishna (2004) recommends that a study using interviews and observations requires qualitative methodology to capture the context, personal interpretations, and experiences of the participants because “qualitative data . . . privileges individuals’ lived experience . . . and increasing our understanding of the views of children and adults is key to developing interventions” (p. 235). Patton (2002) asserts that “qualitative designs are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest, e.g. group” (p. 39).

#### Preliminary Study

The purpose of the preliminary study was to select one leader who best exemplified culturally responsive leadership with students, teachers, and parents. To do

this, I elicited the help of an expert panel that helped to identify several potential culturally responsive leaders.

#### *Expert Panel Nominations*

My dissertation committee members identified possible expert committee members by recommending names of experts. The experts assisted in the selection of several potential school leaders for the preliminary study. The expert committee was comprised of four university professors, one district superintendent, and a school principal. All of the nominated university professors had experience working with school leaders in Central and South Texas.

To invite each of the expert committee members, I wrote a letter informing them that they had been nominated by my dissertation committee to help identify potential leaders who met the description from the literature-based characteristics. In the letter of invitation to the experts, I first introduced myself and provided the title and purpose of my dissertation study. The letter also provided details of the purpose of the expert committee and explained that the members had been identified by my dissertation committee as the best individuals to help select a truly culturally responsive school leader for the study. In the same letter, I also provided the potential expert committee members with a detailed explanation of the characteristics of culturally responsive leaders identified in the literature. I expressed my confidence that each of the potential expert committee members were the very best people to help me select a leader who best exemplified cultural responsiveness. Appendix A shows the letter and Appendix B shows the expected list of characteristics for the school leader to be selected for the study. Once

the expert committee members agreed to participate, I approached and met with each of the members individually to discuss nominations.

### *Participants in the Preliminary Study*

The expert panelists made their nominations, and I visited the schools where the nominated leaders worked to invite them to participate in the preliminary study. Four of the nominated school leaders participated in the preliminary study. Teachers from each of the four schools also agreed to participate by completing surveys on the participating leader's level of cultural responsiveness.

On agreed upon dates, I visited each of the schools, collected surveys I had previously distributed to teachers who had volunteered for the study, and interviewed the leaders in order to establish each leader's level of cultural responsiveness. These data helped me to identify the leader who best exemplified culturally responsive leadership.

All volunteer teachers at each of the schools completed the same survey that was completed by the expert committee. The survey was drawn from literature-based characteristics of a culturally responsive leader. The teacher survey results were part of the data I used to select the final participant. I asked each participating leader to specify the total number of teachers in the school to help me prepare sufficient surveys for all the teachers.

The packets that I submitted to each teacher included a survey and a return envelope for the survey. A cover letter served as the first page of the survey (Rea & Parker, 2005). That cover letter informed the teacher of the date when I was going to collect the completed surveys. The instructions for completing the survey were included in the same letter. Appendixes E and F show the cover letter and the survey, respectively.

### *Preliminary Data-gathering*

The purpose of the preliminary data-collection was to select a school leader who best exemplified culturally responsive leadership. For this study, I collected data that described each of the leader's schools in order to show demographic characteristics of students and teachers. Some of the students' demographic characteristics included socio-economic background, race, ethnicity, and language(s). During the preliminary study, I ascertained and documented the ethnicity of the leader and the teachers. It is important to secure this information from the participants instead of assuming the information by observation (Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004).

*Data from preliminary interviews.* The basic interview questions that I asked the school leaders were derived from the study's research question and from an additional question. I also elicited new questions from the participants that enhanced the interviews. The questions for the preliminary interviews are included in Appendix E. The interview questions probed for information related to how the leaders understood culturally responsive leadership within their contexts. The interview questions for the preliminary interviews follow:

1. How does the school leader understand culturally responsive leadership? For the school leader, what makes culturally responsive leadership different from other types of leadership?
2. What experiences have helped the school leader to become culturally responsive?
3. How does the school leader model cultural responsiveness?
4. What other personal and professional attributes of the school leader combine with the leader's cultural responsiveness to make her or him a successful leader?



5. How does the school leader influence teachers and others to be cultural responsive?
6. Specifically, how does the school leader foster culturally responsive pedagogy?
7. How do teachers in the leader's school demonstrate cultural responsiveness?
8. Are there any other questions that the leader feels I needed to ask to help me describe the school leader's cultural responsiveness and its effects?

I later adapted this basic interview protocol for the first interviews that I conducted with teachers and parents during the primary study.

*Data from surveys with teachers.* Teachers completed a survey with the list of literature-based characteristics of a culturally responsive leader. I asked teachers who volunteered for the primary study to sign the consent form in Appendix F. Appendix G lists the literature-based characteristics of a culturally responsive leader and instructions for completing the survey. Since teachers and the expert committee members completed the same survey, I was able to compare the results from the expert committee survey to those from the teacher survey.

#### *Preliminary Data Analysis*

One way to think about analysis is that it begins at the same time a study does—at the conceptualization stage. The conceptual framework of the study, the research questions, the strategy for research and the design, and the genre to which your study links—all these provide the preliminary foreshadowing of the analysis. (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 270)

The main purpose of the preliminary data analysis was to rank the four leaders and then select one leader who emerged as the outstanding culturally responsive leader.

My experiences from the preliminary study and the results helped me to modify data-gathering strategies for the primary study. From the data, I was able to describe the characteristics of each leader, and determine each school leader's level of cultural responsiveness.

*Analysis of data from preliminary interviews.* I prepared a scoring guide for the interviews. To score the guide, I listened to the responses of each leader to the interview questions, and I scored each aspect. The scoring guide for the preliminary interviews is included in Appendix O. By comparing the nominated leaders' responses to the literature on culturally responsive leadership, I was able to select the leader who best exemplified culturally responsive leadership. I then invited that leader to participate in the primary study.

Every researcher is concerned about how to ask *good* questions, ones that will take the research to a productive conclusion . . . A good question is one that leads the researcher to answers that serve the developing of theoretical formulation. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 75-76)

For my study, the questions that I used in the interview guide served three main purposes as suggested by Strauss & Corbin (1998). The questions include sensitizing, theoretical, practical, and structural questions. Throughout this study, sensitizing questions guided me to understand what the data might be indicating. Examples of such questions include (1) how do the interviewees define culturally responsive leadership? (2) what is meaning of culturally responsive leadership to the participants? and (3) what do the various actors do in promoting culturally responsive leading? Theoretical questions helped me understand the processes and how they connect among the categories. Such

questions included the following: How does culturally responsive leadership differ from other forms of leadership? How do the events in this type of leadership differ from those in the other known types of leadership? Practical and structural questions define the nature of the phenomenon under this study. These questions helped me design the primary study, including the development of interview questions for the main study.

After each interview, I immediately transcribed the interview tapes and then identified categories for classifying each set of data. I read the transcripts repeatedly and then coded the transcripts to identify the emerging themes and categories. I used a qualitative thematic strategy to analyze the data. In this process, the first analysis activity involved identification of categories for classifying data. I kept the data from each interview separate, and I used that data to develop a descriptive picture of each leader, including themes that characterized the leader's level of cultural responsiveness.

I began all the preliminary data analysis by using microanalysis, or line-by-line analysis, to identify preliminary analytic categories "with the aim of generating the mid-level theory to explain the phenomenon of interest" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 274). "Usually when a person sees words, he or she will assign meaning to them, derived from common usage or experience" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 60). Therefore, the microanalysis process allowed participants to contribute to the interpretations by giving "in vivo concepts that will further stimulate our analyses" (Strauss & Corbin, p. 65). After identifying the categories and preliminary themes, I immediately moved the level of data analysis from microanalysis to holistic strategies as suggested by various researchers (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

*Analysis of data from surveys.* I summarized survey data for each case study in tabular form and graphical representation. Using the scores from the survey results, I calculated means and ranked the leaders according to overall means. I compared the data from the surveys to the narrative analysis of the interviews that I had conducted with each of the nominated leaders. This allowed me to give an overall, preliminary rank to each leader.

#### *Description of Leaders for the Preliminary Study*

The preliminary study included one principal and two assistant principals from three different elementary schools and one high school assistant principal. Here, I describe each of the school leaders, the communities the schools serve, the schools, and the results of the surveys and interviews.

*Ms. Faith Dean, Assistant Principal.* Faith is an African American female assistant principal at Washington High School. She has been in that position for three years. Faith has a degree in social work in addition to her teaching and administrative certifications. Faith taught reading in a middle school before she moved to Washington High School, where she had been for four years.

Faith described the community served by the school as being composed of two neighborhoods. There was a very affluent neighborhood, and a rapidly growing low income neighborhood. Faith also noted that there was a large number of single parents, mostly women, who sent their children to WHS. Faith described the community as rapidly changing due to the increasing industrial activity in the town. The arrival of a computer software company had led to a number of changes in demographics.

WHS was the only ninth grade campus in Alamo ISD. Student enrolment was 869 students, with 88 faculty members. Of the 869 students, 17% were African American, 36% were Hispanic, 44% were White, 1% were Native American, and 3% were Asian/Pacific Islander. Of the 88 teachers in the school, 2% were African American, 10% Hispanic, 90% White, 2% Native American, and 2% other. The percentages of male and female teachers were 31% and 69%, respectively. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students at WHS was 33%, and 47% of the student population was classified as “at risk.”

A total of seven teachers completed the survey on Faith’s cultural responsiveness. Her teachers ranked her very high in ten of the fifteen areas described in the survey. Some of the teachers felt that she needed to do more in community engagement and more using of data to assess the culturally responsive levels of her teachers. The leader’s strongest points were perceived to be how she reflected on her own culture, how her cultural identity affected others, and how she tried to understand the values and traditions of others in order to make improvements in teaching and learning.

During my interview with Faith, she provided me statistics that demonstrated that the community served by the school was increasingly changing. The data showed that the school environment mirrored the demographics of the state of Texas and the U.S. in general. Faith had recently graduated with a Master’s degree in educational administration from a university in Central Texas, where she had taken courses on diversity. During the interview, she demonstrated a clear understanding of how the school’s community influenced her leadership style. In addition to articulating her philosophy of education, which included a commitment to inclusiveness, she discussed

experiences that helped her embrace cultural responsiveness. She also described how she is currently involved in working with teachers to foster culturally responsive pedagogy in their classrooms. Throughout the preliminary interview, Faith put cultural responsiveness at the center of her leadership activities in the school. A tour of the school allowed me to observe displays related to cultural responsiveness in the hallways and in the classrooms that I visited. One of Faith's assignments was to diversify the teaching staff. Faith demonstrated to me that she had already made changes to recruitment interview guides to include questions related to diversity.

*Ms. Helen Fortune, Principal.* Ms. Helen Fortune, principal of Darwin Elementary School, is a female American White of a German descent. She has traveled extensively within the U.S. In the 1950s her family was a typical middle class family in Los Angeles. They later moved to Texas because of her father's work. She attended elementary school in San Fernando Texas. The school had a large Jewish population and students celebrated Jewish holidays along with Christian holidays. At home, her parents spoke German. Helen has been working at the same school for 20 years. During those 20 years, she held positions of classroom teacher for 12 years, assistant principal for 2 years, and principal for six years. "So I have seen the change in the diversity at our school," she said. She attended Dialer University where she graduated with a degree in Speech and Hearing Therapy. Helen pointed out that she had always wanted to be a teacher. She started her teaching career teaching at a rural school in northern Alabama before she moved to Mt. Darwin Elementary.

Helen described the community served by her school as middle class. Most of the families in the community owned their own homes. She pointed out that there was only

one apartment complex, where about 100 students lived. Helen described the community as diverse. She believed that the community was very positive and supportive regarding the school. “They are very excited to be involved in the school. The parents come into the school to use their different talents to support the school.”

There were 752 students currently enrolled at Mt. Darwin Elementary School. Of these students, 2% were African American, 5% were Hispanic, 49% were white, and 44% were Asian/Pacific Islander. The school had a total of 60 teachers whose ethnicity breakdown was 3% Hispanic, 93% White, and 4% Asian/Pacific Islanders. The percentages of male and female teachers were 10% and 90%, respectively. Five percent of students were economically disadvantaged, and 21% were classified as “at risk.”

Ten of Helen’s teachers completed the survey. She was highly ranked by the participating teachers on her cultural responsiveness. One teacher thought that the leader was not democratic enough when developing an inclusive school vision, and another teacher thought that she did not put enough emphasis on cultural responsiveness to improve performance of underachieving groups. Generally, the leader was ranked high in culturally responsive leadership by both the expert panelists who nominated her and the teachers who completed the survey.

In my interview with Helen, she discussed her experience as a teacher and assistant principal before she became a principal. Helen revealed that there were leadership and teaching challenges related to the diverse demographics in her school. She displayed her school vision and mission in the school’s front office. From our conversations, Helen clearly demonstrated that her leadership style was linked to the school vision; *A school for developing talent where everyone is a learner, a contributor,*

*and a decision maker.* She connected the school vision to cultural responsiveness when she pointed out that in her school everyone learns from each other as a result of their diverse cultural backgrounds. Helen stated that diversity in the demographics of the school and the community influenced how she enacted her leadership role. Helen allowed me to visit classrooms and experience the environment while I looked for evidence that the school would be suitable for carrying out this study. Helen's definition of cultural responsiveness follows:

I would define it as first understanding my cultural perspectives, and then the different cultural perspectives represented by different groups of people, and then the responsive part of it is having a wide lens that is inclusive, not trying to figure out who has got it wrong but just understanding what the perspectives are and, as a school, how can we best meet the needs of all these different cultures that are represented at our school.

*Ms. Amanda Rosas, Assistant Principal.* Amanda, an assistant principal at Lundi Park Elementary School, is a Mexican American, born in Corpus Christi, Texas, where she lived the first five years of her life before her family moved to Northwest Texas. She attended a university in Central Texas and graduated with a teaching degree. Amanda started teaching in 2001. During her first year of teaching she was also enrolled in a Master's program. After receiving a Master's degree in education, Amanda moved to her current school, where she worked as a teacher for four years. When I interviewed Amanda she was still in her first year as an assistant principal. However, as a teacher leader prior to becoming an



assistant principal, Amanda headed many different committees and was the leader for a team of 10 teachers. She explained “As an administrative leader I would say I am very green. This is my first year, so I am definitely just absorbing things; just taking in things in.”

The community served by Lundi Park Elementary School is largely middle class. The majority of the parents were Whites. According to Amanda, the mainstream population of the community was more active in the parent teacher association (PTA) when compared to the minority groups. Due to this situation, she was still trying to reach out to the minority parents in order to involve them. Amanda understood that cultural responsiveness involves the inclusion of all groups.

Lundi Park Elementary School had a total enrollment of 1,021 students. Of this student body, 6% were African American, 18% were Hispanic, 68% were White, 8% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and the rest were Native American. The school had a total of 65 teachers, and their ethnicity breakdown was as follows: 5% African American, 8% Hispanic, and 87% White. The percentage of male teachers was 2% and the other 98% were female. Four percent of the school’s students were economically disadvantaged, and 15% were classified as “at risk.”

A total of five of teachers from Amanda’s school completed the survey to describe her level of cultural responsiveness. One teacher thought that Amanda was not democratic enough when developing an inclusive school vision and another teacher thought that she did not put improving the performance of underachieving groups at the center of her leadership. Further analysis of the survey showed that the teachers did not

believe they had known Amanda long enough to participate in the study. This may have accounted for the wide range of responses to survey questions.

During the interview, I scored Amanda's responses against the fifteen literature-based characteristics. She scored high in seven of the characteristics. However, her philosophy of education was not clearly stated. The description of the school showed that the diversity of the teachers and student populations presented some challenges in modeling leadership roles in ways that would help teachers and students to overcome challenges related to diversity. The community that the school served was mostly upper socioeconomic status and the majority of the families were White. Her description of how she modeled CRL revealed that, although she showed interest in the subject, Amanda did not have adequate experience to inform this study. In addition, the number of teachers who actually knew her well enough to inform the study did not meet the requirement of six teachers. Amanda did display a high level of understanding of the behaviors that she expected teachers to demonstrate in relation to cultural responsiveness.

*Ms. Elizabeth Desouza, Assistant Principal.* Elizabeth is a White who was born in Dallas, Texas. She lived there with her parents before they moved to Florida when she was still in elementary school. She also went to high school in Florida. After graduating from high school, she received a teaching degree and then taught in New Mexico for two years before moving to her current school. When she got married, she and her husband moved back to Texas where she has been living for the past eleven and a half years. Elizabeth started teaching in 1997. During her third year of teaching, she studied for a Master's degree in education. She has taught in three different elementary schools, two in the same district. As a teacher, Elizabeth realized that she could help her school improve

by paying attention to students of color. At the time of the study, Elizabeth had been at the same school for three and a half years.

Elizabeth described the community served by Peterhouse Elementary School as being of mostly high and middle socioeconomic status. The majority of the people in the community were White and Asian Pacific Islanders. Parents were very supportive of the school, and they participated in a range of parent-teacher activities. Most of the families owned their own homes.

Peterhouse Elementary School had a total enrolment of 650 students. Of this student body, 1% was African American, 6% were Hispanic, 62% were White, 30% were Asian/Pacific Islander, with 1%, Native American. The school had a total of 56 teachers, and their ethnicity breakdown was 1% African American, 4% Hispanic, and 95% White. The percentage of male teachers was 12%, and 88% were females. Two percent of the students were classified as economically disadvantaged. Fourteen percent of the students were classified as “at risk.”

Results from the surveys on Elizabeth’s cultural responsiveness revealed that the teachers ranked her high. A total of eight teachers completed the survey. Personal information from the teachers showed that three of the teachers had not known the leader for more than three months when the teachers were surveyed. Therefore, these three teachers did not have enough experience working with Elizabeth to provide well-informed ratings on her cultural responsiveness.

Preliminary interview results convinced me that Elizabeth understood what cultural responsiveness entails. Her definition of cultural responsiveness included the fact that it “involves recognizing and accepting that students who come from different

cultures have different ways of doing things, and taking that understanding to help students use their experiences to be able to learn better.” During the interview, Elizabeth’s responses indicated she did not have a clear understanding of how cultural responsiveness differs from other forms of leadership. However, Elizabeth clearly showed an understanding of those teaching behaviors and characteristics that show inclusiveness and embrace diversity. Her articulation of the experiences that led her to embrace culturally responsive leadership was not clear.

#### *Selection of the Leader for the Primary Study*

When I had completed the analysis of all the data from the preliminary study, I presented my findings to the dissertation committee. The committee then helped to make the final choice of the leader who participated in the primary study. The dissertation committee and I used a purposeful approach to select the leader for the primary study. A purposeful sampling approach to selection of participants is consistent with other research findings that suggest that purposefully selected participants are rich with information regarding the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Creswell, 2007). Purposeful selection, therefore, “means that the inquirer selects the individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and a central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125).

The means of expert and teacher ratings for each teacher are shown in table 1. Although receiving a high expert mean, Amanda was not ranked highly by the teachers because they had not known her in a leadership position long enough to assign her high ratings. In addition, Amanda was working directly with only a very small group of teachers to start a culturally responsive program.

Table 1.  
Rating of Leaders by Expert Panelists and Teachers

School Leader	Expert Survey Mean	Teacher Survey Mean
Elizabeth	4.33	5.00
Helen	4.53	4.38
Faith	4.93	4.58
Amanda	4.67	4.50

Helen had twenty years of experience working in the same school, first as a teacher and then later as a principal. Although the student population is highly diverse, the students of color are mostly international students. The percentages of the Hispanic and African American student populations did not reflect the general outlook of Texas and the country at large. Elizabeth received the highest mean from the teachers but the lowest mean from the expert panelists. Faith received the highest mean from the expert panelists and the second highest mean from the teachers.

For the last stage of the selection process, I prepared a presentation on each of the four cases and presented the findings to my dissertation committee. The presentation included a display of the ratings derived from the expert panel and the teachers' surveys, a description of the demographics of each school, and summaries of the preliminary interviews with the four leaders. My dissertation committee and I agreed that the second highest ranked leader, Faith, was the best participant to best able inform this research because her campus and characteristics most nearly resembled the leader and school characteristics that were desired for the study.

*Gaining Entry for the Primary Study*

I made an appointment with Faith during which we discussed her possible participation in the primary study. To refresh her mind on the activities involved, and to ensure complete understanding and commitment to participate in the study, I presented Faith with a flow chart of all the expected activities that were going to be involved in the study. I explained to Faith that I would need to attend all activities and meetings in which she was going to be involved in during each day of the three shadowing sessions. However, I also clarified that if there were any meetings or activities that Faith deemed confidential, I would stay out of the meeting on her advice. I explained that I would also make specific requests to Faith for any artifacts which would help me describe her leadership. After our meeting, I gave Faith time to reflect on the study and her possible participation. Faith took two days to reflect on the invitation, and then agreed to participate. I also consulted with the principal, Ms. Pearl, to ensure that she understood and approved of all research activities in which Faith and the participating teachers would be involved. During our meeting the principal and I agreed that she would decide which school artifacts I would have access to. Appendix H shows the letter that I wrote to Faith inviting her to participate in the primary study. Appendix I shows the consent form that Faith signed in order to participate in the primary study.

After securing the commitment of both the principal and Faith, I met with each of the six teachers who had agreed to participate in the study. The purpose of the meetings was to describe in detail the research activities in which the participants would be involved. I gave all the teachers some time to reflect upon on our meetings, and they all agreed to participate. A parent representative served as a liaison to parents who agreed to

participate in this study. A total of ten volunteered to participate in the study, but once the study was underway, only nine were able to participate.

After identifying the leader for the primary study, I visited the school regularly for a few days and mixed with the school community, parents, and the students. During the first week, I walked the hallways and talked casually to teachers and students. This helped teachers and students to become used to my presence, so that by the time the actual research started for the primary study, I had blended into the school community. During that period, I located the classrooms of the teachers who had volunteered to participate in the study. Also, since for part of the study I had to shadow the leader, it was important for me to spend a day walking around with the leader to have opportunities to meet individuals and groups throughout the school community. I made sure that the students and the school community saw me walking around with the leader and talking to the teachers who had volunteered to take participate in the study. All six teachers and nine parents who agreed to participate in this study signed consent forms for the primary study. Appendixes K and L show the consent forms that teachers and parents signed respectively.

### Primary Study

#### *Participants in the Primary Study*

*The school leader.* Results from the preliminary data analysis informed the selection of the school leader who best exemplified culturally responsive leadership. For the main study, I shadowed Ms. Faith Deans, the selected leader, for three full school days to gather data relative to the research questions. I interviewed the school leader after each shadowing session to clarify and expand upon the observations.

*Teachers.* The same six teachers from the preliminary study participated in three classroom observations each teacher and three group interviews. After each classroom observation with each teacher, I asked follow-up questions to individual teachers to clarify certain observations related to cultural responsiveness. I also gathered information from teacher artifacts relative to the cultural responsiveness of the school leader and the teachers.

*Parents.* A group of nine volunteer parents participated in two interviews in which I asked them questions relative to the study's research question. The parents were purposely selected to provide a diversity of gender, race and ethnicity. The parents were selected with the help of a parent co-coordinator who was contacted by the leader herself.

#### *Data-Gathering for the Primary Study*

In the primary study, I collected information through in-depth interviews, eighteen classroom observations and mining of artifacts relevant to the research questions. "The essence of a case study . . . is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (Yin, 2003, p. 12). This study intended to uncover and describe the participants' perspectives on culturally responsive leadership. Therefore, the study focused on the participants' present and past experiences with the phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Qualitative data allow researchers to understand lived experiences, thus increasing understanding of the participants' views that will give researchers knowledge about using effective interventions (Mishna, 2004; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As advised by a number of experienced qualitative researchers, for this study I used multiple data sources



and multiple data-gathering techniques as a basis for triangulation (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

*Shadowing of Faith.* Shadowing involved spending time with the Faith and following her around the campus and observing and taking field notes on all the work activities in which the leader Ms. Deans engaged. Shadowing also involved focusing close attention on the leader in order to record detailed information about what the leader did in particular contexts (Wolcott, 1973). For this study, I took the advice from Wolcott, who sees shadowing as

maintaining a constant written record of what I [the researcher] observe[s] in the behavior and conversations; attending formal and informal meetings and conferences; accompanying him on school business away from the building as well as occasionally accompanying him to non-school settings; interviewing everybody; and with his permission, sifting through notes, records, and files. (Wolcott, 1973, p. 3)

Shadowing was chosen for data collection because of several advantages that it offers: the researcher is better able to capture the context in which behaviors are manifested, discovers and clarifies certain issues with the participant in a first-hand approach, and “can see things that may routinely escape the awareness among the people in the setting” (Patton, 2002, p. 262), the researcher also can see behaviors and listen to contextual conversations that may not arise during interviewing, and the researcher’s shadowing eliminates the idea of participants selecting what they would like the researcher to know and leaving out what they may not like to share (Patton, 2002).

Likewise, Creswell (1998) views shadowing as an

ethnographic-type account of the actual behavior of people occupying roles in professional education, contextualized not only in terms of the formally organized institution in which they work but also in terms of their lives as human beings interacting within the context of a broader cultural milieu. (p. 324)

During the shadowing sessions, I did not ask the leader any questions in order to let the leader do her work without any interruptions.

I shadowed the leader for three full days, at the beginning, middle and end of the study. During the shadowing sessions, I took detailed field notes and drew sketch diagrams which I used to remember most details that I had observed. In the notes, I wrote down questions about certain observations and comments that I felt needed clarification. I then used the questions to develop follow-up interview questions with the school leader. Wolcott (1973) advises that during shadowing the focus of the observations should only be

drawn to such aspects of the principal's life as the who, what, where, and when of his personal encounters, the cultural themes manifested in his behavior and his attempts to influence the behavior of those about him and the paradoxes inherent in the role of the principal. (Wolcott, 1998, p. 326)

Therefore, I made detailed notes in long hand, in complete and legible form, on all of the observations made during the shadowing process.

Field notes represent an attempt to provide a literal account of what happened in the field setting—the social processes and their contexts. . . . What eventually gets recorded depends on the style and preference of the

researcher, the research questions being asked and the particulars of the setting and the methods used to record data. (Bogdewic, 1999, p. 59)

I wrote brief notes during observations and detailed notes immediately following the day of shadowing (Wolcott, 1998; Stringer, 1999). I typed the notes into Word documents. I tape recorded all conversations that the school leader gave me permission to tape. Within 48 hours of each shadowing session with the leader, I conducted a follow-up interview with the school leader.

*Interviews with Faith.* Faith participated in three different interviews, each following a day of shadowing. Each interview was divided into two sections. Questions from section one were designed to clarify what I had observed while shadowing Faith. The second section contained new questions for the study. Questions for the first interview session were informed by the preliminary study and the first day of shadowing. The interview questions for the second interview were informed by the first two shadowing sessions and the first interview. Interview questions for the third interview with the leader were informed by all three shadowing sessions and the first two interviews. During the second part of each interview, I asked new questions for the study.

*Classroom observations.* I conducted three classroom observations with each of the six teachers who were interviewed. During the classroom observations, I looked for classroom behaviors, intentions, and artifacts that were related to cultural responsiveness. For this research, I paid particular attention to teaching methods to determine if the teachers were using culturally responsive methods. Attention was also paid to classroom management and teacher student interactions. I used an open narrative observation method during the classroom observations (Glickman et al., 2007). With some teachers,

there was a need to add an extra round of classroom observations to those planned to make sure that the data collected were consistent with the earlier observations. I considered those extra observations as an opportunity to learn something new that I wanted to understand for the purpose of improving schools in Zimbabwe.

*Group interviews.* Qualitative studies elucidate what a complete stranger would have to learn to become a routinely functioning member of a group or culture (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Therefore, to get enough information to elucidate, I conducted three in-depth interviews with participating teachers and another set of two interviews with participating parents. Some of the strengths of group interviews are (a) they are comparatively easy to conduct, (b) they have the ability to explore topics and generate hypotheses and (c) they give the researcher the opportunity to collect data from group interaction (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Weaknesses are that the researcher has less control over the data that is generated and there is no assurance that individual behavior will be reflected within a group. However, “what focus groups do best is produce an opportunity to collect data from groups discussing topics of interest to the researcher. In part, this strength reverses some of the weaknesses” (Morgan, 1988, p. 21). Using interviews in qualitative methodology captures context, personal interpretations, and lived experiences of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Mishna, 2004). Marshall and Rossman advise that, “A study focusing on individual lived experience typically relies on an in-depth interview strategy” (2006, p. 55). For this study therefore, I interviewed groups of teachers and parents, using open-ended descriptive questions to collect information. Each time I asked a question, I let the participants engage in a dialogue in relation to the concept that I intended to capture. I listened

carefully and took down notes and mentally prepared any necessary probes to allow the participants to extend and reflect on certain ideas. One strength of open-ended questions is that they guide the participants to give descriptions of a phenomenon. Therefore, group interviews helped me to collect that data that I later used to describe how culturally responsive leadership was enacted in the school. I was able to compare the information from interviews to the data from the observations (Creswell, 2007). I tape recorded all interviews with the permission of the participants, and I transcribed the tapes soon after each interview.

I made follow-up questions to clarify anything that I did not understand. The follow-up questions formed the introductory part of the next interviews with the group. In addition, I maintained flexibility throughout this study to allow for changing interview protocols during data-collection whenever a need for that arose. Lincoln and Guba (1985) advise that flexibility of the design is necessary to allow the research to naturally “unfold, cascade, roll, and emerge on its own” (p. 65). In the same vein, Wolcott (2001) adds that when conducting interviews and observations, it is important to seek clarification until the events and information patterns begin to repeat themselves.

The first of the group interviews with teachers was informed by the preliminary study, thus I only developed the interview questions for the first interview after the preliminary study. Similarly, the second of the three group interviews with the teachers were informed by the first interview, therefore, I developed the questions for the second interview after the first interview. The second interview with the teachers, second shadowing session and interview with the leader, and the second round of lesson observations with teachers all informed the third group interview guide for the teachers.

Therefore, the third interview guide for the teachers was only developed after the second rounds of interviews, lesson observations, and shadowing sessions. I also made three extra lesson observations with two of the teachers because I wanted to confirm and clarify certain teaching behaviors I had observed previously. In addition, interesting phenomena had caught my attention during the earlier observations and I wanted to learn more from those two teachers. All of the teacher interview questions were related to the research question, and they were formulated in parallel manner to the questions that I asked the leader and the parents.

The questions for the first parent interview were informed by the preliminary interview with the school leader. The questions for the second parent interview were informed by the first parent interview, the second and third teachers and leader interviews, shadowing sessions and lesson observations, and thus were only developed after all those research activities. The questions that the parents responded to were designed in a parallel manner to the questions that I asked the leader and the teachers. The structure of each of the interview guides with the parents contained two sections. The first section was meant to clarify certain observations related to what I had learned from the interviews with the leader and teachers. The second section was comprised of interview questions that were formulated in a parallel manner to the leader and teacher interviews.

*Review of institutional artifacts.* I reviewed and analyzed artifacts that were relevant to the research questions, including minutes of staff meetings, logs, samples of students' work, announcements, school policy statements, attendance lists, records and classroom and hallway displays. "The greatest strength of content analysis [of artifacts] is

that it is unobtrusive and nonreactive: It can be conducted without disturbing the setting in any way. The researcher determines where the emphasis lies after the data has been gathered” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 108). In addition, Marshall & Rossman’s (2006) note that review of artifacts gives researchers

...knowledge on the history and context surrounding a specific setting [that] comes, in part, from reviewing documents. Researchers supplement participant observation, interviewing, and observation with gathering and analyzing documents produced in the course of everyday events or constructed specifically for the research at hand. (p. 107)

The information that I collected from the artifacts, including documents, provided details on how culturally responsive leadership was performed and how it influenced teaching behaviors. Additionally, staff meeting records added historical context of how leadership was being used to help teachers understand the importance of cultural responsiveness.

#### *Data Analysis for Primary Study*

“Qualitative researchers study spoken and written records of human experience including transcribed talk, films, novels and photographs” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 42). Qualitative data analysis involves reading through transcripts and combing through the data, generating categories and themes, data coding and interpreting information (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). To do this, I read all the transcripts several times to become familiar with the data, then I coded the transcripts using codes that emerged from the data. A code is “a word or short phrase that captures and signals what is going on in a piece of data in a way that links it to some

general analysis issue” (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p. 286). Merriam (1998, p. 167) adds that “coding involves labeling passages of text according to content, and retrieving is providing means to collect similarly labeled passages” units of analysis for the coding were complete thoughts.

Data for this study came from four sources: shadowing of Faith; interviews with Faith, teachers, and parents; classroom observations; and school and classroom artifacts. I began data analysis as soon as I made the first collection of data, and the analysis ran parallel to the data-collection process throughout the study. In the primary study, data analysis involved using analytical codes to identify and sort data into broad categories and sub-categories that I identified during preliminary data analysis. Categories reflect the purpose of the research and help to answer the research questions (Merriam, 1998).

One question that I asked each time when reading the transcripts was, “What did the participants say about what the leader does?” The following three categories emerged from the preliminary data that I collected: (a) what the leader *does with people*, (b) what the leader does in relation to *curriculum and instruction*, (c) and what the leader does with *the school environment*. Sub-categories help to broaden categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Rossman and Rallis, 2003). To help develop clear subcategories, I asked questions specifying when, where, why and how a certain phenomenon happened during the interviews, observations and review of documents. The following subcategories emerged from the data: timing consistency of events, environments in which events took place, why they took place, and how the behaviors took place. I constantly compared the data that I collected to the available theories of leadership in education in order to establish how culturally responsive leadership extends the concept of educational



leadership (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). “People do not invent the world anew each day. Rather, they draw on what they know to try and understand what they do not know. And that way, they discover what is similar and different about each object and thus define the objects” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 80). The purpose of data analysis in this study was to build on existing theory, and one way of doing this is to use the current study to say what it teaches us about other cases (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

*Data from shadowing Faith.* After each day of shadowing, I transcribed all the handwritten field notes into electronic Word documents while the ideas were still fresh on my mind. During the data-collection process, I reviewed the typed notes and coded the information by identifying themes emerging from the data. During the data analysis process, I recorded codes and their definitions in a master list. For easier display of data, I entered the data on a display chart for each interview question. The interview questions were related to the overarching research question, and categories and themes that emerged from the field notes. Analysis of data from each day of shadowing helped me to formulate questions for follow-up interviews with the school leader. As the analysis of data continued to develop, I collapsed some of the themes that carried the same meaning.

*Data from interviews.* After each interview, I immediately transcribed the interview tapes, and then identified any new categories for classifying each set of data. After reading the transcripts repeatedly, I open coded the transcripts to identify the emerging themes within specified categories (Patton, 2002; Mishna, 2004; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Discovering categories involves grouping the coded information according to similarities of more abstract higher-order concepts based on how they explain what was going on in the school (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Rossman and Rallis,

2003). Such grouping of concepts into categories helped to reduce the groups of units that I had to work with to describe what was going on at WHS.

Data are broken into discrete incidents, ideas, events, and acts and are then given a name that represents or stands for these. The name may be one placed on the objects by the analyst because of the imagery or meaning they evoke when examined comparatively and in context...As we continue with our data analysis, if we come across another object, event, act, or happening that we identify through *comparative analysis* as sharing some common characteristics with an object or happening, then we give it the same name, that is, place it into the same code. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 105)

Based on analysis of the first set of group interviews, I developed a list of questions for a follow-up interview of each group. In like manner, the questions for the second and third interviews with the school leader were informed by the previous interviews with the leader as well as the shadowing that preceded each of these interviews.

A qualitative thematic strategy was used to analyze the data that I collected for this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). First, I identified categories for classifying data, and then placed all the data into the categories in order to identify the themes that emerged from that categorization. As the thematic structures and overarching constructs emerged during data analysis, I continued to use the interview transcripts to stay grounded in the foundation of the study. I used direct quotes to enhance and match the categories and themes that emerged from the transcripts that I had typed. During the

process of transcribing and analyzing interview data, I went back to the participants for clarification as needed. Asking questions and making theoretical comparisons with the participants helped me to obtain meaning of observed and spoken happenings that may otherwise seem obscure. I was also able to discover other dimensions that would have remained undiscovered. This way, I was able to “suggest further interview questions or observations based on evolving theoretical analysis” (Strauss & Corbin, p. 85). I entered the categories and themes that emerged from the transcripts and analysis that were related to the research questions on the data displays that I developed for each interview question.

*Data from classroom observations.* I read all classroom observations notes and then analyzed and coded information for categories and themes. I also reviewed diagrams and sketches to identify and further analyze details of the leader’s actions and behaviors. To enhance the analysis of anything that was not clear to me, I clarified the content by asking questions to the participants (Adler and Adler, 1987; Wolcott, 2001; Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Categories and themes that emerged during the observations were compared with categories and themes that emerged from the interviews, shadowing of the leader, analysis of institutional artifacts, and from the staff meetings.

*Data from artifacts.* To analyze data from artifacts, I created a document summary form and attached it to any artifact that I analyzed (Merriam, 1998). The summary form helped me to place the artifacts into the context of the study and to link the information from the artifact to the purpose of the study. I also related each artifact to the individual who used it, the purpose, timing and the targeted audience. I was also able to formulate follow-up questions to clarify with the participants the purpose of each

artifact. When analyzing summary documents, I was able to use many of the same codes that I had used to analyze the data from shadowing the school leader, interviews, and classroom observations. Coding the data from the artifacts enabled me to assign units of meaning to that data (Merriam, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Archival evidence enabled me to describe culturally responsive behaviors of the principal from a historical context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). I looked for information regarding school-level policy statements as they related to culturally responsive leadership. Other artifacts that I reviewed included staff meeting minutes, announcements, samples of students' work, classroom and office displays. I used any new category that emerged from archival data to further analyze information from other data sources.

Documents, closer to speech, require more contextualized interpretation.

Records, on the other hand, may have local uses that become very distant from officially sanctioned meanings. However, it is important to know that researchers may be able to get access to documents, whereas access to records may be restricted by laws regarding privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 111)

As with other types of data, categories and themes relevant to particular research questions were also entered on data display charts that I developed for the research question.

### Trustworthiness

Various types of triangulation assured trustworthiness of results of my research. Triangulation provides diverse ways of looking at the same phenomenon, adding to credibility by strengthening confidence in whatever conclusions will be drawn from a

study (Patton, 2002). In this study, I used four types of triangulation that includes triangulation of: methods, sources of data, data analysts, and data-collection periods (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) suggests that each kind of triangulation helps qualitative studies to verify and validate qualitative analysis in different ways:

1. *Methods triangulation*: Verifies consistency of findings generated by different data-collection methods. Methods used in this study included interviewing, observing, shadowing, and mining of archival data
2. *Triangulation of sources*: Verifies consistency of different data sources within the same method. In this study, sources of interview data included the school leader, teachers, parents, and archival data. Data *within* and *across* these sources was compared for consistency
3. *Data-collection periods triangulation*: This form of triangulation is a way of checking for consistency of behaviors and beliefs identified through observations and interviews. In relation to interviews, I checked for consistency in what the participants said about the same thing over a given period. I was also able to compare the participants' views and beliefs over time on the same issues related to culturally responsive leadership. I also used archival data to check for historical consistency. This study lasted for several months, allowing for an adequate period for this type of triangulation

I also considered this advice from Patton (2002) that data from observations may produce different results than interview data. However, that does not necessarily mean that either or both kinds of data are “invalid, although that may be the case...More likely, it means that different kinds of data have captured different things and so the analyst

attempts to understand the reasons for the differences” (p. 560). This understanding helped me explain any differences that manifested themselves in the information that I collected through each form of data collection.

### Ethical Considerations

For confidentiality purposes, in this study pseudonyms were used to refer to the principal, teachers, schools, and the school districts. For the parent participants, all data collected was anonymously labeled. I collected data only from individuals who voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. To make sure that each participant understood what they were going to involve themselves in, I explained to all participants why the information that they volunteered was important for this study and why they are the appropriate people to supply that information. All teachers who participated in this study were informed that they were important to this study because they had experience working with a culturally responsive leader, and therefore they were in unique positions to describe what the principal does and how that influences their teaching approaches. The information collected in this study was treated confidentially. I used all the data that I collected only for the purposes of writing this dissertation and publications related to the dissertation.

I clearly explained the purpose of the study to all the participants and I gave necessary detail about the procedures so that all the participants knew what to expect. I also allowed participants to ask questions regarding anything that they wanted to know about the study. During the study, I scheduled all data-collection sessions in such manner that I did not interfere with the smooth operation of the school processes. I informed all

participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The participants had the right not to respond to any questions they felt uncomfortable answering.

### Summary

The first part of chapter three describes how an expert panel nominated the school leaders to participate in the preliminary study and how interviews with the school leaders and surveys with the teachers helped me to select the culturally responsive school leader who was the focus of the primary study. This chapter also describes each of the four school leaders who participated in the preliminary study. I described how the shadowing of the school leader, interviews, classroom observations, and archival data were gathered to address the study's research question concerning how culturally responsive leadership is enacted in a diversely populated school. I concluded this chapter by describing the data analysis procedures, trustworthiness, and ethics of the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

*How she addresses the students, even when they're doing something wrong—it's not more of "Hey-hey, what are you doing?" It's, "what are you doing Sir... maam... Ms... Mr. I know who you are, you attend my school, I'm here for you to give you directions and help you succeed" And she even comforts them in times of loss... I'm here for you...."* (Latino Male Parent)

The research question guiding this study was “How does a culturally responsive leader of a culturally diverse school enact his or her leadership roles with teachers, students, and parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?” To answer this question, I used a qualitative research approach that involved observing classroom lessons; shadowing the leader; and interviewing the leader, parents, and teachers. I also analyzed institutional artifacts in order to gather more data that I used to describe how the leader conducts her leadership roles with teachers, students, and parents from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

The presentation of results will begin with contextual portraits of Faith's background, the community she serves, the high school where she works, and her philosophy of education and vision for the school. The second section describes her and the other participants' definitions of CRL. Next, I present and describe the six themes of Faith's culturally responsive leadership. The results will also describe how the CRL model is moving the school towards a culturally responsive system (CRS).



### Context of the Study

Washington High School, the site of the study, is a school where the student and teacher demographics are changing rapidly to match the changing demographics of the state. During the 2007-08 school year, enrollment at WHS increased for all ethnic groups except for the White students whose enrolment continued to decline (TEA, 2007-08). This tendency has been consistent for the last three years. The Latino student population had the largest numerical increase. However, according to available data from TEA, for 2007-08, White students were still the largest ethnic group in the school, followed by Latino and African American students in that order. When combined, both Latino and African American students formed the majority of the school population.

In addition to the culturally responsive leader, assistant principal Faith Dean, participants in the primary study included six teachers and nine parents from Alamo ISD, a public school district located in Central Texas. Of the six teacher participants, five were female and one was male. The only male teacher participant was a White and had known the leader for three years. One female teacher was Latina, and she had known the leader for two years. A third teacher was a descendent of a Native American father and Latina mother, and she had also known the leader for slightly over two years. The rest of the teachers were all female White participants, and they had worked with the leader for an average of two years. All nine parents had known the leader for two to four years. Eight parents were females and one was a male. Six of the parent participants were Latino, including one male and five females. Two African American parents, both females, and one female Asian participated in the study. Of the nine parents who took part in this study, five worked on campus as parent volunteers.

My remaining description of the study's context will include discussion of Faith's background, the community served by Washington High School, the high school itself, and Faith's philosophy of education and vision for the school.

*Ms. Faith Dean's Background*

Faith, an African American, was born in Texas. She is one of two siblings in her family, a boy and a girl. Her father worked in the military. According to Faith, her family moved almost every four years because her father's employment. She was born in Texas, moved to California, moved back to Texas, moved to Virginia, and then to New Mexico. Faith attended three different middle schools in the process, completing the eighth grade in New Mexico. She then attended high school in New Mexico, and when she graduated from high school, she returned to a university in Central Texas where she graduated with a Bachelor's of Social Work degree. Faith stated, "I think my personal experiences have been unique in that I lived in different parts of this country, and I got to meet different people."

Faith went to a regional service center in Texas to become certified to teach. Her first teaching assignment was teaching English Language Arts in special education. Her principal asked Faith to start a school-wide reading program during her second year of teaching. At that same time, Faith entered graduate school to study for a Master's degree and certification in educational administration. Faith, a single mother of two girls, divorced after seven years of marriage. After teaching for three years (two years in middle school and one year in high school), Faith was promoted to her current position of assistant principal. In total, she has been in the education system for five years.

I asked Faith to identify personal experiences, if any, that helped her to embrace CRL. According to Faith, her frequent movement from state to state brought her into contact with people from different parts of the country and world. This helped her realize that certain people were different from her in a variety of ways; they spoke different languages and spoke in different dialects and accents. However, different types of people were also similar to her in many ways. As a student Faith was exposed to teaching and leadership behaviors that demonstrated to her that she was of a lesser status. Some teachers failed to embrace her ways of doing things.

As a young student, I was always one of the few female minorities in a large class of mainstream students.... every time I spoke I had to do everything right. Our current reality here as well as in other parts of this country is that diversity of any form has not always been welcomed. I have seen and experienced times when I or another of the same hue has not been received in the most positive manner. Growing up I was aware of the fact that there was and still is racism and prejudice in this country, especially in the classrooms. For instance, when we travelled across the country we came across people who were not receptive of my family and had a small town mentality. I was also aware of differences growing up as I was always one of the only Black students in advanced classes. I noticed this fact and always questioned it and made a concerted effort to make sure I was the best. I felt and still feel that all that I do is watched and I am a “representative” and “reflection” of Black Women in the work place and in education. Based on these and other experiences I continue to be

conscious of what I do and how I do it. I know that I am not just representing me but I am representing other women and other African-American people. I truly believe this is why I operate as a perfectionist in all that I do.

Artifacts from her professional portfolio indicated that Faith believed in building positive relationships as a means of achieving cultural responsiveness. When Faith became a teacher her teaching approaches were guided by the belief that it was necessary to develop strong rapport with people and know them well before making conclusions about how they behaved, what they could do, and what they could not do. At home, Faith's parents always taught her to respect other people. According to Faith, her parents instilled in her the value "of accepting all people regardless of what they looked like, their religion, and different persuasions." Faith revealed that she had always attended church and now leads the Baptist church choir in her community. The religious principles instilled in Faith by the church persuaded Faith to embrace and love all people regardless of race, color or creed.

During her Master's degree and principal certification programs, Faith took classes on diversity. The experiences in the diversity training ignited her passion for culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP). Consistent with the literature (Bass, 1990b; Glickman, 1993; Gordon, 2004; Blase & Blase, 2004), Faith believed that empowered professionals continuously reflected on their practices, remained actively involved in discovering new ways to engage others in discussions, and continuously pushed themselves to look for more information and opportunities to improve practice. Reflecting on a graduate class she had taken, Faith recounted a learning experience that

helped her embrace cultural responsiveness; a game that two of her professors had the class play.

They made us play a card game almost like spades. We had to pass out four or five sets of rules but they were all different. In that game nobody was allowed to talk. People at each table played by different rules but nobody knew that. Then you are, like, you want to ask a question... but you weren't allowed to talk. But then you have a need... and it's like I want that card or book but you are not allowed to verbalize it, and so when we finish the game, we would then talk about it and each one of us had to explain what problems they faced, what they wanted to achieve, how they tried to communicate their intentions and why it was complicated. In the game there were four different groups, but everybody had a different set of rules. So it's the same thing with our kids here, there is a different set of rules, you know, sometimes in the classrooms there is different set of rules from school rules, and their home rules, or you know... community rules. And just having the conversation, I was like, "Oh! Wait a minute—not everybody has been on the same boat of the same experiences." So it was very eye opening... to have these conversations....

A number of ideas stand out in Faith's quote. She discovered her passion for culturally responsive leadership through her learning experiences at the university. Her understanding of CRL and CRP were formed by those learning experiences in combination with childhood life experiences and religious upbringing. Her professors helped her realize that it was important to know more information about other people in

order to understand how they make sense of things. Faith's experiences during diversity training allowed her to realize that communication is vital to solving problems and promoting learning.

*The Community Served by Washington High School*

The community served by the school has a total of twelve other schools, and Washington is one of the two high schools in the area. The community has a total population of 74,635. There has been an increase in the number of separated, widowed and divorced adults in the community compared to the national average. While there are two very affluent suburbs in the community, the majority of the students served by Faith's school come from low income families. There are large numbers of apartments in the community. A sizeable number of the people in the community live in subsidized housing.

Latino and African American students are the largest groups in the community that require special education services (Fears, 2004; Texas Education Agency 2005-6; Texas State Data Center and Office of the Demographer, University of Texas-San Antonio, 2007). Faith and the teachers at Washington High reported that the number of parents or guardians in the community who are employed in more than one job at the same time is increasing rapidly. There also was an increase in the number of students who are homeless and who lived in shelters, one reason for this being the deportation of parents.

*Washington High School*

There are 900 students in the school; 17.4% were African American, 35.6% were Hispanic, and 43.6% were White. The rest of the students are Native American (.5%) and

Asian/Pacific Islanders (3.0%). This population distribution reflects Texas demographics, which shows that Texas has a population of 14.3% African American, 47.2% Hispanic, 34.8% White, and 3.7% other (Texas Education Agency, 2006-7). The student body was 32.5% economically disadvantaged and 5.1% were classified as Limited English Proficient. Of the student population, 47.1% were classified as “at-risk” and 18.4% experienced mobility during the 2006-7 school year. The teacher-student ratio at Washington High was 1 to 13. There were a total of 28 languages spoken in the school.

The school has 88 teachers. Of these teachers, 85.5% were White, 1.5% were African American and 9.9% were Hispanic. The rest of the teachers were 1.5% Native American and 1.5% Asian/Pacific Islanders. The gender of the faculty was 31% male and 69% female. The average years of teaching experience was 7.8 years, compared to an average of 3.1 years for the district (Texas Education Agency, 2007-8).

Based on these statistics and interviews with administrators and the teachers, Washington High faced the following long term challenges:

1. There was a need to help teachers and staff to effectively work with students from low SES backgrounds.
2. The campus required leadership that would help teachers and staff to overcome barriers to learning which result from cultural clashes among the diverse groups present in the school community.
3. There was an overwhelming number of teachers who did not share the same cultural and linguistic backgrounds as the Hispanic and African American students who, when combined, formed the majority of the student population.
4. Negotiating cultural barriers often included dealing with cultural conflict.

The school therefore required leadership that could help faculty and other members of the school community to respond to constantly changing demographics.

*Faith's Philosophy of Education and Vision for the School*

Faith demonstrated her personal philosophy of education in her professional portfolio, which spoke to Faith's passion for helping all students to succeed. She assisted teachers' understanding of their students' culture and learning needs through building relationships, which in turn led students to develop more interest in the learning process and willingness to seek help when needed. Beyond her core belief in the power of building relationships, Faith also believed that culturally responsive leadership included (a) developing a common classroom and school vision that embraced all other cultures, (b) combining students' and teachers' lived experiences and school experiences when leading, (c) understanding and embracing customs, socio-cultural experiences, and beliefs and values of students as a basis for constructing new knowledge, and (d) building rapport and creating a school environment that is inclusive and promotes learning. Faith's written philosophy of leadership included the following statement:

As a leader I have to reflect on my past beliefs and thoughts regarding my philosophy of education. As an educator, I want the opportunity to supplement each student's home life in school. I am aware that individuals are constructed by their families, life experiences, race, beliefs, customs, and culture. Using each student's diversity, I would like to contribute to their overall human development while educating them. I desire to impact the educational field by demonstrating that each student, though different, gives our schools and society cultural richness. I want the opportunity to



empower all students, using their own social and cultural experiences, to be what they desire to become no matter their socioeconomic or racial background. As leader and supervisor, I first aspire to create an environment conducive to learning. I want to impart knowledge and passion into my staff—to be the inspirational, instructional leader. I believe in building rapport and creating an atmosphere for learning for everyone on the campus; from the administrators to our paraprofessionals. Once the tone is set and we establish a shared school vision, we will then see the need to transfer this knowledge to our students. We should all have knowledge of content, curriculum, and our community. I believe there should also be proactive strategies in place to help prepare our teacher leaders in specific content areas so that they can teach, implement strategies, and aid in instruction. I believe that I must be that instructional leader who facilitates change by creating the tone, climate, and culture so that all children can learn.

Faith's beliefs confirm Chamberlain's (2005) finding that being inclusive in the teaching-learning process helps students from cultures different from their teacher's to feel comfortable and accepted. Faith understood that her own culture was part of her personality and that, as a leader, the way she behaved while interacting with others affected them. Therefore, Faith believed that as a leader she needed to find a common ground between her own cultural ways and those of others by "reflect[ing] on my past beliefs and thoughts regarding my philosophy of education." Some of her methods of finding common ground included celebrating all students' successes regardless of the size

of that success, setting standards for both students and teachers, and matching students with teachers who have the potential to help the students. Faith revealed how her philosophy of education guided what she believed should happen in classrooms:

I also believe that you have not taught until the student learns. My thing is, you have to have a heart—it takes a special person to be in education and it even takes a special person to reach all kids. A lot of times we celebrate those students who're making 4.0s and 3.9's but I believe we need to make sure we reach every kid. A lot of times I always end up with a certain group of students in my office... behavior if you will. But I have come to believe that we are not reaching them. They don't have aspirations because we don't celebrate the small successes that they make.... So I really believe that with education you have to have the right chemistry—you have to have the right people for the job; right leaders, right teachers, right people in your administrative staff in the front office so when people come in they feel warm and welcome. That way you have set the right climate, you have that culture that says *I don't care who you are. I want you to grow... I want you to make a difference.*

Understanding Faith's philosophy of education allowed me to gain insight into the beliefs and values that guided Faith's leadership behaviors. Next I will discuss the related topic of how Faith defined culturally responsive leadership.

### Faith's Definition of CRL

Several common viewpoints on Faith's concept of culturally-responsive leadership (CRL) emerged from my observations of and interviews with Faith, teachers, and parents. Faith defined CRL as,

the ability and willingness by the leader to look beyond their own personal beliefs, values and biases to see other people for who they are. One who is willing to relate to and learn about others and then embrace their differences as they lead and impart change.

According to Faith, a culturally responsive leader assumes the role of a guide and facilitator, and helps create a series of opportunities that provide the basis for teachers and others to help diverse students develop the necessary attitudes and skills for success. According to Faith, "The task of culturally responsive leadership is to design and prepare a school environment that encourages building confidence, trust and interest among faculty and staff so they in turn can help their students to become organized and disciplined to learn."

For Faith, CRL demands that she makes arrangements for the fulfillment of collective work. She added, "For me, culturally responsive leadership involves encouraging the participation of all students and the collaboration of their families and the educational community for the success of all students." According to Faith's definition, CRL guides teachers to transform their everyday classroom environments so that they may develop in their students a disposition towards successful learning (Ladson-Billings 1995; Garcia & Dormiguez 1997; Guerra & Nelson, 2007). This requires that she helps teachers to create educational contexts in which attitudes of respect, care, nurturing

and collaboration prevail. Faith argued that it is necessary for the CRL to demonstrate willingness, curiosity, interest, passion and enthusiasm for what others say and do to help teachers learn from their students and to help students learn from and with their teachers. Faith's philosophy was constructivist; she believed that individuals construct knowledge and schemas on the foundations of their lived experiences and contexts (Vygotsky 1978; Freire, 1998; Applefield et al., 2000; Delpit, 2006). In this context, both teachers and students should be prepared to learn something from each other. Faith's message to teachers was that they needed to pay attention to students of color at WHS, and learn from them. To help students experience and enjoy learning, Faith believes that CRL does the following:

- encourages others to express their ideas, feelings and emotions from their various ways of knowing (Vygotsky 1978; Freire, 1998)
- recognizes that both teachers and students have different ways of thinking and doing things, and therefore they should be valued for their potential, be guided, and be provided with development opportunities taking into account their different cultural backgrounds
- provides others with the freedom to express ideas about their own culture and experiences
- joins both teachers and students their learning, and experiences their successes and problems
- invites diverse ideas from all members of the school community, inviting and encouraging them to listen and reflect on different points of view so that they may draw new knowledge from these different viewpoints

- encourages students to set their own goals and standards
- shows a high degree of interest in the teachers' work and achievements made by their students.

Mirroring Ladson-Billings' (1995, 2002) beliefs about language and code switching, Faith argued that CRL involved being able to "understand the challenges, including language, that students, and even teachers, may experience, and then empathize with them."

Teachers and parents participating in the study defined CRL as they saw it enacted by Faith. The participants' general understanding of CRL, as they interpreted it through Faith's leadership behaviors, included Faith modeling the building relationships with students, teachers and parents; being persuasive, flexible and understanding; being empathetic; and helping teachers understand students' backgrounds. Teacher 2 stated that one aspect of Faith's philosophy of education is rapport building. "I think it [CRL], as I see it from Faith, deals with knowing the different cultures that exist within the school, accepting them and being open minded to learn about them as you teach." A common view shared by all participants and myself was that CRL, as enacted by Faith, is a leadership style that involves understanding the different cultures that exist within the school, accepting those different cultures and being open to continued learning about other cultures as part of the teaching-learning process. Parent 5 reported that Faith's notion of CRL involved "understanding the kids and being able to stand up for our children when sometimes the teachers don't understand the kids."

Faith also defined diversity: "It is a concept that includes not just race and ethnicity but also additional forms of diversity, including languages, gender, students'

socio-economic status, religion, and home life.” She argued that this wide range of cultural diversity required that teachers know their students as individuals. Therefore, Faith believed that teachers needed to collect information that gave them the big picture of how multiple types of diversity may be addressed at an individual level. Faith also stated that as a CR leader, she needed to understand her staff, students and faculty in order to know what motivated them and to respond with ways that could help all members of the school community to bring out their best selves. CRL, according to Faith, also meant allowing each person to contribute to the success of the school, which in turn contributes to the success of individual members of the school community, especially students of color.

Faith believed that culturally responsive leadership differed from other forms of leadership. She argued that CRL did everything that the other forms of effective leadership did, but went further by understanding relationships, embracing diversity and using an understanding of that diversity to respond to the needs of the school community and especially to those from minority groups. Faith concluded that through building relationships, CRL increased students’ potential to connect with their teachers during the teaching learning-processes:

First, culturally responsive leadership is having that knowledge base. In other leadership forms it’s, “We are gonna be committed in this.” And for me, it’s a little bit more than being committed [to becoming] exemplary. There is something that has to take place before that. And I think that’s where the cultural responsive piece comes in.... You can’t just say, we’re gonna be committed, we’re all gonna get there—if Jonny hasn’t had a

meal and is in your class, in your school, do you think he's gonna care about you trying to teach him math?

Cultural responsiveness, according to Faith, encourages all members of the school community to learn about other people in order to be able to understand what each person has to offer. The knowledge base that one gains from rapport building allows one person to respond to another without either party feeling uncomfortable. According to Faith, communication, perseverance, and the passion to learn and to teach others are important to culturally responsive leadership.

Next, I will discuss six themes concerning how Faith understood and enacted culturally responsive leadership and influenced teachers and others to be culturally responsive. The six themes encompass what she does *with people*, what she does in relation to *curriculum and instruction*, and what she does regarding the *school and classroom environments*. During the study it became clear to me that the theme, *relationship building*, ran through all of the other five themes and hence could not be separated completely from them. Therefore, relationship building always needs to be considered as flowing through five the other themes: *being persistent and persuasive*, *modeling cultural responsiveness*, *being present*, *fostering cultural responsiveness among others*, and *caring for others*.

### Six Themes of Culturally Responsive Leadership

#### *Theme One: Building Relationships*

During the interviews, both Faith and the parents valued the role of relationship building and acknowledged that the success of students in their school depended on building sound relationships. Faith placed relationship building at the center of her beliefs

about leadership, describing the power of relationship using three metaphors. This is consistent with Madsen & Mabokela's (2005) findings that creating positive workplace relationships helps to prevent intergroup differences. However, Madsen and Mabokela's study did not address how relationships help students of color succeed in school. Faith's CRL revealed that successful achievement of school goals rests on the creation of positive institutional relationships with all students, with a greater emphasis on relationships with students of color, who often felt excluded.

**[Metaphor 1]** Think of a house—and you have a cornerstone. If that cornerstone brick is not in place, the house is gonna fall. That's the same thing with a school and a school culture. Again you have to have that relationship piece. Because if you have that you can do anything else you need to do. And if you don't have that, you're gonna fail...

From the time she arrived at WHS, Faith had been part of the leadership team involved in implementing a school improvement plan which involved helping the school achieve recognized status. Faith's strategy for achieving recognized status included developing strong relationships among teachers and between teachers and students.

**[Metaphor 2]** And our goal this year is to be recognized. And so we asked, *what are we gonna do to be recognized?* And we're gonna do it. It's like you cannot expect to win a game of poker when you play without looking at your cards [the different cultures in the school]. So, I wanna make sure that every teacher on my campus [has] the right desire to build relationships and build rapport and to teach every student that walks through that door...**[Metaphor 3]** Our job is to teach these students...



And the way you teach them is to get them with their hearts. If you don't have a relationship, you have nothing.

Throughout her interviews and during shadowing sessions Faith referred to all of her school activities in the plural voice of *we* and *our*. This terminology indicates that Faith believed success can be achieved through high levels of team spirit and collaboration. For Faith, relationships are the leadership tools that help both students and teachers succeed in their respective roles. All three metaphors placed relationship building at the center of WHS. Similar to findings from the literature, (Chamberlain, 2005; Madsen & Mabokela, 2005), parents revealed that building relationships and rapport in the school were both important for the success of their children. They also believed that *leadership as relationship building* helped to bring about positive change in the school. Parents therefore valued relationships as a centerpiece for leading and teaching at WHS.

**Parent 1:** First... home is a different institution from the school. There's a very big difference between my house and the school, so if they create those relationships, then they'll be able to accommodate the child's home experiences in the classroom and the school. Also, those relationships are important because that's what they're gonna face in life. I mean, we just saw the first African American president in the [history of the] United States of America.... It wasn't just for African Americans to say it's finally here. It was everybody—all races coming together.... In a way it's very good, because it sends a big message to the young generation [and

their teachers] in the classrooms about how relationships can help change the world.

The key words in this quote—*relationships, everybody, and everyone*—show that parents valued the power of relationships and wanted to see their school leaders promoting those relationships. The match between Faith’s and the parents’ positions regarding the role of relationship building confirms that Faith’s leadership was responsive to the parents’ expectations and the needs of their children.

The theme “building relationships” includes a number of sub-themes within that broad concept, including empathizing with others, reducing anxiety among students, reducing anxiety among teachers, respecting others, inspiring responsibility and commitment in others, using humor, being approachable, using students’ testimonies, demonstrating compassion and being democratic.

*Empathizing with others.* Faith built relationships partly through empathizing with all people in the school community. She explained that she enacted empathy by showing an understanding of her teachers, parents, and students’ situations, which helped her to reach out to them and encouraged them to open up. For Faith, empathizing involved the following:

Being aware of the existence of other people’s experiences, and then understanding those experiences.... And from that understanding, being able to identify yourself with the other person’s situations, or experiences or their feelings. We need to take those situations as if they were ours—cause somehow we need to have that emotional attachment to those

situations of the other person to be able to help them.... It's like, "how does it feel to be in their situation?"

Faith took time to effectively listen to others, to find out if there were certain situations in their lives that worked against their success at school. Faith then tried to help them overcome those obstacles. Through empathy, therefore, Faith built effective understanding, developed relationships and managed to communicate with others. Faith said, "It's important to show empathy because I want my teachers to have confidence and trust in me, and that is really very essential because that way we avoid conflicts."

*Reducing anxiety among students.* Tied to the category *what she does with curriculum and instruction*, one relationship building behavior that Faith exhibited throughout this study involved reducing anxiety among both teachers and students. Faith helped her teachers to understand that students who came from backgrounds that were different from theirs may feel some degree of fear or anxiety, which may limit their participation in lessons. Literature reviewed for this study (Joyce & Calhoun, 1996; Hofstede, 2003; Gay, 2005; Walker-Fillon, 2007) also underscored the importance of making students feel comfortable during learning. Faith shared a variety of literature with her teachers to help them understand the power of building relationships through understanding how students feel. Her emphasis on investing time to build relationships by developing trust was based on the theory that anxiety causes people, especially young students of color, to avoid participating in social interactions because they fear making mistakes in front of other people, which could cause others to laugh at them, criticize or humiliate them.

**Faith:** Let me say this, our school is really very diverse—about 27 languages are spoken here. And students from minority cultural backgrounds are intimidated by the school environment in general, because they feel that maybe their teachers don't understand them well. And they [students] think that whatever they do or say... will be received or regarded negatively. That really makes them feel humiliated. So they withdraw... I mean they just shut you off cause of the way we evaluate them [from position of power]. Students don't like to be evaluated by someone who doesn't understand their situation, so that's my point. Wear their shoes and you will get their attention.

Faith shared literature with teachers to help them understand different ways of reducing anxiety. She also helped teachers understand that power struggles may result when teachers fail to understand their students' situations (Delpit, 2006).

During one interview, Faith drew my attention to the book "Capturing Kids' Hearts" which teachers at WHS use as a guide for classroom management. In the book there is a section that explains how students' performance increases as fear and anxiety decrease. By sharing such literature and sending teachers to diversity training, Faith helped teachers to understand that reducing anxiety in students was one way to help students learn better. Faith pointed out that "empathizing with students is very important because it kills that anxiety among our students and it opens doors for them to participate. Some students are afraid to ask questions in class because they don't know how others will react."

*Reducing anxiety among teachers.* Faith also used anxiety reduction with teachers. She wanted teachers to feel relaxed and welcome to her space, because that motivated her teachers to pay attention to their students and to other teachers. I attended a meeting in which Faith, teachers and another assistant principal were discussing strategies for discipline management. Faith opened the meeting by asking teachers to share any good things that happened to them over the weekend. The meeting then seamlessly transitioned from the good things into the planned agenda. I realized that the good things segment helped everyone in the meeting to relate to each other's current situations. Next, teachers shared problems they were experiencing in their classrooms. The teachers and the two leaders then collaboratively worked out a solution to one of those problems using a new problem-solving model that was being introduced by Faith and other assistant principal. In this phase of the meeting, teachers were able to state their perspectives, express their concerns, and suggest alternatives. Teachers then applied the problem-solving model by focusing on a common problem. As the teachers all worked on the same problem, their collaboration helped them construct a common solution. Further observations revealed that Faith used this relationship building, anxiety reducing model in most of her daily conversations with teachers. Reflecting on the process during a follow up interview, Faith commented,

I think they would be surprised if we had a very hard and dry meeting without relaxing the environment. If I don't do it, they will. So we all work together with my colleague [the other assistant principal] to make sure that everyone is following what we're doing.

*Respecting others.* Faith built relationships by showing respect for all members of the school community. Throughout all the shadowing sessions, Faith consistently greeted teachers and students with respect by calling them by their names and addressing them in respectful context by saying “morning sir or maam—how is it going?” In the hallways, some students voluntarily stopped and shook hands with Faith. During their interviews, parents agreed that Faith showed respect to their children.

**Parent 1:** She [Faith] calls them by their last names at times. If she knows the students she will say Mr. So and So... or Ms. So and So. She won't say, “Hey you,” or “Come here, boy,” or “I need to have a word with you.” She asks them politely: “Please, may you do this for me; Excuse me maam, Ms., Mr.—can I talk to you?” Something like that.... And she gives that respect to receive respect, and that's how she earns... respect from our kids.

Faith promoted in school what parents expect of their children at home. This is congruent with the literature on culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1990 & 1995; Reitzug, 1994; Rolón, 2003). Several times during data collection I witnessed Faith talking to people directly and on the phone, and she demonstrated understanding and respect for all people that she spoke to. Faith always presented a posture and words that showed respect to others. One parent noted that Faith showed respect to parents by allowing parents to express their opinions and by listening to them. The effect of such respect was that the parent felt accepted and valued. “When you go into her office, Faith takes time to listen to you, and asks questions if she doesn't understand something, and

she takes suggestions seriously. She values our opinions and feelings, and she knows we can help.”

*Inspiring responsibility and commitment in others.* Similar to Richards’ (2006) findings from a case study about setting the stage for student engagement, Faith used her personal influence to inspire others to reach both their own and institutional goals. However, Faith went further with students, using her relationships with them to ensure they remained focused on their goals. Relationship building leadership made students feel obliged to match the trust and respect that Faith showed to them.

**Parent 1:** She tries to make students feel like adults. Like, “Now that you’re stepping into a high school environment... it’s kind of like, “You’re now growing out of that teenage life stage.” She tries to give individual students that sense of responsibility, something that inspires them to implement their own decisions and to be responsible for the outcomes.

Throughout my observations, Faith related to all her students as individuals who were nearing adult life. Making her students feel like adults motivated them to demonstrate the responsibility associated with mature people. Additionally, Faith always told students that she was confident that they could reach their goals.

Faith believed that when students come to school they bring knowledge and experience that complements or adds to the school culture in a positive way (Freire, 1980; Delpit, 1995; Banks, 2001). She encouraged students to share knowledge, experiences, and ideas they brought to school. Therefore, through acknowledging

students' ways of knowing, Faith bonded with them and strengthened her own leadership. This also helped students to bond among themselves.

**Parent 6:** Yes, here at WHS... Faith always does it in a way our kids know they have her license to try out any new ideas they may have. So you know that no student will want to lose that respect, so they will try to bring out their best...

Similarly, Faith encouraged teachers and others to use the knowledge that the students brought to the school from home to increase the depth and breadth of the school curriculum. Like Freire (1998), Faith maintained that students of color will succeed if teachers allow them to use their different lived experiences to express ideas in the classroom. Teacher 2 discovered that students learned better when she took Faith's advice and used students' lived experiences to explain new concepts,

Faith always says that we should use students' experiences as a teaching tool. We are willing to work with that and using that as our strength....

And that really works because the more I try it, the more I succeed with all the groups...

For Faith, therefore, it was important to start making students feel accepted and to feel that, although they are still young, teachers and other adults around them see in them great potential and see them as responsible young adults. This acceptance, in turn, places a lot of responsibility on the students to demonstrate that they can set and achieve their own goals. According to Faith, it also helps to reduce discipline problems that would otherwise be created by students who believe that teachers view them as irresponsible.



Faith referred to me as *sir* throughout this study. During the last week of data collection for this study, whenever Faith introduced me to parents or any other visitors she referred to me as, “The soon to be Dr. Lewis.” As a researcher and participant in this study, it felt good to be seen through that lens. However, being addressed that way put a big responsibility on me, and it inspired me to work hard to live up to the standard Faith had set for me. This feeling led me to conclude that many students in Faith’s school also felt motivated to live up to the high expectations that Faith held for them. What stood out for me was that Faith’s comment related to what I was going through at that very moment. I was persuaded to believe that I would definitely succeed, but that it would require hard work. Similarly, the respect for teachers and students that Faith expressed was always relevant and responsive to the individual’s current situation.

*Using humor.* Faith used humor to appeal to others. She established the tone of the school through the use of humor and stories to promote positive relationships and campus cohesiveness. A day before the school broke for Thanksgiving, Faith organized a turkey-bowling competition which brought together teachers and parents in a humorous event that allowed participants to share jokes, reflect on the first semester of the school year, share ideas, and make connections on a personal level. She revealed that her intention was to bring together people from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds so that they could bond with each other. According to participants at these events, Faith helped them relax and get to know each other better. Teachers cited examples of how Faith modeled humor for them:

**Teacher 1:** She is not afraid to cut a joke. I think back to... the very beginning of the year when leadership was setting the tone and they

actually had a leadership afternoon at an inflatable play park, where all the school leaders and the principals competed against each other in very silly games like obstacle courses and boxing with huge gloves and things like this. It was absolutely fun where everyone laughed....we had not had that for a long time, and that's something that she throws herself into....

Definitely, she models the humor and laughter. How it helps the school to be culturally responsive.... well the teachers and the staff generally get bonded. We're able to see the other side of our friends and share jokes.

We become glued to each other—bonded.

With students, Faith pointed out that she includes humor in order to make students feel comfortable in the school environment, "I want every student who comes through this door to experience our happiness; I want them to miss this building when they are elsewhere, and that's what we work for here; to create a family of happy people."

*Being approachable.* Consistent with the participants' views on how Faith uses humor to create relationships, in her office and in the hallway leading to the school's main entrance, Faith had displayed a photograph of herself, a teacher and the principal posing in a hilarious posture. I asked her to discuss the significance of that photo and she explained that she and the principal were walking in the hallway when a teacher approached them and asked the leaders to pose for a photograph and to include fun in the photo. "And we said oh... why not, and we began to dance. And that's how the photo came up." The teacher appreciated that both leaders were approachable and modeled fun and humor in their school.

*Using students' testimonies.* During the breakfast club meetings Faith introduced a relationship building approach that included testimonies from students of color. Faith organized a group of volunteer students to tell stories about how their teachers, past and present, had made a difference in their lives. The testimonies were designed to attract teachers' attention so that they would realize how all of their positive actions were valued by their students. Faith also hoped that the activity would help to further bond the students to their teachers. The activity achieved a number of things, including creating an emotional attachment between teachers and students, improving teaching methods, building better relations, resetting the attitudes of teachers, and placing emphasis on relating to students of color.

One teacher pointed out that the students' testimonies not only surprised the teachers who were cited in the testimonies, but also helped teachers to realize that students paid attention to every detail of what teachers did for them in the classrooms. In this activity, students were helping teachers establish culturally responsive teaching standards for themselves. Some of the teachers about whom the students spoke in their testimonies were present in the breakfast club meetings. Listening to their students' testimonies made those teachers feel acknowledged by their students. Throughout the testimonies students identified those teaching behaviors that increased their ability to connect with the learning that was going on in their classrooms. Such testimonies also motivated teachers who were not directly mentioned in the stories. One teacher made the following observations,

**Teacher 4:** I was personally touched by the students' presentations although I wasn't mentioned in the testimonies. They shared their valuable

experiences with our teaching and that gave meaning and purpose to my job as a teacher. Since then, I'm reminded of the positive impact I may have on my students if I develop those relationships. It feels good to be acknowledged by your own student. I am sure after the testimonies we all took time to reflect on what would happen if we do not develop those relationships with the students.

The testimonies reminded teachers of the positive impact that they made on a single student, and what those relationships meant for the students' future. Teacher 6 commented, "They reminded me that it's important to pay attention to all students. It's all about how we relate to them to bring that success to the [minority] students. I think that was really a great strategy that Faith used." Other teachers confirmed that the student testimonies helped them realize how much they affected their students' lives. Listening to the testimonies encouraged Teacher 2 to pay attention to all students.

That was really motivational and, for me, it built a foundation of how I relate to all students now and in the future. Their testimonies really emphasized the important role of our relationships with them, and the role we as teachers play in the lives of those students. It was life changing....

Faith wanted the testimonies to help teachers to embrace and accept all students and to address their individual needs. Faith said,

The testimonies helped to point out how teachers made learning possible, and how they created opportunities for all students to approach their teachers. I also think it helped us see that students wanted to be accepted

as they are. I personally believe that when others tell us about our work it's more encouraging and convincing.

*Demonstrating compassion.* Teachers confirmed that Faith created relationships with both teachers and students by showing compassion and paying attention to the reasons why students and teachers sometimes did not fulfill their obligations. Teacher 1 said, “I think leniency—we have had these conversations, you know—it seems like sometimes she understands and accounts for complicating factors and allows that to be a part of her leniency.”

During one interview, Faith described to me an example of demonstrating compassion toward a Latino student who had developed a tendency to skip the fourth and eighth class periods on a daily basis. According to Faith, she invited teachers who taught the student during those classes, the parent, a counselor and the student. During the meeting, Faith allowed each teacher to describe the possible consequences of the student's behavior on his academic achievement. After listening to the teachers' accounts of the student's behavior and the possible consequences, the parent asked teachers to assist her to help her child, and then she recounted her situation and experiences as a single parent. Faith then asked the student to describe how she wanted everyone in the room to help him succeed. After listening to the student, both Faith and her teachers took a compassionate position and offered to help the student work on extra assignments to improve his grades. The counselor offered advice, and the student was given another chance. Faith commented,

Later I said to him, “Hey! This is your chance to do it and turn it in....

You better go to those teachers and you wanna talk to the teachers and

come back and tell me.” So he has been going to the class. So I made him aware but I still filed my attendance referral on him for a record...

Faith demonstrated compassion but at the same time was firm with the student.

Consistent with the literature on effective leadership, Faith used collaborative decision making to draw the compassion of the students’ teachers (Burns, 1979 & 2003; Blase & Blase, 2004; Madhlangobe et al., 2008). The result of that compassion was that after the meeting the student attended class regularly. All outstanding leaders show collaboration, compassion and understanding (Madhlangobe et al., 2008), however, the results of this study reveal that CRL goes further; the leader needs to pay particular attention to extenuating circumstances that may be related to cultural beliefs and values.

*Being diplomatic.* Faith demonstrated sensitivity to other people’s situations.

During her conversations with students who were referred to her office for disciplinary problems, Faith consistently approached them with questions that encouraged the students to buy into school regulations. She always asked students to tell her what they hoped to achieve by being at school, how they hoped to achieve those goals and what specific actions the students took on a particular day to move towards those goals. Faith always concluded such conversations by asking the responsible students to relate the problem that brought them to her office to the student’s ultimate goals and how the students thought they could have been done things differently. During the negotiating sessions that I witnessed, Faith’s diplomacy succeeded in helping students to restate their positions and to move forward. This diplomacy, coupled with Faith’s consistency, helped Faith assist students to stay focused on the task of learning. The approach also helped her reduce discipline problems. Faith explained,

I know for sure that certain students no longer frequent my office with discipline problems as much as they used to. So I take it [that] this approach is making a positive impact. However, that said, there are some students who will always need different approaches, and we keep trying different approaches.

To summarize, Faith's leadership behaviors related to building relationships included being empathetic, reducing anxiety among students and teachers, respecting others, inspiring responsibility in others, using humor, being approachable, using students' testimonies, demonstrating compassion and being diplomatic. Faith saw relationships as the cornerstone of school improvement.

*Theme Two: Persistence and Persuasiveness*

Data gathered during interviews, classroom observations, and shadowing sessions revealed that Faith displayed CRL by being persuasive and persistent with all members of the school community. Persistence and persuasiveness proved to be important attributes as Faith carried out her assigned task of developing and implementing a school improvement plan. For Faith, the vision of having the schools attain "recognized" status would only be realized through persisting and persuading others to provide input to and support for school goals that would lead to recognized status. Congruent with findings from the literature, Faith believed that if there was no buy-in from the team, school goals would not be met (Cummings, 1986; Chamberlain, 2005). To help achieve recognized status, Faith encouraged teachers to pay attention to the minority student groups with the aim of improving their performance. Consistent with the broader literature, in Texas Latino and African American students form a combined of the majority student

population that needed education services (Fears 2004; Texas State Data Center and Office of Demographer, University of Texas-San Antonio, 2007). These two groups perform below state and district averages in several academic indicators, including dropouts, discipline, gifted and advanced placement, school attendance, and referrals to special education classes (Texas Education Agency, 2006-7; Guerra & Nelson, 2007). A great deal of Faith's persistence and persuasiveness, therefore, was focused on working with teachers to improve the performance of African American and Latino students.

Faith believed that culturally responsive leaders who show persistence and persuasiveness both inspire others to adopt an inclusive school vision and work toward making that vision a reality.

When you persist, the focus of that persistence is on the vision of the school, our goal.... What is our goal? So I have to keep reminding everyone to look at our vision so that we will all get there. And...we need to use various tactics to persuade them to get there. That's why I don't give up if I feel something will work. Our goal is to teach all students effectively and to be recognized... and we can only do it by working together as a family, we need that relationship...

Faith consistently encouraged teachers to pool their ideas and actions to achieve school goals for all students, especially the African American and Latino students. For Faith, success with these groups was key to closing achievement gaps and becoming a recognized campus. Teacher 6 said,

Persistence is vital, I think, in places where people have diverse ideas....  
So when we see her [Faith] consistently and persistently following the



same ideas that we're holding back on, we realize that we have permission to express our thoughts. And when we do it, we find that we make great progress.... Faith has shown that persistence in order to achieve commitment and send the message home.

Faith's persistence and persuasiveness convinced others to try out new ideas aimed at empowering students of color through culturally responsive teaching. Through her persistence, she helped legitimize inclusive approaches through which students of color and teachers constructed new knowledge and new relationships with the larger school community. Faith encouraged teachers and students first to work from their zones of comfort and eventually to reach out and embrace new ideas from other cultures (Au, 1993; Basadur, 2004; Banks, 2004).

Sub-themes within the general theme of persistence and persuasiveness are described below. They include using varied approaches to motivate teachers; being a good negotiator; discussing the worthiness of an idea, using experts to share ideas, being patient, delegating; dealing with power struggles; and using clear and convincing language.

*Using varied approaches to motivate teachers.* Whenever she communicated information related to diversity, Faith continuously repeated the same ideas but used different approaches related to the lived experiences of her audience. According to the teachers, the variety of motivational techniques had their intended effects.

**Teacher 6:** Our staff meetings' flavor has changed a lot this year. They [Faith and the other administrators] tried very hard this year to be motivational in our meetings. You know it's the same points they would

have said normally in the previous dry meetings. This time they presented it in a very interesting way with invited guests. This has more meaning to us as teachers. You know, in a way I think they're trying to persuade us in things that we need to be doing.

One approach Faith used involved inviting people from the community to discuss how to succeed through cultural responsive teaching. Using such alternative ways of promoting her ideas about inclusive teaching helped to convince faculty to reflect on ideas she was trying to convey. Teacher 2 said, "If they feel like their job is not achieved one way, or maybe it reached only some people, then they will apply a different method." This agrees with literature that points out that effective leaders use different approaches aimed at reaching the whole school community, and they "know when and where each is appropriate" (Fears, 2004, p. 28).

*Being a good negotiator.* Data from my observations, interviews and review of institutional artifacts indicated that Faith succeeded in convincing most members of the school community to commit to school goals by using her negotiating skills. According to Faith, students of color at WHS, especially Latino and African American students, failed to meet many of the academic indicator standards because they did not have the cultural schemas that allowed them to actively participate on an equal academic footing with others. Through persuasive and polite language, Faith encouraged teachers to help diverse student groups succeed through culturally responsive pedagogy. To convince teachers, Faith modeled her ideas through her behaviors and ways of relating with students. Faith always used real life examples to help students, especially those from minority groups, to understand what she was teaching them. When teachers saw her

succeeding with students of color with whom they would normally fail, they became persuaded to pay attention to the approaches Faith used. This reflection from one teacher encapsulates the effect of Faith persuasiveness.

**Teacher 4:** Faith, specifically, I think that she persuades us through modeling her behavior with the [minority] students. When I'm having one of those days when I really just want to scream, and I can see her in the hallways and she is smiling, even if she is redirecting a student and she is doing it with the utmost flavor of kindness, that really persuades me to embrace that way of doing things and move on...

Negotiating with students always involved Faith showing a welcoming personality—smiling and being warm, even when the students were doing something wrong. Faith engaged students of color and encouraged them to suggest other ways of knowing and doing things. This approach persuaded students to suggest how they felt they learned better. When students offered their solutions, Faith turned them into binding agreements for both herself and the students.

*Discussing the worthiness of an idea.* Faith persuaded others to pursue common objectives by demonstrating to them tangible gains or benefits that made pursuing the objectives worthwhile. Faith not only pointed out the benefits of adopting her ideas about creating positive institutional relationships, but she also invited diverse members of the school community to contribute to the school's cultural responsiveness by suggesting their own ideas. Faith also pointed out the benefits of adopting creative ideas proposed by others. Whenever new ideas arose, Faith paid attention to the contributor and was always flexible and ready to embrace these new ideas. She openly made necessary adjustments to

her own position to include others' ideas. This persuaded others to try her approaches. Teacher 4 said, "She is open to new ideas. If she sees something good in another person, yes, she will take that and use it...and she will persistently email everyone to remind us to follow that up."

*Using experts to share ideas.* Faith also identified experts and specialists in the area of diversity to help communicate important ideas related to cultural responsiveness. Inviting experts to give presentations on topics related to diversity, according to Faith, "helps all my team to understand and identify key decisions and use those as a basis for working with those minority students." I attended one professional development meeting to which Faith had an invited guest to present on the topic teaching across the curriculum. The objective of the workshop was to help teachers see the benefits of working together as a team and to share ideas when planning their lessons. One topic that was discussed in that meeting related to how teachers can help achieve the school goal through closing achievement gaps among student groups. I observed that the teachers became very much interested in sharing ideas on how teachers could help each other to use materials from their different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to scaffold their teaching to help culturally diverse students make connections. In the meeting, Faith and her teachers agreed that they needed to pay more attention to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Other experts that Faith involved in her school included counselors and law enforcement agents. She asked the experts to suggest to her teachers ideas on how to respond to problems without making students feel that their cultural values, norms and beliefs were being looked down upon. Faith deliberately helped others to realize that sometimes, in trying to do the right things, people may create tensions.

*Being patient.* According to the teachers and parents who participated in this study, Faith demonstrated patience with all students and teachers, especially those from minority groups. One teacher pointed out that her ways of dealing with students had been influenced greatly by the way Faith demonstrated patience with students who struggled in her class, especially those whose cultures were different from that of the mainstream teachers. Teacher 6 admitted there were times that she had wanted to give up on such students, who often struggled to understand her ways of teaching.

I ask myself, “how can it be with me [giving up on students],” when the administrator is in the hallways, dealing with all they have to deal with, and she can still manage to be light hearted. So I think that that’s positive energy and that’s hard to crack.

*Delegating.* The main reason for Faith’s delegation of responsibilities was to encourage rapport and buy-in from both students of color and mainstream teachers. As a professional development strategy, delegation of duties helped teachers to focus on those students who were performing below the required standards, and in the majority of cases, they were students of color. Faith convinced teachers to be culturally responsive with students of color by delegating duties that required teachers to show leadership skills and to succeed with those students of color. Delegation is a leadership function that all outstanding leaders use (Bass, 1990a; Basadur, 2004; Blase & Blase, 2004); however, Faith delegated to encourage teachers and students to embrace others ways of doing things, and to persuade them that they would achieve success. For example, Faith, encouraged teachers, especially teachers from the mainstream, to value how students from minority groups used lived schemas to scaffold their own learning.

According to one teacher, “although it’s [delegation] an old tactic, it widens her leadership base and allows her to reach many people at the same time and communicate information about her culturally responsive teaching philosophy.” Current literature does not explain how delegation helps students from minority groups, thus this is an important finding. Teacher 5 saw Faith’s approach to delegating as a tactic that encouraged her to understand and mirror what culturally responsive leaders go through in their efforts to help students of color succeed,

She [Faith] delegates a lot. I think delegating duties is another way she tries to persuade us to understand that she sees some leadership qualities in us. When I am trusted with a responsibility, I get to feel and experience what they have to go through as leaders. So I am persuaded to cross the line and say, “Hey, I know what she is going through.”

Leaders like Faith achieve several things by delegating duties to teachers, including helping teachers to feel trusted and responsible (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998), helping teachers to empathize with school leaders, encouraging buy-in from teachers, and increasing the number of adults who communicate the same message of creating relationships and understanding students from other cultures (Banks 1996; Bass 1997).

Faith was able to engage a large number of teachers who became encouraged to empower students from the minority groups. Faith’s focus was cultural awareness concerning African American and Latino students because together they formed the largest population in the school.

*Dealing with power struggles.* Leading a linguistically and culturally diverse school like WHS required that Faith consistently encouraged the school community to go

beyond personal power struggles and embrace a common vision. Faith used respect from all parties to reduce tensions caused by power struggles, but she was also firm and honest.

Consistent with the literature (Delpit, 2006), my observations, and interview data, Faith effectively dealt with power struggles both among students and parents. During one shadowing session, I sat in a meeting in which Faith was discussing a problem related to a student who beat up another on a school bus. Faith studied the evidence on the video that a bus driver had handed over to the school. To ensure that she would reach an informed decision, Faith involved the other principals and a police officer to analyze the video evidence. Most police officers are trained to analyze video evidence for court cases, and Faith included that expertise by inviting the officer to participate.

The parents of the boy wanted their son to be exonerated from wrongdoing, but the video showed that their White son had assaulted a Hispanic male student on the bus. The parents would not accept Faith's decision on the matter. Soon after leaving the office, the parents phoned Faith and asked her to give them the cell phone number of the principal, who happened to be away at a meeting on that day. Faith explained that the principal's cell phone number was personal and could only be given to them with the principal's permission. The parents insisted, but Faith gave them the principal's office number and also advised them to take up their grievance to the District level if they were not happy with the decision that had been made at the school level. Faith gave the parents all the numbers for the relevant contact people at the district office and concluded by encouraging them to phone her anytime they need more information. Faith also gave them more information on how to appeal her decision. She was later given permission to give them the principal's number, and when the parents phoned, they were informed by

the principal that the decision communicated to them by Faith had been a collaborative one made by the principal and her two assistants. Faith was always honest and frank when dealing with such situations.

*Using clear language and convincing evidence.* For Faith, persuasiveness involved using language and communication skills that convinced others to embrace her ideas. For Faith, it was important for teachers to study the evidence that showed how minority groups performance compared with district and state averages on the TAKS, and that they had more referrals, high drop-out rates, low attendance rates and a high number of disciplinary referrals. With these types of data, Faith helped teachers to focus on the need for cultural responsiveness, and convinced them to understand that if their teaching approaches changed their students would do better. Epstein (2004) writes, “One component of a school learning community is an organized program of school, family, and community partnerships with activities linked to school goals...such programs improve schools, invigorate community support, and increase student achievement and success.” (p. 12).

**Teacher 3:** And I think part of it [her persuasiveness] is making us teachers aware that there is data that show us that there are some populations that are behind the curve and maybe that entices us to focus on this population of students just to bring them forward. If we didn’t have that knowledge we might think that everybody was equal across the board. But the very good thing about her presenting the data is that, in our statistical data there is that group that has not achieved as well as this



group has.... And so it [that persistence] does consciously help us to focus on those kids that we want to try to bring up....

In summary, Faith's persistence and persuasiveness involved a number of leadership behaviors, including being consistent, persevering, varying approaches, being a good negotiator, presenting the worthiness of ideas, using experts to share ideas, being patient, delegating, dealing with power struggles, asking creative questions, and using clear language and convincing evidence. Teacher 3 stated, "Faith is like the public persona of the administration—she puts up her face on anything that the school is trying to project out there." In the next section, I describe how Faith modeled cultural responsiveness at her school.

### *Theme Three: Modeling Cultural Responsiveness*

Throughout this study, Faith modeled cultural responsiveness for others. Faith believed that her school's success depended largely on her ability as a leader to sensitize others and develop in them the abilities that would help them succeed with diverse groups. Faith summarized the importance of modeling cultural responsiveness for others,

First, I want them to see it—it's like I'm not just asking them to do it, but they can see me doing it. So it's [modeling] important for me because I believe every teacher needs to understand that all students respond well to teaching behaviors that help to develop close relationships with the students. I want all my teachers and staff to succeed with all students.

Throughout this study, I asked Faith, teachers, and parents to describe how Faith modeled cultural responsiveness. Some of the behaviors that Faith modeled throughout the study included being flexible, encouraging inclusiveness, being welcoming and

warm, encouraging personalized teaching, celebrating diversity, providing legitimacy to different cultures, encouraging collaborative problem solving, using authentic stories, being honest, sharing literature related to cultural responsiveness, acknowledging others and being consistent.

*Being flexible.* Faith modeled cultural responsiveness by being flexible with both students and teachers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. One teacher explained that Faith had on several occasions demonstrated flexibility and patience with her whenever she failed to meet deadlines.

**Teacher 4:** Every week we're supposed to submit lesson plans to Faith.

Like some students, I do struggle a lot sitting down and writing the lesson plans and submitting them on time. However she has always been flexible with me on time lines, although she always encourages us to be exemplary. I have since kicked away that habit, but sometimes it comes back....

During one shadowing session, Faith demonstrated patience when she was invited to attend to an Hispanic male student who was having difficulty respecting authority. When teachers on hallway duty asked the student to walk back to the classroom after break, the student refused to be hurried. So when Faith arrived, she approached the student who was by then standing near a water fountain in the hallway. She asked him to go the classroom, but the student refused to be hurried. Faith observed the student for a moment and then told the student that she was waiting for him to finish drinking from the water fountain and then move on. When the student started walking back to the classroom, while two teachers were watching, Faith quickly joined him and then engaged

him in a conversation. She followed him into the classroom and she sat in the room until she was convinced the student was not going to harm anyone. Faith then worked with the student in all the group activities that the teacher gave during the class period. Towards the end of the day Faith sent for the student to come to the office, and she talked to him in the presence of his mother, whom she had invited to the school. During the discussion Faith started off by informing the student that she was really surprised at what he had done because she held him in high esteem. The student apologized and went on to explain that something at home had upset him. Since what upset the student was something from home, Faith encouraged the student to go and apologize to his teachers. Later Faith explained why she demonstrated such patience with the student.

Well, I really don't know what set him off. So I needed to be sure nothing worse was gonna happen in that classroom. I can't sit and be relaxed in my office when I know I just left an explosive situation in that classroom. I needed to be there when anything wrong happened.

In these examples, Faith modeled patience, understanding, and concern for others, including the student, but she was also was frank, honest and firm when she was solving the problem. She also modeled inclusiveness by involving the mother of the student. This allowed both Faith and the teachers to realize that certain things that happened at home had influenced how the student behaved at school. Faith said, "His mother helped to clarify things for me."

*Encouraging inclusiveness.* In this study, Faith's modeling of inclusive practices helped her move toward her vision of empowering students of color and improving their academic performance. To promote inclusion, Faith introduced a program to help

students receive expert advice and leadership in relation to their academic goals. The *Adopt-a-Kid Program* (AKP) helped Faith to model inclusiveness and cultural responsiveness. At WHS the emphasis of the AKP was helping students of color who needed guidance, although it also embraced students from the mainstream if they showed that need. Teachers who participated in this study revealed that the program was highly inclusive and responsive to the needs of students who came from single parent homes. Each teacher was allowed to adopt a maximum of three students. After completing the paper work, a teacher would have the right to meet with the adopted student and discuss the student's personal issues and academic progress. Some students who had been adopted were living with guardians or on their own in shelters. The "adoption" of such students was limited to an advisory role for the teacher. I observed that most of the teachers who participated in this study had adopted African American or Latino students. The students who had been adopted by teachers considered the adoption as an important resource for success in their lives and they took the relationship seriously. The teachers frequently conferenced with the adopted students and helped them to organize their priorities. Teachers also helped students by suggesting resources that could help them to succeed.

Teacher 3 explained that Faith helped to model cultural responsiveness for her by influencing the selection of curriculum materials that were inclusive,

Faith does a number of things to promote cultural responsiveness among us teachers. She continuously reminds us to reflect on our teaching approaches or to be more inclusive. For example, I saw it when she purposefully helped us select books and videos for use in our English

classes. That helped the curriculum to be more inclusive.... We could see she was consciously helping to change curriculum in terms of teaching methodology.

During classroom observations, I witnessed one meeting between a teacher and one of her adopted students. The student had come to the classroom to show Teacher 5 her grades and I noticed that there was strong personal relationship as the student shared her grades with the teacher. In their conversation, the teacher responded with very encouraging words. The teacher and student then arranged for another meeting in which the teacher hoped to help the student to set goals and develop strategies for continued improvement. The teacher later commented to me that since she adopted the student, she had noticed that, “She has been making good progress, and I see that she takes our relationship very seriously.” Teachers agreed that AKP helped to reduce achievement gaps between demographic groups, with the focus mostly on students who struggle academically.

*Welcoming and warm.* During all three shadowing sessions Faith frequently shook hands with students, regardless of color or race. I also observed that she hugged female students, who usually asked for a hug from her. With the male students she exclaimed “Give me five.” In our follow-up interview after the first shadowing session, Faith clarified her beliefs about showing respect to all students.

I just personally... I like to call people by their names and, so if we see a kiddo that we know, just speak to him cause you never know how their day is—if it’s bad... good, or if they had good first period, if they had a good night last, or what’s going on at home. So for me it’s important just

to take the polls.... And see how the atmosphere is. Cause we can tell whether it's gonna be a rough day, and we can tell whether it is gonna be a good day.

This quote reveals that for Faith social conversations are barometers for gauging how students of color experience their academic and social lives. The social conversations also helped her to tell how diverse students and teachers were responding to her leadership and about things that happened to them in the classroom. Faith called that behavior “taking the polls and feeling each other’s pulse.” Students from minority groups often experience issues related to power struggles in the classrooms and in their social interaction with teachers from the dominant culture. Such issues can only be overcome by constant evaluation of the situation (Guerra & Nelson, 2007), and by allowing students of color to express their experiences with those power struggles (Gay, 2000; Delpit, 2006). Throughout this study, both Faith and her teachers emphasized the idea of “feeling each other’s pulse” and then trying to brighten the other’s day by empathizing.

*Encouraging personalized teaching.* Faith modeled inclusiveness by understanding and approaching students of color from the strengths of their lived experiences. She encouraged teachers to personalize their teaching to include examples that allow students to experience new knowledge from their lived cultural schemas (Vygotsky, 1978; Freire, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2002).

This finding is consistent with constructivist theory, which suggests that students construct new knowledge and schemas based on their lived experiences and the contexts under which those schemas were constructed (Freire, 1980; Giroux, 2004; Leonardo, 2004; Lunenburg, 2004). The findings of this study extend this notion by revealing that

culturally responsive school leaders help their mainstream teachers to help students of color to scaffold their learning. For Teacher 6 the approach involved doing the following,

Faith always says that we should ask the students to help us with ideas on how to help them. So what we do here is, for example, I can ask a student who is having problems, “Hey Jimmy you need to do your work, is there anything that you need to get your work started? Can I help you with anything?” Then he will respond with a suggestion, because I’m already approaching him with a question that allows him to open up from his vantage point. He will tell me everything and offer possible solutions that suit his needs. Sometimes students have these answers. So we have to do everything from that context...everything is personal.

*Celebrating diversity.* Faith modeled cultural responsiveness by organizing celebrations related to different abilities and successes of different groups, especially those of African American and Latino students. During the first shadowing session, Faith sent thank-you cards to five female students who had helped organize a big event in the school during the previous week. Faith handed one of the cards directly to the mother of one of the girls who participated in the event. The Latina mother had come into the school to seek permission to take her daughter to attend a special pre-Christmas family event [the *posada*] later that day. Faith recognized that the name of the student was on the list of students that she was honoring with the thank-you cards. Faith stood up, shook the parent’s hand, and gave the card to the student’s mother. She asked questions to the mother to show interest related to the *posada*. From my cultural perspective, standing up and shaking hands with a person is a sign of respect and honor for that person. When the

student arrived from class, her mother hugged her daughter and shared the good news with her daughter. The mother of the girl was emotionally touched by Faith's gesture. By allowing the parent to take her child home, Faith showed respect for Latino cultural and family traditions.

*Providing legitimacy to different cultures.* Faith invited me to accompany her to observe a world geography class to which she had been invited. The class was celebrating different types of foods and artifacts from around the world. The class was designed to allow students to speak about important events that were linked to the foods and artifacts that they had brought to the classrooms. Most students in the class brought food from their countries of origin to share with the teachers and other students. However, to make the class more academic, the teacher asked the students to make presentations on the food and artifacts. The presentations were graded by the teacher. For the teacher, such classroom visits were very important because Faith's presence provided legitimacy to what the students and the teachers were doing.

**Teacher 4:** She comes in and provides a non-obtrusive observation.... She sits in and participates in whatever will be going on in the lesson with the students.... To me, that helps a lot because students view that she is approving everything that I am doing.... Students realize how important it is to be part of that [lesson that Faith visits].

After the presentation, Faith commented that she liked the activity because the students appreciated that the teacher was giving them grades for presenting something from their own cultures. Faith said, "It makes the student feel accepted as a whole person. That part [grading] was really excellent to me." After their class, students from that group went to



share their foods with Faith, the principal and the rest of the administrative staff. I concluded that the students felt legitimized and they corresponded by sharing their products.

*Encouraging collaborative problem solving.* Faith modeled cultural responsiveness by involving her teachers in seeking solutions to problems and helping students of color to achieve success. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) found that when leaders involve their faculty in decision making and collaborative problem solving, teachers feel empowered and motivated to find ways of involving themselves in future activities. This is consistent with the following reflection from Teacher 4, who reported that Faith helped teachers to gather and reflect on information about African American and Latino students with learning or discipline problems. The teacher felt empowered to use the same approach during her lessons.

A lot of times she helps us to do investigations, like if I see a student who is acting out or misbehaving, Faith always says, “you know, we need to know why, is it they don’t understand the rules?” Faith always says that for some minority students, especially Latinos, language plays a big role when students break the rules. Maybe it’s because they don’t understand you.

Throughout this study I observed that Faith encouraged and modeled collaborative problem solving. One problem solving approach that she frequently modeled was related to language diversity and lack of communication. Since the majority of students of color in the school spoke Spanish, Faith always invited an interpreter to explain in detail what she really wanted to explain to the student. Also, Faith had been

making efforts to learn Spanish. During one collaborative walk through (CWT) session Faith sustained 30 seconds of conversation in Spanish with one Hispanic female teacher. I concluded that Faith was sending a message to the other teachers that it was necessary to know something about the languages that students of color speak, since students were more comfortable around teachers who could speak with them in their first language.

*Using authentic stories.* Faith modeled the sharing of personal stories in order to help students and teachers realize that they were all human beings and all sometimes had issues that they struggled with. Faith encouraged teachers to share authentic stories in order for students to make connections with the teachers and their teaching. Teacher 2 described how Faith modeling CRL through story telling.

I know she always says stories are incredibly important. Without them she always says you're missing an element which really is the cultural piece. Often times, I've seen where an adult is disconnected from youth. And they're almost in a sense afraid that if they show vulnerability, or if they admit that they've had rough spots in their lives, that all of a sudden is giving in or giving permission to a student. But Faith says that they [the students] really appreciate sincerity and realness. And so that's what I try and provide them with. If I want students to be real and honest and open with me, I have to be able to introduce it.

Faith, the importance of modeling cultural responsiveness through authentic story telling was based on the understanding that stories help students, especially those from minority groups, to identify with their teachers and other students. Faith shared her personal stories with both teachers and students because that sharing helped them to also open up and

share their own stories. Faith and her teachers believed that inclusive relationships and rapport were very important to the success of students of color.

*Being honest.* Teachers witnessed that Faith consistently modeled frankness and honesty. Both qualities are regarded important in culturally and linguistically diverse institutions because they serve the purpose of increasing accuracy in communication with students of color. Teacher 4 discussed how Faith modeled frankness and honesty:

Well one thing I do like a lot about her is that I've been involved in a couple of mediations with students in Faith's office. And what I like is, we both sit there and we listen to what the student is saying. Occasionally then, if it feels like we aren't getting anywhere, in other words if the student is not buying into what I'm saying, she will then jump in and somehow connect with the student on some level, from the level of the relationship that she has with students. So that's something that's really is great; to be part of her team... we learn from seeing what she does.

As Delpit (2006) recommends, Faith took time to listen and to share honest opinions to help students and teachers to contribute to and voluntarily embrace school goals. This behavior agrees with Delpit's conclusions that cultural responsiveness involves helping students to achieve autonomy. My findings reveal that Faith's CRL created relationships that allowed students of color to move toward autonomy, a movement assisted by the respect that they get from their teachers.

*Acknowledging others.* Recognizing and acknowledging others was important to Faith, "My duty is to recognize those good behaviors and make them known [so that others] feel respected and acknowledged and appreciated. It makes them feel confident

and creates that good relationship between me and them.” Faith modeled acknowledging others by including them in school-wide activities. During the shadowing sessions, I observed Faith directly thanking teachers. In one case, Faith thanked one teacher when she met the teacher in the hallway in front of the cafeteria. The teacher had organized a group of students who successfully carried out an event during the previous week. Faith openly thanked her in the presence of other teachers. During an interview with the teacher, I asked her how she felt about the acknowledgement. The teacher explained that she felt respected and recognized in front of her colleagues. Faith’s public acknowledgement of the teacher was meant to help other teachers and even students to hear Faith’s appreciation and become motivated to do good things.

Faith always modeled a positive attitude that helped to change teacher attitudes throughout the school. Teachers agreed that because of Faith’s contagious smile and positive approach to others, teachers and students identified with her. Dealing with Faith made teachers feel good.

**Teacher 5:** You feel motivated to keep doing good things. You know it remains as part of your signature to do good work all the time... Next time I get a similar assignment I know what she expects, so I will do it even better.

One teacher added that such an experience helped them to “feel distinguished, and... I am reminded of the standards I set for myself... and I can hope to repeat it.” The other teachers agreed that, because of Faith’s positive attitude toward them, they were inclined to repeat their positive behavior and even to raise the standards that they had set for

themselves. Faith's modeling of cultural responsiveness through caring leadership helped her teachers achieve both personal and school goals.

In a follow-up interview following a shadowing session, Faith clarified that it was important to publicly acknowledge teachers and students and that doing so helped the school to be a culturally responsive campus.

For teachers and students I think it's good to acknowledge a job well done, and for me that inspires them to repeat the same [good] things. It makes them feel good. Personally, I genuinely thank them and that kind of makes them feel that they are being recognized. My experience is that it brings a smile to their faces. Acknowledge someone's efforts after they do something good for you or for the school... they will feel it for a long time.

According to Faith, acknowledging behaviors that promote diversity is important because such recognition legitimizes those behaviors.

*Being consistent.* The literature points out that effective leaders are consistent in the way they model leadership for others (Bass, 1960; Blase & Blase, 2004). In this study, Faith extends the concept by consistently modeling cultural responsiveness. Parents observed that Faith, with the support and permission of the principal, was helping to make the school staff more responsive to the continuously changing demographics of the school.

**Parent 8:** Faith tries hard to make sure that all students are treated equally.... And the other important thing here is that sometimes you hear your child say, "My teacher is so concerned that I do not understand her.

She takes me aside and talks to me.” And sometimes she calls the counselor to talk to the kid. And I know that Faith tries hard to talk to all students and to make sure that she can access their parents, not only because the student has a problem but because it is important to contact the parents and know them.

The parents agreed with observations I had made during the shadowing sessions that Faith was consistently inclusive and intentionally modeled inclusion for her teachers. For example, parents and teachers agreed that making the school office staff more diverse sent a message that the school was responding to the changing community and student demographics. However, parents felt that there was a need to quickly diversify the teaching staff because most of the teachers were White. Parent 7 said, “There are very few Latino and African American teachers in the school. However, Faith works hard to help the teachers she has to attend well to our kids. My daughter is happy...”

Faith modeled cultural responsiveness for her teachers and staff through a number of leadership behaviors that included building relationships through flexibility, encouraging others to be inclusive, and consistently presenting a welcoming and warm personality to others. Faith also encouraged teachers to use personalized teaching approaches with their diverse students, participate in events to celebrate diversity, involve others in collaborative problem solving, encourage the use of authentic stories, be honest with others, acknowledge others and be consistent. This allowed teachers and staff to continuously learn from and with their students.

*Theme Four: Being Present and Communicating*

Throughout this research, I observed that Faith maintained high levels of visibility by visiting classrooms, attending and participating in meetings, walking the hallways, and joining collaborative walk-throughs. Faith also made sure that her presence was evident in the form of messages that she strategically placed in different places in the building. Through all these forms of presence, Faith deliberately helped to create a culturally responsive school environment by advancing ideas related to diversity; building relationships with all students, especially minority groups; and supporting culturally responsive teaching behaviors. In response to an interview question, Faith explained that her leadership presence was important because it helped to continuously remind others to improve teaching and learning, achieve collaboration, and promote communication with students from minority groups. Faith believed that in a diverse school like WHS her presence among students of color helped to achieve excellence.

**Faith:** One reason, [for maintaining presence] is to let them know we're here and we're watching. Here is one example; when you were little and you were in your home and you knew mom and dad were there you were on your best behavior. But if you know mom and dad are gone, you might say, "Let me sneak and see what I can do..." Same thing here—and I learned this from a principal a couple of years ago—and she goes, "Even if you know you're not going to be at school that day because of meetings or training, always try to show up at the school, shake hands, stand in the hallways and talk to a few people." And that kind of sets the tone.

Faith stated that she continuously made herself visible in the hallways and classrooms to encourage teachers to engage all of their students. This practice also demonstrated to any students who sometimes disrupted lessons to realize that they were being watched by a school leader. Faith believed that the presence of CRL in the classrooms and hallways was important for “setting the tone” for culturally responsive teaching. Faith’s presence also provided students of color with opportunities to ask her questions about issues that concerned them. Teacher 4 explained, “Students approach her in the hallways if they have any questions and she is always around to answer them. If she is not there she makes sure that one of us or the other leaders are always available.” During one shadowing session a male student made a passing comment to Faith in the hallway,

Hey Ms. Dean, you guys are everywhere. I just saw you and Ms. Pearl [the principal] a couple of minutes ago downstairs in the front of the cafeteria and now I’m here I see you again. Are you guys following me?

Some of the classrooms that Faith frequently visited were those of students who were known to frequent her office for disciplinary reasons. Because some of those students, mostly from the African American and Latino groups, had social contracts with Faith, she felt that she was fulfilling her side of the contracts by checking on the students. Sometimes she would just walk up to them and remind them to keep their promises.

**Faith:** And so my thing is, if you [student] tell me something, I’m gonna take your word that you are telling the truth. And then I’m gonna hold you accountable for that. And that’s kind of saying, “Hey you told me so-so... make sure you do it.” Just a reminder for him to keep the social contract, you know. And so that’s why any time I see him, I try to remind him...



During one shadowing session, Faith approached an African American male student in the cafeteria and said, “Remember to stay out of trouble.” In a follow-up interview, Faith explained that she had observed that the student’s “mouth gets him into trouble with teachers, so I was just reminding him.” Teacher 6 echoed Faith’s belief regarding the need for the culturally responsive leader to be present among the students.

She knows the students who normally disrupt classes and she makes it a point to stop by everyday and say something about being good. And she does it in such a jovial approach... students don’t even feel they are being redirected. Usually it leaves a lasting impression on them. And she really does encourage them to work at the big picture, the direction they’re going now, and she tells them where they’re gonna end up if they continue in that path. And she tells them where they are gonna end up if they start making changes for the better.

Faith’s continuous leadership presence in strategic places and timing helped to improve discipline. She helped students to know when and where certain behaviors were acceptable.

Subthemes under the theme of being present and communicating include strategic leadership presence, using collaborative walk-throughs, leading from behind, using strategic communication, embracing students’ ways of knowing, and presenting a positive attitude.

*Strategic leadership presence.* During the observations, I realized that most of the problems related to violence occurred when students were in the hallways or in the cafeteria. Faith deliberately encouraged teachers and staff to constantly position

themselves at certain strategic positions during breaks to ensure that students felt the presence of adults. She encouraged her teachers to frequently remind students to avoid trouble.

**Faith:** Our first concern is safety—when you have a whole bunch of 900 plus kids out in the hallways and cafeteria at one time anything can go on. Somebody might bump somebody the wrong way and then a punch might be thrown and then we have a fight. And it keeps growing—it snowballs, or something else. We don't want that to happen. It's a big school with different groups, colors, call it what you may, but they are human beings you know. They bring some of these differences from the diverse community into the building.

One place where Faith encouraged visibility both for teachers and herself was in the cafeteria. In the cafeteria, Faith always made sure that she stood in a raised position on the stage, and from there she was clearly visible to all students, staff and teachers. From that position, Faith had clear visibility of anything that could go wrong in the cafeteria. She particularly focused her attention to those areas that were frequented by students who were known to cause gang related problems.

**Faith:** I know most of these students by name. I know those who usually cause trouble. So I focus on them a lot when I am in the hallways or in the cafeteria. Sometimes you can tell from their body language, something isn't just right—so you approach the student and ask—“is everything OK?” But if they see you're watching they will stop.

*Using collaborative walk-throughs.* One strategy that Faith used to maintain her visibility while promoting inclusion was the collaborative walk-through (CWT). The CWT's were designed to help teachers improve teaching approaches by making them more inclusive for students of color. Each CWT involved the following activities:

1. A group of twelve selected teachers met in the library to share classroom observation roles. Each member of the collaborative walk through team received an index each to write things they observed
2. The team chose one teacher to coordinate the collaborative walk-through. Teachers were assigned group roles:
  - One group observed and took notes related to the classroom environment
  - Another group observed and recorded notes related to the teaching behaviors of the teacher
  - Another group took notes related to the activities that the students engaged in
3. Each CWT lasted four minutes. The observations were recorded in two sections: positive things to be encouraged and areas that needed improvement
4. Soon after the observation the collaborative group convened again in the library and reported their findings to the CWT leader
5. The CWT leader recorded all the observations and collected all the index cards and then submitted them to the teacher
6. Finally, the CWT leader made an appointment with the observed teacher to discuss the observations.

Faith participated in all the collaborative walk-throughs. Her role was to bring in ideas from other collaborative walk-throughs in order to enrich the post-walk-through discussions. According to Faith, the purpose of the CWTs was to foster inclusive teaching practices by allowing teachers to observe inclusive practices and find ways of incorporating those practices in their own classrooms. The questions that each CWT team had to answer at the end of each session included: (a) How did the classroom look? (b) What did the students do? and (c) How did the teacher respond? As a participant in CWTs, this form of assisting teachers to learn from each other stood out to me. In the few minutes that teachers were in the classrooms, they gathered a great deal of data that the teachers would use to improve their teaching. To make sure teachers learned something related to cultural responsiveness, Faith deliberately raised questions related to how teachers worked with minority groups. According to Faith, she used CWTs to help teachers make decisions for

changing the current teaching behaviors to embrace all groups of students... I believe that if we reach those minority students, then we can reach our goal of being recognized. Since we initiated the CWTs a few months ago, teachers have started talking more among themselves. I believe they do get tons of problems solved.

Teacher 4 agreed with Faith and added that through CWTs Faith helped her understand how students of color responded to people who create relationships with them.

Well, I have this kid who's always giving problems in my class, and suddenly I see him at his best in another class during our collaborative tour, and I was like "Wow, really?" So I asked the teacher how she does it.

And then I tried those ideas, and suddenly I see change. So, yes, CWTs are changing things for me.

*Leading from behind.* Similar to findings from literature, (Banks, 2000; Chamberlain, 2005) Faith believes that mainstream teachers need help identifying problems that keep students of color from succeeding in school. Faith made herself available, participating in meetings, off campus sporting events and in the CWT's in which I participated. During such activities, Faith modeled "leading from behind" or "followership." In one meeting about behavior monitoring procedures I observed Faith as a participant and she suggested that, when selecting professionals to talk to a student, educators needed to select individuals who the student knows very well. According to Faith, this helps the student develop confidence and also fosters inclusion. In all such meetings that I observed, Faith participated not as a leader but as a follower, and she always advanced ideas related to inclusiveness and relationship building with students of color.

Faith helped teachers to create a common vision of cultural responsiveness and that vision guided everyone. Faith also modeled learning from others by asking questions that led teachers to reflect on how their teaching could help diverse students succeed. What stood out to me was the link that Faith made between cultural responsiveness and instructional improvement. Faith deliberately helped teachers to include the cultures of students of color in their lessons.

The focus of Faith's participation was helping teachers pay particular attention to those minority group members who performed below the state and district average in the academic excellence indicators. Faith said, "The success of minority groups, especially

Latino and African American students, is the success of Washington High.” This same belief was also confirmed in an article, *Educating Latino Students by Rolón (2003)* that Faith shared with her teachers during the collaborative breakfast meeting. Faith was consistent in the way she presented her leadership role as centered on closing achievement gaps between minority and mainstream students. As a participant in CWTs and other professional development activities, I realized that Faith’s approach would serve as a good school improvement strategy for professional development in my own country of Zimbabwe.

*Using strategic communication.* Another form of maintaining presence that I noticed from Faith was the continuous presence of her written reminders posted at various strategic places around the school. The messages reminded teachers and students to collaboratively work for the recognition of Washington High. In the cafeteria, Faith put up a big sign that continuously engaged those who used the cafeteria in thinking about what role each of them needed to play to help realize the vision of being a recognized school. She invited a team of teachers to carefully craft that message to help faculty to keep focused on their goal and inclusion as the way to meet that goal. Faith, together with her teachers, believed that the cafeteria was the best place to display the message because almost everyone in the school goes to the cafeteria. The message read,

What can...

I do?... [Referred to teachers]

You do?... [Referred to students]

We do?... [Referred to the teachers and students together]

To be recognized?

This message invited all members of the school community to collaborate to achieve the school goal. The presence of similar messages throughout the building helped to create a collaborative and inclusive school culture. Faith, thus, was consistent in using various messages that set the tone for cultural responsiveness. According to one teacher, the message in the cafeteria mirrored a teaching philosophy that encouraged teachers to model inclusiveness for their students. Similar to Ladson-Billings' (1994) findings, teachers at WHS believed that the best way to achieve the NCLB education policy was through culturally responsive teaching approaches.

**Teacher 1:** We have faith in our leadership; we're able buy into the idea of being recognized, because the premise of NCLB.... [is] the idea of closing the achievement gaps.... And that's a worthwhile goal in itself; [it] forces us to look at the data in the daylight of accountability and realize that there are kids who are falling through the cracks. And we have to focus on them.... We're able to buy into it because we know that our leadership here is on board in an authentic way in doing that. *It's not just something you're doing to achieve the label.*

Teacher 5 stated that Faith invested time to build culturally responsive communication networks at all levels, and that helped to create a culturally responsive school culture (CRSC). For Faith, the development of a CRSC involved developing teacher and student leaders who in turn were able to communicate cultural responsiveness at their different levels. Teacher 1 described Faith's approach as one in which she developed "the school culture from the inside out." The participants reported that Faith used communication patterns that involved being consistent, patient and communicating

widely. Through this strategy, Faith was able to respond to problems related to diversity. Both teachers and parents agreed that she persevered in sending culturally responsive messages—“if she does not succeed at first she continues to send the same message.”

Another aspect of Faith’s strategic communication was her continuous communication with parents. Faith made her presence among minority parents felt by constantly interacting with both African American and Latino parents who visited the school. This continuous communication helped Faith to gain the support of minority parents. Her strategy of approaching all parents with special effort to interact with minority parents helped to send a message of inclusion to all groups who visited the school. Faith stated that she believed that the best way to construct relationships and bond with parents of students of color was through getting closer to them and showing interest in their ideas about the school and how they could help the school better serve their children. If Faith did not know a parent or parents, she took time to introduce herself and engage them in conversations that involved their children. During the shadowing sessions I frequently observed Faith stop and talk to parents. Her way of starting conversation was to introduce herself and then ask if parents had been assisted. In the majority of cases, the parents would reciprocate by introducing themselves. From that point, Faith initiated her relationship-building conversations. I asked Faith why she did this so often.

Usually I target those that I don’t know, because sometimes I connect them to their kid. And then I’m able to put a face to the name that I know already. That way I get to know Mom, Dad or Brother.

Faith took time to help minority parents develop trust and confidence in the school administration. One Latino parent observed that Faith, “has good public relations,



she smiles at you and you can see that she really means it, and you can feel that welcoming hand-shake. I like that about her.” During the study, I noticed that there were times when Faith invited parents, mostly from the African American and Latino communities, into her office for discussions. After witnessing several occurrences, I asked Faith why she approached more parents from the Latino and African American communities. She responded, “First, I want us to know each other. And second if they mention the name of a kid that I know has problems, I will then try to talk more about their child.” This response agrees with Delpit’s (2006) finding that the best way to teach minority children, especially the poor, “can only be devised in consultation with adults who share their culture.” Therefore, by inviting parents to her office and talking to them privately, Faith demonstrated to parents that she intended to help their children succeed, and also that she preferred that her discussions with parents be confidential. This approach helped those minority parents to develop confidence and trust in her.

At times, Faith talked to parents on the phone, as a way of building trust and helping the school develop the inclusive and culturally responsive image of the school. Faith said,

Sometimes I speak to parents I’ve never met before.... Sometimes you find that they’re not necessarily nice on the phone. But I try to listen to them without interrupting or asking questions. I listen until they finish. Usually I keep my cool and even apologize for things that I may not have done.... Maybe it’s just that they are having a bad day and you happen to be in line and they empty their frustration on you. My job is to absorb all that. If you try to argue, then you make things worse.

Faith used diplomacy to earn the confidence of parents and others. She mentioned that she was prepared to take risks and allow others to empty their frustrations on her so that she could earn their trust. During her daily routines in the hallways and in the building, Faith was inclusive in the way she communicated with everyone, especially people from minority groups. This allowed her to reach all the diverse groups and to discover how each group could help to make the school a better environment for all students to succeed. Teachers reported that Faith consistently communicated information focused on diversity-related issues. Faith believed that teachers should lead others in the development of a culturally responsive school. Therefore, she shared information related to racial, ethnic and economic diversity to the attention of all teachers in order to empower them to deliver the same messages about inclusion.

**Teacher 1:** It [the diversity] influences a lot of problems that she has to face and the way she has to communicate.... Her communication influences the way we arm ourselves to deal with the problems. She wants teachers to lead the awareness on diversity and how to help students of color.

Faith's communication deliberately focused on creating a team of teacher-leaders who understood and communicated the school vision of building relationships with all people with an emphasis on minorities. Faith tried to be physically present during her communications in order to model and equip her teachers with the necessary skills to deal with problems related to diversity. Teacher 2 commented:

She makes students aware of the consequences of their choices. She says if you do this, this is what will happen to you, and maybe to the person

you're attacking. And she is very consistent, I guess that's the word....

She just puts it out there as it is, and they learn from that. "This is what's gonna happen," and she communicates the same message to everyone.

*Embracing students' ways of doing things.* During her constant contact and communication with students of color, Faith consistently showed understanding of their ways of speaking and then used their manner of speaking to help them understand the school regulations. Throughout the study, I observed Faith clearly and consistently communicating to students of color that they were equal to other members of the school community.

Both teacher and parent participants reported that Faith displayed very good listening skills and she embraced new ideas from diverse people. Teacher 3 added, "I guess I can say she is open-minded and flexible, just in the way she responds to other people... She tries to show interest in what others are doing, and how they do it."

Consistent with the literature (Delpit, 2006; Glickman et al., 2008), Faith believed that a breakdown in communication may cause people to disagree, which in turn leads to some form of power struggle. Participants agreed that Faith made extra efforts to communicate with all parents and, if there was a language barrier with Latinos, she used an interpreter. This demonstrated that Faith valued communication as a tool for cultural responsiveness. During shadowing sessions, I witnessed times when Faith invited a Latina member of the school administration to act as her interpreter for both students and parents. This way, Faith communicated clearly, clarifying issues to assure that all partners in a conversation understood each other.

**Teacher 4:** One thing I have seen her do is, first of all... the way she communicates and connects to students... she will listen and pay attention and become aware of maybe, for example, the colloquial manner with which they speak. And she will sustain a level of professionalism.... But during that communication, she also knows how to bring herself to the [student's] level, to the point where they're connecting and understanding.

One teacher added that Faith did not give up on students. She showed patience, and invested time to make sure that students from minority groups understood her.

**Teacher 5:** One message, she tells us each time we meet, is that it takes a long time to build the self-esteem back up.... Perseverance is very important in a school like this one and that's what she [Faith] does. You create a culture of understanding over time. When students get it, they will also pass it on to other students...

*Presenting a positive attitude.* Consistent with data from observations and interviews with Faith, both parents and teachers agreed that Faith radiated a positive attitude and energy that helped to encourage teachers to show positive attitudes towards students of color. They all agreed that through her positivity, Faith helped to change attitudes throughout the school to make the school more inclusive. One sign of Faith's positive attitude was her ever present smile.

**Teacher 1:** Smiling is her important mark... it helps change the attitudes and even the environment. When you smile you're quickly noticed... more than somebody who puts on a sad and gloomy face. Most students identify with her because of that. In the hallways they always greet her and

talk to her. She has problems of her own just like all other people, but I've never seen her wearing them—you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

*Theme Five: Fostering Cultural Responsiveness Among Others*

Fostering cultural responsiveness for Faith involved creating conditions that enabled others to be culturally responsive. The importance of fostering CRL is that it empowers others to try different approaches in order to reach all students. Teacher 3 reflected on her experiences with Faith's fostering cultural responsiveness:

[Faith helps teachers] to understand how minority students think, and also how they want to be treated. Students also get to know from the beginning that they have permission to express their ideas and they know we're receptive. And the good thing about it is that Faith encourages us to try new ideas.

This observation by teacher 3 agrees with what the literature says about outstanding leadership (Bass, 1990b; Kouzes & Posner, 2002); however, Faith's CRL goes further to embrace students' ways of knowing and uses that as strength to increase performance (Chamberlain, 2005; Comings, 2007; Guerra & Nelson, 2007).

Subthemes within the theme of fostering cultural responsiveness among others include collaborative classroom vision building, matching leadership behaviors to social contracts, promoting good practices through networking, accepting others, and using home and school experiences.

*Collaborative classroom vision building.* While the literature shows that outstanding leaders encourage collaboration (Burns, 1979; Bass, 1990a; Blase and Blase,

2004), there is little literature that shows how collaboration helps students of color to succeed. Faith fostered cultural responsiveness among teachers, students, and staff by involving both teachers and students in developing common classroom and school visions based on the overarching beliefs, values and interests of all cultural groups in the school. This approach allowed both students and teachers to have input into how they wanted to work together. During the first round of classroom observations, I witnessed teachers and students collaboratively engaged in developing classroom social contracts. Each group of students collaboratively defined the kind of a classroom learning environment they expected to see, hear, and experience during the course of the year. As noted earlier in this report, I observed that all teachers who participated in this study had social contracts displayed in their classrooms. Both Faith and her teachers constantly referred to those contracts whenever they were redirecting students who were struggling with disciplinary issues. Therefore, the social contracts not only served the purpose of a code of conduct for all the students and teachers but also set the tone for collaborative environment. The classroom social contracts were all handwritten by student representatives and had been signed by all students in the classroom. Faith and her teachers planned this activity for the beginning of the school year, allowing students and teachers to clarify expected classroom behaviors, define standards, and describe the classroom environments that would promote learning and teaching.

I photographed the social contracts and then analyzed them to examine the desired interpersonal relationships, teaching behaviors, learning behaviors, classroom environment, and school culture the teachers and their students articulated through the social contracts. I also compared the language of the classroom contracts to the school

vision and Faith's philosophy and concluded that all three were highly consistent with each other. This also led me to conclude that Faith's philosophy and ways of acting were guided by the needs of the school community. Figure 3 shows some of the common language that students and the teachers used to characterize the expected relationships and classroom environments.

When analyzed closely, the words and phrases in figure 2 clearly express desired classroom environments characterized by responsive relationships and inclusiveness. Results from my observations and interviews also revealed that some of Faith's leadership behaviors were articulated in the social contracts, including *trust, respect, forgiving, being compassionate, understanding, open mindedness, share positive energy, be patient, good listening, use kind words, be accepting, empathy, even treatment, take opinions into play, and respect mental space.*

*Matching leadership behaviors to social contracts.* One observation I made during analysis of the social contracts was that language about how people should relate to each other made up the longest list of terms; students, like Faith, put relationships at the center of their desired learning conditions. I concluded that by putting more emphasis on building relationships, Faith was fostering and modeling cultural responsiveness so teachers would understand how to help the school meet most student needs. Similarly, Faith promoted relationships as a key leadership behavior because she understood and valued the needs of her students and their teachers. Other terms used in social contracts related primarily to curriculum and instruction and desired classroom environments, but these terms also indirectly encouraged positive relationships and inclusiveness. Faith fostered cultural responsiveness by creating strong relationships with all her teachers and

students, with greater emphasis on bonding with minority groups. This was because the majority of the teachers were Whites.

Related to Relationship Building People	Related to Curriculum and instruction	Related to Creating a CRL School Environment
<i>Respect, constructive criticism, encourage each other, don't pick on favorites (everyone is important), to be equals, friendship, no fighting, golden rule, peace, trust, understanding, attentiveness, effort, confidentiality, fair punishment, maturity and to be treated maturely, honesty, encouraging, no yelling, talk it out calmly, no profanity, open mindedness, being reasonable, positive attitude, use the right tone, being considerate, share positive energy, be patient, good listening, tolerant to new ideas, being responsible, non moody, polite, self control, no judging, use kind words with each other, don't be rude, agree to disagree, entertaining, caring, classroom, respect of space and property, no violence, class meeting, don't take sides, loyalty, helpful, kind, no put downs, self control, be accepting, courage, love, give each one a chance, keep things interesting, no grudges be nice, to be treated humanely, take turns, no passive aggression, no excuses, patience, positive solutions, optimism, calm empathy, even treatment, don't be fake, like a family, no negative attitudes, don't yell out, no assumptions, self control, be mellow, no put downs, take opinions into play, don't take out frustrations on others, equality, light hearted, no bad language, forgiving, stay on task, courteous, follow expectations, respect mental space, students should follow intrusions, and put maximum effort.</i>	<i>Student centered content, constructive criticism, encourage each other, student centered content, don't pick on favorites (everyone is important), friendship, no fighting, understanding, attentiveness, effort, encouraging, use the right tone, being considerate, share positive energy, be patient, good listening, tolerant to new ideas, entertaining classroom, class meeting, helpful, kind, no put downs, give each one a chance, keep things interesting, take turns, no excuses, patience, positive solutions, optimism, take opinions into play, stay on task, follow expectations, respect mental space, follow intrusions, and put maximum effort.</i>	<i>Don't pick on favorites (everyone is important), friendship, no fighting, peace, confidentiality, fair punishment, encouraging, no yelling, no profanity, positive attitude, use the right tone, share positive energy, tolerant to new ideas, being responsible, non moody, polite, use kind words with each other, entertaining classroom, respect of space and property, no violence, loyalty, helpful, kind, no put downs, self control, courage, love, give each one a chance, keep things interesting, no grudges be nice, take turns, optimism, even treatment, caring, don't be fake, like a family, no negative attitudes, mellow, equality, no bad language,</i>

Figure 1: Classification of Vocabulary from Social Contracts



*Professional development.* Faith fostered cultural responsiveness by always looking for information and organizing workshops where experts on cultural responsiveness made presentations on that topic. This provided her teachers with opportunities to receive expert advice and also to clarify things that confused them in their classrooms. Faith also attended and presented papers at workshops, and she always brought information for her teachers from the workshops. One teacher confirmed that Faith was always trying to provide them with information on cultural responsiveness to help them succeed with students of color.

**Teacher 2:** Well first of all we've been taught about diversity and cultural responsive teaching at workshops. And we have attended some outside of the school, all of them organized by Faith and the other administrators. And Faith has asked us to lead some of the workshops. She brings in articles or discussion topics that are specifically related to crossing these cultural barriers. And then we would have discussion groups.

Results from classroom observations and shadowing sessions revealed that Faith also fostered cultural responsive pedagogy through sharing teaching strategies and materials with teachers during faculty meetings. Several teachers agreed that Faith shared ideas on topics related to teaching students from various cultural and linguistic minority groups. Some of the common ideas and topics that Faith shared with her teachers included, *African American Students and the Reading Achievement Gap; History of United States – Brown vs. Board of Education; Culturally Responsiveness; and Rapport & Motivation*. These topics show that Faith wanted to empower her teachers to be

responsive to the needs of both African American and Latino students in addition to students with other forms of cultural diversity.

Both teachers and parents agreed that Faith's primary concern was to influence teachers to use culturally responsive approaches with their students.

**Teacher 3:** I think it's the sense of empowerment that we provide the kids through building rapport... so we go into this with this understanding that there are no bad kids. There are only bad choices... And we lay out our consequences and we give them the power to choose. It doesn't mean that they always choose correctly, but they walk away having learned something most of the time. And we give them that level of empowerment, so that if they want to step up and lead classes and [assist others] they can do it and they feel comfortable and safe, and she [Faith] will encourage that.

Faith encouraged parents from all demographic groups to volunteer at WHS. According to Faith, the presence of the parents in the school served a number of purposes related to cultural responsiveness with linguistic and cultural minorities. These purposes included (a) providing teachers with adults who advised them on urgent issues about minorities, (b) strengthening the presence of minority adult population groups, and (c) acting as a cushion for power struggle debates that constantly arose in the school (Delpit, 2005). One parent summarized how she valued Faith's efforts to have parents from different cultures present at school:

**Parent 1:** Even though I may not be here every day to answer for my kid when she crosses the line, at least some Latino parent can help teachers

with one or two things that will help my own child to succeed.... And what I see Faith doing is that her approach is always to try and reset those relationships—make them work.... So by allowing parents constant presence in the school, at least you have an assurance that their home cultures and the school culture come together to help the kids succeed. That's what I want as a parent.

This parent and others supported Faith's approach to helping teachers succeed with Latino students. Both teachers and parents who I interviewed observed that Faith's commitment to parent involvement led to more parent-teacher collaboration and ultimately to more successful learning experiences for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Faith's cultural responsiveness involved her continuously studying the situation and "resetting" relationships to make them work for the benefit of students (Guerra & Nelson, 2007).

*Promoting good practices through networking.* During one of my classroom observations, I noticed that Faith was working with a teacher to help that teacher improve her classroom management skills. Faith pointed out that the teacher struggled to maintain discipline among both African American and Latino students. To help the teacher, Faith invited the teacher to observe a number of teachers Faith considered to have outstanding classroom management skills. During the visits, Faith encouraged the teacher to take notes that were related to the behaviors of the teacher and their students. Faith said,

I didn't inform the other teachers in advance that we're visiting, cause I wanted her to see the other teachers going through the process of solving real discipline problems in real time. So she learned from there. Usually I

deliberately visit classrooms with students who normally give problems to the teacher that I'm helping. That kind of helps too, cause the students will go, "Oh so they're following me? What's gonna happen?" So while I am helping the teacher I am also sending a message to the student, like, "Hey, look we're watching you."

After one classroom observation Faith conferenced with the teacher to discuss how the teacher could use what he had observed in the other teacher's classroom to improve his classroom management skills. During the conference, Faith encouraged the teacher to modify what he had observed to suit the diverse needs of all of the students that he taught; Faith understood that different groups of students have their own needs and character. Faith took action in this situation not only to communicate to the teacher that he needed to respond to the needs of culturally diverse students, but also to help the teacher realize that there were resources available to help him succeed with all students.

In addition to working directly with the individual teachers, Faith also promoted teacher networking. "I believe in family. We're family here, that's my conviction, so we work for one another." Faith believes in collaborative work as a tool for improving her school. She encouraged teachers to develop collaborative relationships that benefited all students. Faith also encouraged teachers to network with parents of students of color:

**Teacher 1:** I think it goes to one of the key points in our philosophy as a campus, the success of our minority students. It depends on what we do as a school, but it also depends on what the parents do and what the student does for himself. And so, for her, [Faith] networking and communication

are very important for the success of our school and those minority groups....

Networking with parents ensured teachers of parent support if students showed signs of negative changes. Parent 4 said, “What Faith encourages is—meet with the teachers on that parent night. My husband and I have gone in, sat down and said, “OK, this is the son we know at home, so how is my son at school?”

One example of an activity that Faith used to foster cultural responsiveness was discussing topics related to culturally responsive teaching during the voluntary breakfast club. According to Faith, discussing topics related to cultural responsiveness helped to empower teachers to be more responsive. At the breakfast meetings, Faith and her teachers read one article per week, and they made reflections and explained how they would use ideas from the articles in their classrooms. Three of the articles covered the following topics:

1. *Relationships that Matter*, by Deborah Stipek (2006)
2. *Educating Latino Students*, by Carmen A. Rolón (2003)
3. *Setting the Stage for Students' Engagement*, by Jan Richards (2006)

Faith explained that the article on educating Latino students helped to emphasize the need to focus on Latinos as the largest minority group in the school, district, and state. Faith explained, “if teachers understand this group more, it may help reduce the achievement gap in our school by a significant percentage.”

Some of the artifacts related to this theme that I examined included thank you cards and e-mails from students who thanked Faith and her teachers for the care and nurturing they received at Washington High. These behaviors by Faith and her teachers

helped to create suitable conditions for everyone to do their work. Examples of key terms used by the students in these artifacts include the following:

- “You helped me understand the value of education.”
- “She explains everything to us.”
- “She takes time to talk to me to help me understand.”
- “She listens to me when no one else does.”
- “Helper”
- “Caring”
- “Sympathetic”
- “Good person”
- “Makes me feel confident.”

All the vocabulary used by the students in these artifacts supported the finding that Faith demonstrated caring and nurturing leadership with the students.

*Accepting others.* Faith created bonding relationships with all students by making them feel accepted. She accepted others in the school by showing that she trusted and relied on them, making everyone understand the importance of relating to each other as family. Faith discussed this conviction: “I believe in family, because I grew up in a family environment, and we were there for each other every time. So it’s the same here, when one member of my team is not happy it affects me directly.”

Consistent with Faith’s notion of including everyone in decision-making, teachers and students always reached decisions by consensus. The reason Faith accepted others into her “leadership” circle was her understanding that people in a diverse school community are always learning new things about each other, “In this school, we want all

people to continuously look at each other and to learn from each other, because we come from different backgrounds.”

Faith often showed that she accepted others simply by paying attention to them.

One Latina parent gave an example of how Faith went about this:

**Parent 2:** Both with my child and me notice that she always takes the time to talk to us. And if she doesn’t have the time at that moment when you are in the school, she will always let you know exactly when she can talk to you. And I think that’s important because I feel that she pays attention to me and she makes me feel important and acknowledged, and the students feel important too.

*Encouraging the heart through respect.* Faith created a Power Point presentation entitled *Washington High School—Teachers of Honor*, that addressed the idea of encouraging the heart through respect. The title of the presentation itself helped teachers to see that Faith respected them. In the presentation, Faith shared ideas about how teachers should teach. Two slides in the presentation had the following ideas that fostered cultural responsiveness.

A teacher is not a Julliard instructor selecting who they will and will not educate. They are experts at educating the masses. Whether it be collectively or an individual child. If your student(s) didn’t learn, then you didn’t teach.

If a student doesn’t understand we break it down until they do, if a student is failing we help them to pass...

*Uniting home and school experiences.* According to the parents who participated in this study, cohesiveness at WHS was being achieved by bringing together students' home and school experiences. The school culture at WHS was continuously being redesigned to help all people understand how to approach changing demographics and other forms of diversity. One way Faith bridged the gap between home and school was through showing interest in how parents at home would handle problems that their children experienced at school.

**Parent 4:** She [Faith] calls the parents when there is a problem and she involves them... I think that helps because she always has the opportunity to understand why the student acts the way he does. That respect, I think, closes the gap between the parents and the school, and helps to build trust. She also explains the problem and how she will deal with it....

*Theme Six: Caring for Others*

Consistent with feminist epistemology and philosophy (Noddings, 2007), Faith showed care for all members of the school community and demonstrated a deep commitment to working with all students and a deep desire to see more students of color succeed. She expressed her strong belief in the positive effects of caring for others, and pointed out that care helped to strengthen relationships throughout the school community. Faith said, "My concern is to see all students develop the same caring and responsible behaviors towards each other. Maybe that may help those who struggle to succeed." Faith placed special emphasis on the care and nurturing of students of color in order to encourage teachers to develop similar relationships. Faith said,



For me, I think it is important to care; first I have to be responsive to the teachers' needs so that they in turn can be responsive to their students' situations. If teachers are happy, then I know the students are going to be happy too. They [teachers] need to understand each student as an individual and to attend to the needs of the student, and that's what care is all about, because we need to know how our students feel...

Faith exhibited a deep concern for creating a caring environment for all members of the school community. Participants believed that Faith's care for others helped students and teachers develop close rapport and also improved the learning environment for linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Subthemes within the theme of caring for others included supportive and nurturing, giving information, passion for working with children, being concerned about security, and encouraging culturally responsive pedagogy.

*Supportive and Nurturing.* Faith's way of caring for people involved providing emotional support to both students and teachers. According to Faith, providing care and nurturing experiences helped minorities to function effectively in a school environment that was predominantly White. Faith commented, "Our Latino students and their parents need people who listen to them and provide them with comfort and respect because they may feel lost in our school." This quote is consistent with Noddings (2007), who believes that both parents and students of diverse cultures prefer to participate under caring leadership. Faith provided care for students of color and parents by respecting their needs. Throughout this study, I observed that Faith showed concern and emotional support for teachers whenever they needed support. One of her teachers had surgery on

her left leg a few days before TAKS, and she was confined to a wheel chair. Faith coordinated the other teachers and the office staff to help the teacher. The teacher commented,

Faith is very supportive, she came in with a group of other teachers and they did everything. Everything went on smoothly. Generally, this subject is so isolated at this school. I've no one to share lesson plans with or to co-teach with, but Faith encourages other teachers to be supportive of what I'm doing, especially science and English teachers.

I also observed Faith showing deep concern for the principal when she fell sick during the second shadowing session. Throughout the day Faith would call the principal to find out how she was progressing. In all the telephone conversations I heard Faith encouraging the principal with the same message, "I want you to know that everything is going on well here, so take your time and rest. You need to take all your medicines." She also attended to parents who wanted to talk to the principal on the phone, but she did not consult the principal immediately because she did not interrupt her rest. In short, Faith's concern for others was evident in the way she treated them.

*Giving information.* For Faith, sharing information about students of color was an important form of caring. I observed that Faith arrived at the school early to prepare for the day and to make contacts with parents of students who were experiencing problems. The care that Faith showed towards students who were experiencing problems was consistent with her philosophy that building relationships with students of color helped them to feel welcome at school. This is consistent with Noddings' (2007) philosophy that caring involves, "a nonselective form of attention that allows the other to establish a

frame of reference and invite us to enter into it” (p. 227). Faith deliberately invited students of color, especially those from the African American and Latino communities, to “mutually construct” those frames of references or new knowledge. She hoped that information sharing would empower students from minority cultural and linguistic backgrounds to improve their learning.

**Faith:** I try to give information to their parents, and I also say “Hey I need you to help me help your child succeed.” So I tell them what is happening with their child so that they tell us what we can do to help their child do well. I don’t want parents to be surprised when the student shows up with poor grades—we’re in it together as a family so I have to communicate every day and give them information about their child. So, I arrive early to e-mail and make phone calls to parents because this is the best time I can catch them before they get too busy.

Faith gave information to parents of students of color because she believed that information empowered those parents and increased the students’ capacity for learning. Consistent with the literature (Vygotsky, 1978; Noddings, 2007), sharing information helps to improve the quality of family life that students will experience at home, because when they have it, parents become more aware of the learning needs of their children. One Latina parent confirmed that Faith’s information helped her identify her son’s learning problems early, which allowed the parents to help teachers address these problems. Another parent said, “Faith cares, because she always tries to give us information that helps our child in school. And she shows concern if we don’t interact

with teachers ... because she says we need to know what teachers and our children go through”

*Passion for working with children.* Consistent with Noddings’ work (2007), minority parents reported that Faith demonstrated care by showing her passion for working with their children. A typical statement from my interviews with the parents was that Faith was “enthusiastic, whole heartedly passionate, about how kids from minority families learn and even about how we look after them at home. Again, she wants to see the teachers enjoying the job so she tries to share ideas with them...” Another parent said the following:

**Parent 5.** She definitely has a passion for education; she has a genuine persona for teaching—passionate... she is keen to see things moving smoothly for all kids regardless of who they are. There is a difference, there is a passion for what you do, and there is a job that you just do. Faith is passionate about her work with our kids.

*Being concerned about security.* Faith’s caring for people went beyond academics; she risked her own safety for the safety of others. During all three shadowing sessions, I noticed that Faith walked the hallways regularly during classes and break periods to ensure the safety of students and teachers. I consistently observed that, when Faith arrived at the school in the morning, she walked throughout the building checking to see if all areas in the building were safe before students and teachers arrived. Faith clarified why she did that,

First, I’m a mom—both here and at home. It’s my running joke, I always say, “I have 902 kids. We have about 900 students here but I have two

daughters and they [the 900 students] are just like my children.... I am responsible for them. And if anything happens to one of them... it hurts.

So you wanna be sure everything is safe.

Some of the places Faith demonstrated her concern for the safety of others was in the school's bus drop and pick-up lanes, bathrooms, hallways, and the cafeteria. Faith made sure she was always present at these places during the times when student presence in the areas was at their peak.

During one shadowing session, I accompanied Faith to the bus drop zone, and as soon as she arrived she asked her teachers to return into the building since it was very cold. Faith and the other principals remained on duty. That behavior stood out for me because Faith, together with the other principals, demonstrated care for their teachers at a moment they really needed that care. For Faith, the cafeteria and the bus pick-up lanes were places where conflicts were likely to take place because students gathered in these places in large numbers. Parent 6 corroborated my observations and commented that Faith's care for others was demonstrated by her effort to make the school a safe place for everyone, "I feel more comfortable sending my kids to school here, because I don't want to send my kid to a school that I don't feel comfortable walking through its doors."

*Encouraging culturally responsive pedagogy.* Faith's philosophy of caring included her belief that for students of color to learn better, the school's teachers must help them develop a sense of trust and belonging (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Fullan, 2001; Banks, 2001). Teachers' reflections during interviews following classroom observations revealed that they demonstrated their caring through culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP). All of the teachers who I observed called upon all students so they could

participate and share ideas based on their own cultural experiences. Teachers confirmed that Faith encouraged them to group students randomly and teachers frequently changed group membership to expose the students to different experiences with different classmates.

Faith and the other leaders at WHS invited parents to participate in the development of the curriculum. One parent described participation in the selection of a new Math program.

**Parent 1:** On curriculum and instruction matters, I had the opportunity to sit in to validate the new math program for our high school. I got to appreciate the importance of what teachers have to go through when they're teaching our kids. The school asked me as a parent to give a parent's perspective to the education board, the school board.... I sat in the whole three-week process to look at the different options and pick the one that I think is best for the kids. Indeed, you learn a lot from the whole process and you even get to appreciate the importance of helping teachers and administration. So by involving me in that process they managed to make me understand why it is important for parents to participate in school activities.

Faith also invited parents to observe learning and teaching experiences in classrooms. From that experience, parents were able to empathize with what their children went through. An African American female parent valued working with teachers for the benefit of her child. The experience helped the parent to be on the same page with the teachers:

**Parent 6:** Even in the classroom, too, I kept telling my daughter that, “Hey I’m gonna come see your classes one day.” And I didn’t tell her, but first I communicated with all the teachers. And I showed up, and I sat in the whole class, and I participated with the students; you know, whatever work they were doing. And then the next class I went too. But it was great, and the other students thought it was great too, you know.... The teachers themselves thought the dynamics of the class changed that day, and some students said that they didn’t know whose parent was gonna show up next. Me and those teachers thought that at least some parents should come to school just for one day... because you see the change in the attitude of the kids...

The overall picture of Faith’s leadership and how others responded to her showed that the school was gradually becoming a culturally responsive system. The next section of this study describes notable changes in eight areas of the school system resulting from Faith’s culturally responsive leadership.

#### Change: Toward a Culturally Responsive System

The overall picture drawn from interviews, classroom observations and institutional artifacts revealed that WHS was experiencing a transformation that was leading the school toward becoming a culturally responsive system. Faith’s culturally responsive leadership was influencing the school system by creating relationships, being persistent and persuasive, modeling cultural responsiveness, fostering cultural responsiveness, being present and caring for culturally diverse students. Specific indicators demonstrating that the school was becoming a culturally responsive system

included improved relationship with students, improved relationships with parents, improved relationships among staff, more culturally responsive teaching, development of a more culturally responsive curriculum, improved student discipline, and an improved school climate. In this section I discuss each of these changes.

### *Improved Relationships with Students*

I observed that both Faith and the teachers had developed good rapport with their students. Parents confirmed that in general Faith and her teachers had developed sound relationships with their children, and that those relationships helped the students to feel at home in the school and comfortable with their teachers. Parent 4 summarized what most participants felt about the changes happening at WHS, “What I have seen here is that students and teachers are very happy; students like their teachers and leadership because the teachers are really friendly, approachable and caring. So they [students] trust and respect them.” Participants generally viewed WHS as inclusive, and they considered the school environment as warm, happy, and conducive for their children to succeed academically. Faith acknowledged that improved student-teacher relationships had not yet led to all of the change that needed to happen at WHS:

I also make sure that all students are valued and do not have to go through the same experiences I had. I look at our Advanced Placement classes and I question why there are only a few minority students in those classes. I also question why there is an overrepresentation of minority students in our special education classrooms....



### *Improved Relationships with Parents*

Parents agreed that both Faith and the teachers bonded well with them and they felt welcome at any time to involve themselves in school-wide activities in a variety of ways. They also reported that the school leaders and teachers related to them with respect and they allowed parents to give teachers ideas to consider when teaching their children. One example was that parents observed that in the initial stages of enrolling their children into the school faculty engaged all parents, including minority parents, in efforts to help them understand school requirements. According to parent participants, the school was always open for all parents to share what they expected from the school for their children. This helped both mainstream and minority parents to bond with their children's teachers and the school leadership. One parent explained, "When enrolling our kids here, we're encouraged to meet our children's teachers to share ideas about our children. I think it helps teachers to understand my kid better." Fostering parent-school relationships at WHS helped to close communication gaps between the home and school cultures, helping the school to be culturally responsive.

Through Faith's encouragement, parents and teachers continuously collaborated with their children's teachers. Parents reported that their positive rapport with faculty and other staff helped them to continuously review the academic progress of their children. By bringing the parents and teachers together, Faith managed to help them forge relationships that were closing the gaps between the home and school environments, which, in turn, contributed to students' success in school. The practice of parents coming to school on a regular basis to address problems that arose—problems often due to cultural conflicts—is consistent with other research concluding that parental presence

helps the school to bridge cultural gaps and develop caring relationships (Vygotsky, 1978; Freire, 1998; Noddings, 1992, 1993, 2007).

Observations reported by the parents corroborated results from classroom observations and shadowing sessions. I consistently observed both teachers and staff engaging parents in specific conversations related to students' academic progress. I also observed that the school community regularly came together in social events that united parents and teachers. This helped to reduce problems of discipline and encouraged the building of relationships among diverse members of the school community. Consistent with the literature, parents found that positive relationships with teachers and leaders in the school helped them become aware of different resources to help their children succeed (Fullan, 2001).

#### *Improved Relationships Among Staff*

Overall results of this study revealed that school leaders, faculty and staff had developed positive relationships. One example of these improved relationships was evident during a Valentine's Day celebration when the school leaders, faculty and staff came together and shared messages of appreciation for the good work they were doing. Another example was when teachers and students joined community leaders for a breakfast sponsored by a local restaurant. Teachers reported that at this event it was evident that the faculty had strong relationships among themselves and also with the community served by the school. Teachers and staff viewed the relationships Faith had fostered as a source of empowerment.

**Teacher 6:** Faith believes in empowerment through rapport, and I see that too; it transpires across the board. So she has worked hard on building

rapport with her faculty and other staff at our school... And it's something that I have found [that], the more that I became tuned into it as a teacher, the higher my success rate with all my students and faculty...

Teachers reported that their ways of relating to other faculty and staff had been influenced by the way Faith modeled CRL for them. Teacher 2 reflected on how relationships helped her to succeed with students from other cultures:

I've actually used that [relationships] as a source of inspiration for myself. And so when I see her [Faith] connect with a student and then all of a sudden that student is in my class, I can take some of the technique that I might have seen her use with them and apply it and I find I'm successful as well.

#### *More Culturally Responsive Teaching*

Faith's leadership helped teachers at WHS to embrace the philosophy of culturally responsive teaching (CRT). Throughout the study, there was evidence of teachers using CRT with their students. During my classroom observations I observed a variety of teaching strategies that were consistent with Faith's concept of CRT and also with the readings that Faith and her teachers had discussed during the breakfast club meetings and other professional development sessions. Examples of prevalent CRT practices included the following:

- Using cognates to simplify vocabulary in English
- Acting out words when defining new vocabulary
- Using student friendly versions of concepts (SFV), which involved asking a number of students to explain new concepts in their own words

- Using games to understand students' circumstances
- Dramatizing
- Researching and presenting information related to other cultures
- Using students' and teachers' personal stories
- Inviting specialists and experts from diverse cultures to talk to students about topics being studied
- Constantly changing student grouping to encourage diverse views during cooperative learning
- Allowing students to bring models from home to help them explain concepts to be learned and to connect those concepts to their lived experiences.

One culturally responsive teaching strategy listed above that was used by most teachers to explain new concepts was “student friendly version” (SFV). During a lesson, teachers helped students connect with a new concept by asking a number of students to explain the concept using their own vocabulary. I consistently observed that during SFV explanation, students of color shared ideas that enabled other students of color to understand new concepts. What became apparent to me was that the number of students of color who were giving their own explanations increased after every example of SFV. I concluded that the SFV approach helped students to develop confidence and encouraged them to participate from a position of strength. The approach helped the teacher to connect with all students. Teacher 1 explained the benefits of using the SFV approach with students of color:

They're able to use their peers' understanding to scaffold their own understanding. If I said to one kid, “You tell me what you got out of that,”

well, I'm narrowing the focus. By letting 2-3 people talk about what they get out of it, [I'm giving] them a more convivial atmosphere and then there is a bigger chance; I just quadrupled my chances that one of them is going to say something that's gonna spark the curiosity of one of those minority kids in the class.

The campus-wide use of the SFV approach was consistent with the philosophy of education espoused by Faith to her teachers that if students did not understand teachers should break down the information for them.

Teacher 2, who had embraced the concept of empathy, used “good things” and played a game that allowed her students to voluntarily communicate who they were, how they wanted to be treated, and what issues they were having in their lives. The game was called “Step Up to the Line.” The teacher divided the students into two groups, and then the students stood up in two rows facing each other. There was a line drawn between the students and each row of students stood one step behind the line and waited for the teacher's instruction. The teacher read out instructions:

- Step up to the line if you laughed today.
- Step up to the line if you cried or almost cried today.
- Step up to the line if you have an assignment today.
- Step up to the line if you come from a single parent home.
- Step up to the line if you have a friend who is making bad choices.

The teacher had selected instructions consistent with what she wanted to learn about her diverse students and what she wanted her students to learn about each other.

The teacher explained that she paid attention to students who stepped up to the line for any of the reasons that she pronounced. At the end of the game, she followed up with a question to help students reflect on the experience: “What did you learn from that game?” One response that attracted my attention was from an African American male student who mentioned that he felt better because he realized he was not alone in his situation. The student was able to relate to the other students and was motivated to seek answers to his problems. To conclude the activity the teacher took advantage of the feeling in the classroom and told the students her own story and how she as a young girl had made bad choices. The teacher concluded her story by explaining what she did to change and make better choices. The teacher’s story helped to connect her with the students and also to demystify the perception that teachers are super-human beings. The teacher explained that the game helped them to know the kinds of experiences her students were struggling with. This agrees with Guerra & Nelson (2007), who argue that teachers should assess the situation to determine if their teaching is responsive, and make changes if necessary.

Teacher 3 included personal stories in her lessons because doing so helped her to connect with students of color and to build trust with those students. She said, “Stories help to connect me with all my students. They can see from my story that I am being genuine, because sometimes I make reference to a story that I may have told them before.” Observations like these demonstrated that teachers at Washington High had embraced Faith’s ideas about being culturally responsive. Teachers were modifying their own teaching philosophies to become more inclusive.

Another important teaching approach used at WHS was called the *pedagogy of care*. Teachers at WHS explained that they had embraced the pedagogy of care and nurturing to help students feel included. One teacher explained the benefits of the pedagogy of care for all students, and especially for students of color.

Sometimes struggling [minority] students may be overwhelmed by the number of people around them who may know the answer and this may frustrate them. My role is to encourage them. So I use open ended questions—probes help them to breakdown the content and the concept into simple units.... Maybe I can ask another student in another group or in the same group to try the answer. I will deliberately extend the explanation given by one student to help the struggling student get it. Nobody likes to have all eyes fixed on them for failure to get something right, so I try to move attention away from the struggling student so that they can get it from other students.

The reflection reveals a number of aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy. The teacher deliberately helped students to connect new concepts to their own lives and thus to construct new knowledge from their different zones of comfort. Consistent with literature on cultural responsiveness (Freire, 1998; Dunn 2000; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Guerra & Nelson, 2007), through *pedagogy of care* teachers at WHS promoted cooperative learning that encouraged students to share stories from their own cultures and lives. Scaffolding and telling stories allowed cultural and linguistic students of color to connect with what their teachers taught and helped to build social bridges among students. Collaborative

learning is a concrete example of the “pedagogy of care” that was helping the school to become a culturally responsive campus.

Other culturally responsive teaching behaviors that I observed included use of humor, anxiety reduction, showing respect for students’ answers and using approach behaviors with students of color. Another behavior that was evident during most classroom observations was teachers greeting students at the classroom door. Teacher 1 explained this custom, “Welcoming them at the door really helps to establish relationships because you get to know more about what’s going on with them.”

#### *A More Culturally Responsive Curriculum*

Throughout the classroom observations, I observed that teachers deliberately modified the written curriculum by bringing in examples beyond the textbooks to help facilitate students’ understanding of new concepts. One science teacher explained that she tried to be inclusive by modifying the content from the science text as well as using examples with which the students were familiar.

**Teacher 4:** In my classroom, generally I try to remove those subtle biases from the text books. For example, when I taught in Massachusetts, and I was teaching about acceleration, we could talk about acceleration during downhill skiing because most students there have gone downhill skiing. So I realized if I used that example here very few will understand how that has to do with acceleration.... So that way I’m already not being inclusive if I use an example that I and a few students know. Faith encourages us to ask ourselves, “what’s something that they can really all relate to—something they have all experienced or seen.” So I will pull an example



that most have been through here because they all live here, and that is inclusiveness because everyone can relate to it, because they all share the experience. So I will use that instead of what the book says.

Teacher 4's reflections summarize the general practice that most teachers in this study used. It shows that teachers respected the different ways students learned. Teachers selected books and other teaching materials that were inclusive in nature. The English teachers who participated in this study commonly agreed that they consistently invited Faith to help them select culturally responsive teaching materials.

### *Improved Student Discipline*

The teachers and Faith reported that student discipline at WHS had greatly improved. Participants explained that the number of students of color that were being referred to the office for discipline purposes had declined when compared to the situation two years before. Faith pointed out that she felt "there was a general feeling of togetherness." All participants agreed that the change was related to the improved relationships that teachers and administrations created. Teacher 1 commented, "The improvement and discipline go back to the cohesive and culturally supportive school environment that we have here. It determines what you [Lewis] have observed in the classrooms about discipline and orderliness." Teachers frequently communicated with parents of students of color to ensure that they were consistently provided with information related to the progress of their children; Faith said, "We have parent teacher conferences for students who may have made bad choices, and... parents to help us with ideas about improving discipline. Our teachers and counselors help with that too."

At WHS, discipline was improving due to the collaborative relationship of all members of the school community. Consistent with Faith's philosophy of education that everyone at WHS is a learner, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds come together to help solve problems as part of a culture of learning.

*Improved Relationships with the Community*

Both teachers and parents reported that the school had experienced improved school-community relationships. Faith promoted school-community relations that benefitted all students and teachers. Thanks to positive school-community relations, members of the community donate various resources to WHS.

During the study, I observed constant communication and collaboration between Faith and different members of the community served by the school, including the business community and social organizations. This communication and collaboration helped Faith to (a) collect different ideas about how the school should respond to the diverse interests and needs of the community as well as how to better promote student success, (b) build long-term relationships with the community, including the businesses surrounding the school, (c) bring together groups of people who had key interests in the school, and (d) receive important information regarding the image of the school from outside perspectives.

One school-community connection that parents discussed during the interviews was a music video that was shown on a local television station. The video, which was recorded sometime in 2007, was entitled "Thriller." In that video, Faith, teachers and a group of students were dancing to a Michael Jackson song as a way to provide entertainment to the local community. When local TV showed the video during prime

time, it led to the whole community talking about the school, and the school became a celebrity campus for a while. This helped to promote a positive school image with the community. Faith's name was in the middle of those community discussions, as a leader who appeared side by side her students and teachers. In another example, Faith invited leaders from the business community to speak to students and answer questions related to their work. This helped students to understand requirements needed to achieve success in the world of business.

### *Improved School Climate*

Results from shadowing and classroom observations revealed that an improved school climate at WHS helped to promote a positive teaching and learning environment for all the students. Data from observations throughout the school revealed that students from various cultural backgrounds felt comfortable with the way school leaders and faculty created relationships with students by supporting them and involving them in social contracts that supported student learning. Consistent with the literature on culturally responsive schools, (Johnson, Johnson, & Zimmerman, 1996; Kuperminc, Leadbeater, & Blatt, 1997; Peterson & Skiba, 2001) parents felt that the campus environment made their children feel safe and comfortable at school.

**Parent 5:** For me, this school is good for my son... I can say my child feels welcome, you know—just the attitudes of the teachers and their leaders, they're good and welcoming... Faith and her teachers and even the principal are supportive when I have a problem, and they pay attention... I see that they do the same with all parents.

Participants confirmed that parents helped to construct a culturally responsive school culture (CRSC) that reflected common ideas, beliefs and values of diverse groups within the community.

**Parent 1:** I walk the hallways on my days off here and you can see the difference when there is an adult presence and when there is not.... You listen to the terminology from the students in the hallways, and that's normal for the teens. But, basically, I can see that teachers in school care a lot about our children's safety and they care about how they learn.

**Parent 6:** [There is a] safe, respectful, and caring school environment for our children because she [Faith] shows everyone respect... and the teachers too, they show that respect to our children. I think it helps them [students] feel valued and they are able to succeed in their classes and to achieve their goals without any disturbances.

These observations are consistent with research that shows creating a positive school climate can lead to increased teacher retention, positive teacher and student attitudes, reduced student dropout rates, reduced violence, and increased student achievement (Guerra & Nelson, 2007).

#### Outcome: Improved Student Growth and Development

My interviews with participants and data from the PEIMS revealed that since the 2004-05 school year, WHS has been experiencing improvement in student growth and development. Since Faith became a leader at WHS, students have made progress in their academic, social and personal development.

### *Improved Student Academic Achievement*

**Faith:** The students grew with the campus... I attribute that to the emphasis on building relationships with students. When students and teachers know they are cared about they will go the extra mile to learn and to teach. We saw that this year with our improved scores and our school achieved a recognized rating.

*Test scores.* PEIMS data for reading and math scores, broken down by ethnicity, revealed that for the years 2006-2007 through 2008-2009 both African American and Hispanic students showed gradual improvements in reading/ELA passing rates. Table 2 shows comparative passing rates for each group.

Table 2.  
Reading/ELA Scores by Student Groups

	Reading/ELA Scores at WHS						
	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09
All Students	74%	78%	91%	93%	93%	89%	93%
African American	65%	72%	80%	89%	88%	84%	91%
Hispanic	66%	71%	88%	90%	91%	82%	87%
White	79%	84%	96%	97%	97%	96%	97%
Econ. Disadvantaged	59%	69%	84%	86%	86%	79%	87%
LEP	6%	50%	48%	44%	39%	41%	43%

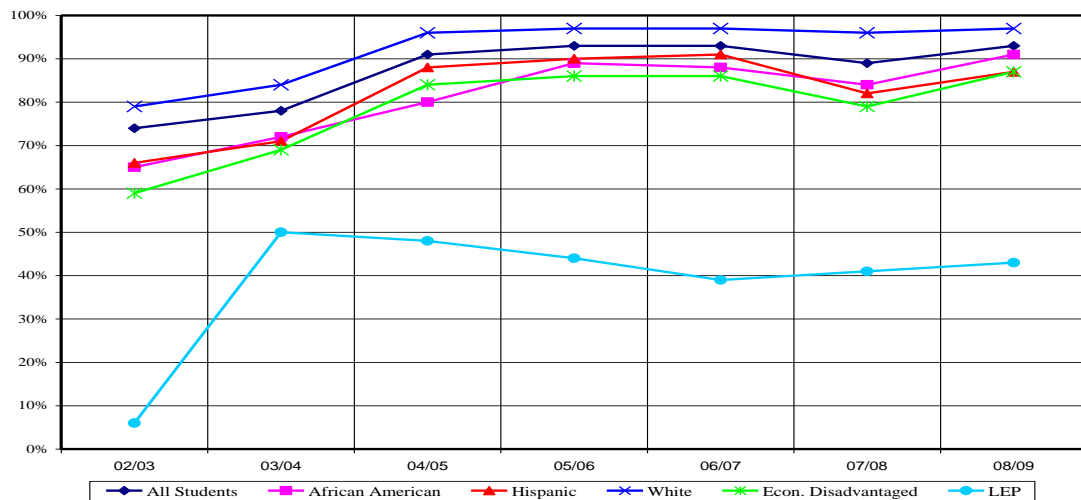


Figure 2. TAKS Reading/ELA Scores by Student Groups

Faith arrived at WHS during 2004-05 school year. Between 2005 and 2009, both African American and Hispanic students showed gradual increases in their TAKS passing rates in relation to the results for the White and all-students graphs. The graphs for the two groups (Figure 3) show that for both African American and Latino students the achievement gaps between “all-students” and mainstream students were reduced from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009. The most notable reduction was for the African American students from 2007-2008 to 2008-09. The gaps in the reading scores between African American and their White students were 12% in 2007-08 and 6% for 2008-2009. Similarly, there was a difference of 14% points between Latinos and the mainstream students in 2007-2008 and a gap of 10% in 2008-2009, a reduction of 4%. Faith’s use of CRL and CRT approaches may have contributed to the reduced achievement gaps. Information from TEA (2009) reveals that the 2008 drop in passing rates at both the school and group level was related to two changes in the state’s accountability system: (a) calculation of high school completion rates started to follow the federal formula for the first time and (b) it was the first time that the system brought science test results into the mix. However, the sudden increase in the results for 2008-2009 shows that immediately after the dip in 2007-2008 the school’s passing rates rose again.

There were other notable improvements in math, as shown in the Tables 3 and Figure 3. Both African American and Hispanic students showed a marked degree of improvement in their math scores between 2005 and 2009. Although the gap between the scores of these two groups of students of color and their mainstream counterparts remained wide in the same period, their performance shows gradual improvement. Between 2005 and 2009, math scores for African American students increased from by

3%, from 57% to 60%. Hispanic students test scores in math also show an increment of 2%, from 59% to 61%, for the same period. It is important to note that Hispanic students achieved their highest score of 65% in 2006-07. During the same period, both African American and Hispanic students increased their scores by 3% and 6% respectively. This helped them reduce the achievement gaps between their scores and that of the mainstream students by 4% for the African Americans and 7% for the Hispanic students. All student groups recorded an increase during the 2008-2009 school year, and the school also recorded its biggest achievement; recognized status. Faith had clearly set the target for achieving this status from the beginning of the year.

Table 3.  
TAKS Math Scores by Student Groups

	Math Scores						
	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09
All Students	54%	55%	71%	72%	72%	69%	74%
African American	41%	43%	45%	57%	60%	59%	60%
Hispanic	42%	41%	62%	59%	65%	58%	61%
White	63%	66%	82%	82%	81%	81%	85%
Econ. Disadvantaged	36%	39%	58%	50%	56%	51%	59%
LEP	10%	29%	26%	17%	22%	18%	27%

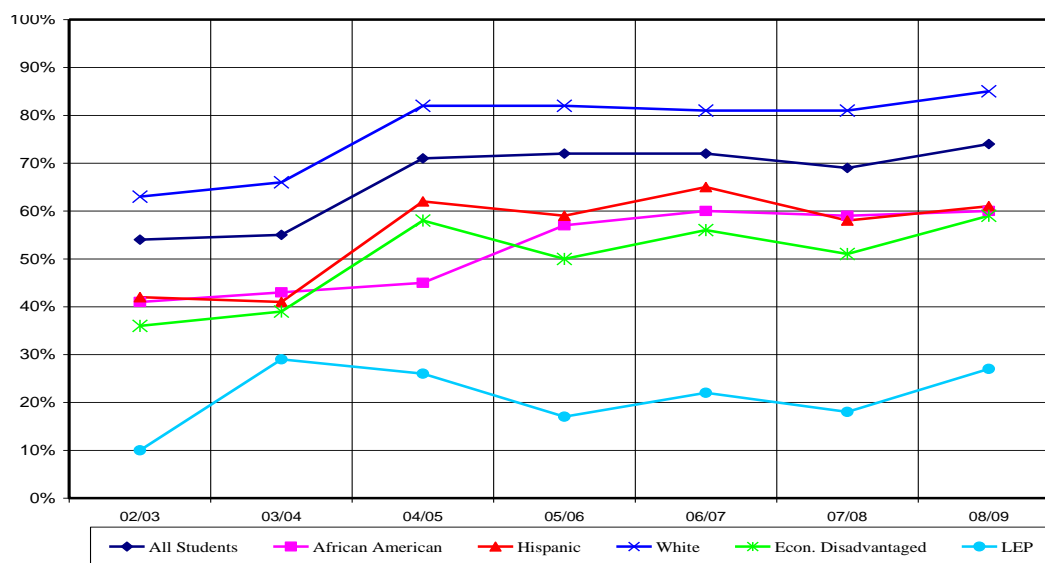


Figure 3: TAKS Math Scores by Students Groups

In addition to increased passing rates on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) for 2008-2009, the school rating also changed. The school managed to satisfy the new measure of growth called the Texas Projection Measure (TPM), which gives schools credit for the academic growth of students. For the 2008-09 school year, the school achieved recognized status. On June 4, 2009 Faith wrote to me, "I wanted to tell you we reached our goal... We are a RECOGNIZED campus. Yea!!!" In a follow up interview, Faith added that, in addition to the school achieving recognized status, two teachers who participated in this study were also recognized for outstanding achievements. For a school to achieve a recognized rating, it is expected to meet three standards, including (a) achieving a performance standard of 75% or higher on TAKS tests for each subject and student group, (b) achieving annual dropout rate of 2% or less and (c) achieving an 85% completion rate. The school achieved all of these standards under Faith's watch.

*Attendance and dropout rates.* According to the available data in the TEA data base, there has been a gradual reduction in the dropout rates since the 2006-07 school year. However, starting with the 2008-2009 school year, the district introduced a new but rigorous definition of drop-out rates. According to the information of TEA website,

School districts were given two years to adjust to the use of a new, more rigorous dropout definition.... Because districts are being held fully accountable for their dropouts, the new definition has resulted in lower ratings for some districts and schools.

Even under those conditions, WHS still managed to achieve positive change with one minority group. The highest change was among the African American students, with their



dropout rate reduced from 1.2% in 2005-06 to 0.5 % in 2006-07. Table 4 shows the changes in attendance and dropout rates.

Table 4.  
Attendance and Dropout Rates by Ethnicity

Indicator	Year	State	District	Campus	African American	Hispanic	White	Asian/Pacific Is
Annual Dropout Rate	2005-06	3.7%	3.1%	0.9%	1.2%	1.1%	0.7%	0.0%
	2006-07	3.9%	3.0%	0.7%	0.5%	1.3%	0.5%	0.0%
	2007-08							
Attendance Rate	2005-06	95.5%	96.0%	96.0%	95.9%	95.1%	96.0%	97.7%
	2006-07	95.5%	96.1%	95.8%	95.4%	95.0%	96.5%	96.7%
	2007-08							

### *Students' Social Development*

Faith observed that in general, the school noted an improvement in the social domain, with improved collaboration, including student collaboration with teachers and students' collaboration among themselves.

*Improved student-teacher collaboration.* Faith believed that for her teachers to be able to facilitate meaningful learning among diverse students, collaborative relationships between teachers and students needed to be created. There was clear evidence of student-teacher collaboration from the classroom observations that I made. One outstanding example of collaboration that I observed was when teachers and students collaborated to redirect students who misbehaved. In the Teen Leadership class, for instance, I observed that at the end of each lesson students took time to review how the lesson had progressed. During such discussions students focused on how they had either collaborated with each other to make learning a success or disrupted learning. Through these collaborative discussions, the students showed their commitment to helping the teacher by getting

directly involved in creating a positive learning atmosphere. Throughout this study African American and Latino students collaborated with teachers for the benefit of their own learning and the learning of others.

*Improved student-student collaboration.* Observations revealed that the students were able to work in groups with any combination of races and ethnicities. Throughout the study students from different cultures helped each other to learn. In one class, I witnessed a group of Latino students helping an Asian student to understand how they were constructing sentences from a table that the teacher had made. What I noticed about this collaborative process was that the teacher took a step back and allowed the Latino students to help the Asian student to work through the exercise. The teacher would join the students for a while, and then move away from them to allow them to exchange ideas. When the students group was giving its report, the students actively participated in reminding the Asian student to use some of the ideas they had shared with her during group work. This process helped the student to construct her own ideas using the help she was getting from the other students. I witnessed similar activities in other classes as well as students assisting each other in the hallways and in the cafeteria. Faith also noted a significant growth in student-student collaboration, which, in turn, enhanced students' engagement in learning and participation in other school activities. Consistent with comments from other participants, Faith observed that,

Growth occurred—one illustration I would like to speak of is something that occurred in our *Teen Leadership class*. A White student used the “N-word” in class and students were offended. It happened with a substitute. The teacher came and told me about it and said she was going to have a

class meeting. I was invited and I sat in the circle as a member of the class.

We all talked openly and freely. I told the students when I was talking as

“Faith” and when I was talking as an “Administrator.” That conversation

was priceless. It did my heart good to share, listen and learn... I

commended the teacher for taking the moment to make it a teachable

moment. Later on a student in the class approached me in the hallway and

told me “thank you” for being in class and taking the whole period to stay

and talk with them. Wow. I was sooo moved by the conversation.

Students in classes throughout the school were engaged in collaborative learning.

Teachers always presented their lessons in steps that allowed students to participate

successfully in collaborative groups, and they would then give groups reports on their

work. During group reports students had the opportunity to help other students to increase

their understanding by sharing personal experiences related to the topic reported on. In

one classroom, I observed a teacher who gave students an activity and set her stop watch

after telling students to begin the activity. They were supposed to work out an agreement

on a given problem. The students had to retell the story in a collaborative presentation in

which they showed that they had reached a common position through collaboration. The

students had to reach consensus on all aspects of their response to the problem. When

they had agreed, they were to sit down as an indicator that they were ready to report back

to the rest of the class. As I observed this process, I noticed that one girl remained

standing after the rest of the group sat down. The rest of the group stood up and started

working on the topic again and later they all sat down. Later I learned the group had not

reached consensus the first time most of the members sat down because the girl had not

understood what the other students had agreed on. So, as a group they had to refocus on the task to reach consensus.

Based on the collaboration among different cultural groups that I observed at WHS, as well as my interviews with Faith, teachers and parents, an important finding of this study is that—while the school had a considerable distance to go—WHS had made considerable progress toward bringing students from different cultures together in the learning process.

*Students' Personal Development.*

I observed behaviors indicating that students at WHS were experiencing personal development in areas such as self-image, motivation to learn, a demonstration of a pride in and sense of belonging to WHS, self discipline, capacity to learn, genuine respect for the cultures of others and pride in one's own culture.

*Self-image.* Faith promoted the belief that relationships among people are affected by how each person feels about herself in relation to the others. At WHS, diversity created potential problems related to how students develop their self-image. Both Faith and her teachers modeled self confidence and encouraged students to emulate them. Due to the constant celebrations of achievements by students from diverse cultures, students, especially students of color, had come to believe in themselves. During classes I noticed that students expressed themselves freely and confidently, and I witnessed mainstream students and students of color responding to their colleagues in ways that promoted good relationships and motivation to succeed. Through Faith's modeling and fostering of cultural responsiveness, students at WHS (a) showed self-pride when Faith helped celebrate their achievements, regardless of the size of the achievements, (b) confidently

identified achievable goals and worked hard to achieve them, (c) openly socialized and communicated with people from diverse cultures, (d) displayed confidence when attempting to solve difficult tasks through collaboration with others, and (e) demonstrated confidence in people from diverse cultures.

*Motivation.* Throughout the study I observed that students of color exuded confidence and were motivated to participate in different school activities. This resulted from acceptance by teachers and positive attitudes toward students of color expressed by mainstream students.

*Comfort with being at WHS/increased feeling of belonging.* All participants agreed that students and teachers, including students of color and teachers felt comfortable at WHS. This was demonstrated through increased levels of attendance at various school activities and the ways students talked about the school. I observed that students, teachers and even parents of different cultures travelling together over the weekends to support the school's football team. This kind of presence over a weekend is a clear demonstration of solidarity and belonging, because it is the choice of the student to participate in weekend events.

*Self discipline.* Some students were out of control at the beginning of the semester. However, as the semester developed, I noticed a marked degree of improvement in the way students behaved during classroom observations and in the hallways. During the last semester I did not witness frequent referrals of students to the offices or other centers for discipline purposes. This led to my finding that there was an increase in the levels of self discipline among the students. During the last month of classroom observations, I observed only one incident of student-teacher clashes as compared to five

incidents on the first day of a shadowing session during the initial stages of data collection. One important observation relates to students Faith identified as new comers to the school. These students were frequently referred to the office during the beginning of the semester. Their problems reduced gradually as they blended into the school culture while creating relationships with others at WHS.

*Learning capacity.* In addition to the improved results from TAKS, one behavior that was common among all students, especially those from minority groups, was active participation in lessons. Specific behaviors related to learning capacity included volunteering responses, asking questions, deliberately searching for help from fellow students and bringing ideas from home, all of which increased students' capacity to capture new ideas. Students were creating opportunities to scaffold their learning and to help teachers better understand them. Indeed, learning capacity was increasing for both teachers and students. I observed students asking their teachers a great many questions during and even after lessons. In one class, for example, I observed a Latino student who always offered examples in the context of things that he experienced at home. When the teacher asked students to write a short composition to predict how a story was going to end, he asked the teacher to explain what she expected from him, since he felt that what he was imagining might not connect with what the teacher was thinking. This question from the student helped the teacher to demonstrate that she was culturally responsive. The teacher pulled out a model of a hamburger that she had made from pieces of cloth. When she assembled the different parts it looked like a genuine burger. The teacher told the students,

Here is what I mean; look at this burger; we'll all eat the bread. However what you decide to put in the middle of your burger is your choice... No one should say it's wrong as long as you like it—it's your choice.

She then demonstrated how to make her own choice of a burger, and then asked two students to model their own choices. One student made a vegetarian burger, and another created cheese and vegetables. The teacher then concluded, "So you see, you are free to write anything that you think happened in this story. You know the beginning..." Later, the student was asked to read his story and the story generated a great deal of interest among all of the other students. The teacher then took the story and displayed it in the classroom.

*Pride in one's own culture.* Both mainstream students and teachers in the advanced placement class showed support for the few students of color who were in those classes. However, students of color maintained their own cultures and during different cultural events they showed that they were proud of their cultures. Of course, the fact that there were so few students of color in the advanced placement class was a cause for concern and indication that WHS still has much work to do.

Throughout the study I observed cordial communication, relationships and sharing among both students and teachers. This helped all students to improve their commitment to learning. Students also showed that, while they embraced other cultures, each group valued and showed pride in their own cultures. During the month of November, students had different celebrations for the festive season. A group of Latino students demonstrated pride in their "posada" ceremony while on the other hand

Thanksgiving was well celebrated among the mainstream students. In both cases students joined each other to celebrate the ceremonies of the other.

*Washington High School: A Work in Progress*

Although the school experienced change in the academic, social and personal domains, Faith expressed the belief that the school was not yet where it needed to be. WHS is a work in progress. Faith and the parents both believed that the school still needed to become more culturally responsive and needed to stabilize academic performance, which at WHS has had tendency fluctuate. Faith voiced particular concern for a particular subset of African American and Latino students:

**Faith:** In general attitudes did improve, as I said in one of the interviews we still have more work to do. I sometimes wonder if we made a significant improvement in the lives of [some of] our Hispanic males and African-American males...

*Challenges of CRL*

Leading a school with diverse demographics presents challenges that are unique to the ecology of the culturally responsive leadership. Some of the challenges include that at WHS, new students and teachers who transfer into the school from other school that may not be culturally responsive. Such students and teachers require time adjust to the new school environment and they will disrupt the growing culturally responsive school culture. This forces both the CRL and teachers to slow down while they try to accommodate the new members of the school community.



Some parents of the parent and teaching community may resist ideas advanced by a CRL because they may feel that their power is being compromised. That resistance will affect the smooth transformation to a culturally responsive school. In a school with diverse demographics like WHS, there is always a need for all members to model and foster culturally responsive behaviors. If some individuals show resistance, that may cause others who may not have embraced the system to engage in power struggles.

CRL requires time to build enough support. One big requirement for continuity is that members of the staff need to remain in the same school long enough to influence the smooth transformation to a culturally responsive school community. If members of the school community leave the school, students who may have developed close relationships with faculty or staff who leave may become affected and this will affect the administrator's leadership strategies. At WHS, there is a principal and two assistant principals. This means that the school has three different leaders who may have diverse educational leadership philosophies. If a CRL fails to achieve buy-in from the other administrators, the level of resistance to change among faculty may be great. At WHS, although Faith was an assistant principal, the support from the principal and the rest of the administration helped her promote culturally responsive practices.

### Summary

Faith's philosophy of education guided how she understood and acted out CRL. She viewed CRL as "being aware of the existence of different cultures and languages in the school, and then knowing how to respond to the needs of each group or

individual...knowing what do, what not to do and when.” Teachers and parents interpreted what CRL was through Faith’s leadership behaviors. Faith led by building genuine relationships with students and adults in and outside the school. Within the overarching theme of relationship building, five other themes were identified. The six themes that characterized Faith’s culturally responsive leadership were:

1. Building positive relationships
2. Being persistent and persuasive
3. Modeling cultural responsiveness
4. Being present and communicating
5. Fostering cultural responsiveness among others
6. Caring for others.

When she compared CRL to other forms of leadership, Faith argued that CRL uses the proficiencies and behaviors that characterize other forms of successful leadership, but that CRL goes further by consciously building relationships among individuals that help all members of the school community to emotionally relate to each other and to embrace diversity.

The results reveal that although CRL faces many challenges, WHS is going through a process of change leading toward a culturally responsive school. Specific systemic changes included improved relationships with students and parents and among staff, more culturally responsive teaching, a more culturally responsive curriculum, improved student discipline, improved school community relations and improved school climate. Specific outcomes included student growth and development in academic, social and personal domains.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

*The way the diversity of the school administration is set up is such a big message on what they think about diversity in the school. Any child can reach out to somebody at their comfort level not just because of their ethnic backgrounds but just because of the cultural diversity. The way the school is built is not just like I'm an Hispanic and I'm only able to speak to an Hispanic counselor or an Hispanic vice principal, but I can go to whoever is there because they will be treated the same way. (Latina Female Parent)*

The purpose of this study was to describe how a culturally responsive leader in a culturally and linguistically diverse school understands and enacts culturally responsive leadership and influences teachers to be culturally responsive. In this chapter, I describe the ecology of CRL, discuss the interpretations of the findings, draw conclusions, and discuss knowledge that I gained from this study. I also make recommendations for practice and further research.

#### The Ecology of CRL

Findings from this study show that the macro ecology of CRL interacts with the micro ecology to influence how Faith enacts her leadership roles to influence teachers and others to be culturally responsive. Figure 4 shows the Culturally Responsive Leadership Model derived from this study. The outer segment of the model, macro-ecology, represents the different systems that impact the school system

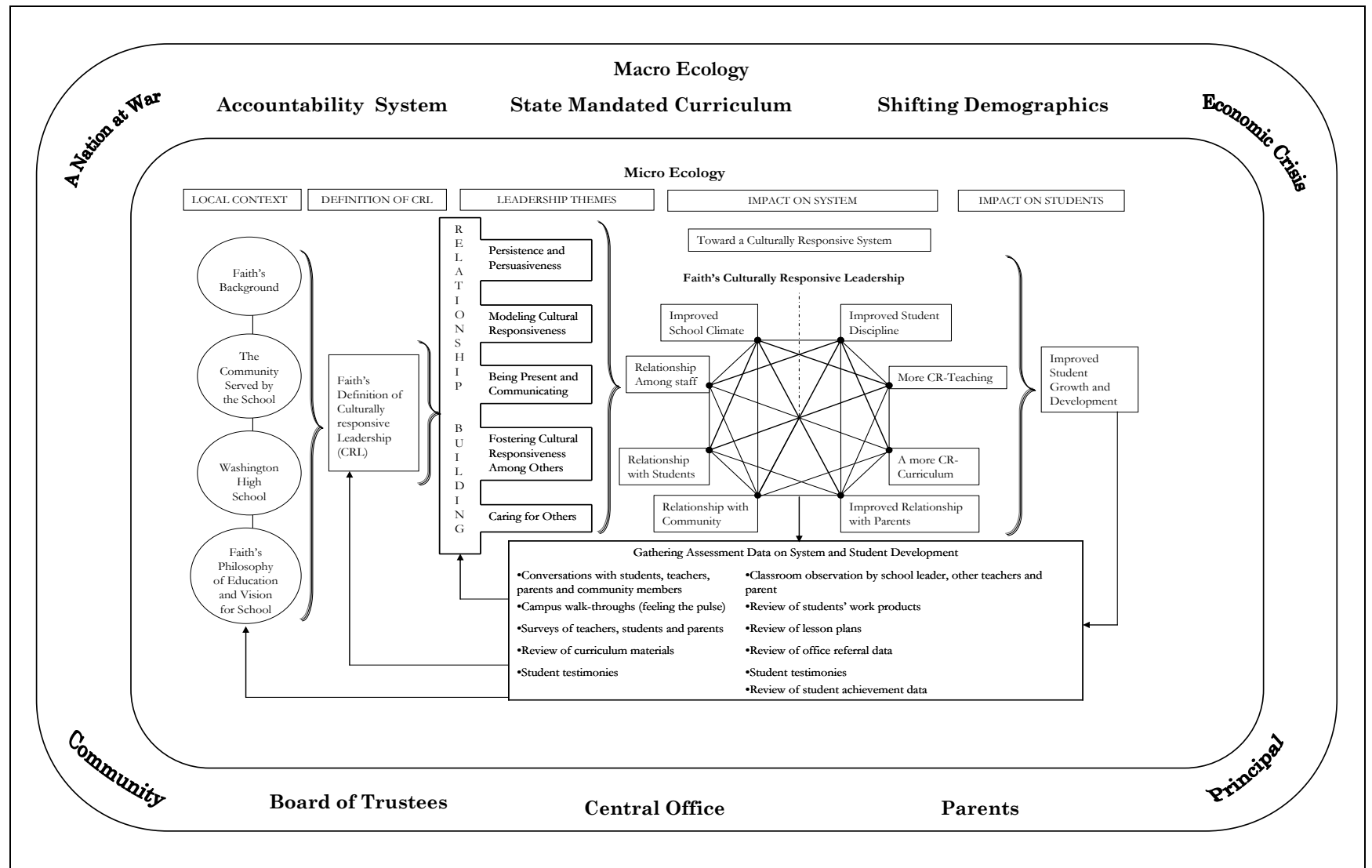


Figure 4: The Culturally Responsive Leadership Model

The inside part, the micro-ecology, shows a model for implementing CRL within the context of the macro-ecology. Here I will discuss how each aspect of the macro-ecology of CRL influences school leadership.

### *Macro Ecology*

Since the September 11, 2001, terrorists attacks, the US is in its ninth year as “a nation at war.” Based on the most recent estimates from the Congressional Research Service (2009), the cumulative total funds appropriated since the 9/11 attacks to defend the nation from terrorism is \$944 billion. These expenditures include the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the enhancement of security at home and at US embassies around the world. It is estimated that the amount will reach \$1.08 trillion dollars if an additional request for \$139 billion is approved. This unexpected budget increase is exerting enormous pressure on the nation’s economic resources. This, in turn, limits the resources that the nation can provide for education.

The “Economic Crisis” has affected many families, especially those of low socioeconomic status. Many of the students Faith works with at WHS come from low SES families. The number of students on free or reduced lunch has increased considerably in recent years. The financial resources available to the school do not meet the school’s resource needs. Thus, one effect of the economic crisis is that the school must work to meet higher standards with fewer resources. Shifting student demographics at WHS show that increases in the number of students of color are not being matched proportionally by teacher and staff demographics. Faith’s leadership in convincing all members of the school community to use inclusive methods thus becomes increasingly critical.

Although one purpose of NCLB and the state accountability system is to increase academic standards, schools working to achieve those standards may lose sight of the goal of educating the whole child, which is the purpose of CRL and CRT. The disadvantage of both the accountability system and the state mandated curriculum (TEKS) is that they force teachers to narrow the curriculum and to focus only on those areas that will be tested. At the same time, the state mandated curriculum does not include cultural knowledge that help all students to succeed. One advantage of the TAKS and TEKS is that they help to disaggregate student achievement data, helping leaders and teachers to see the big picture of student needs. In the case of Faith and her teachers, that big picture helped them to achieve buy-in from the whole school community. Other forces in the macro ecology impact Faith as she enacts her leadership roles in the school. For example, while shifting demographics require Faith to meet the individual and group needs of her teachers and students, the expected success of students on the TAKS sometimes works against addressing those changing demographics and meeting the holistic needs of diverse students.

Other parts of the macro-ecology system that interact with the micro-ecology and with Faith's work include the community, board of trustees, central office, parents and, school principal. The community in which the school is embedded is experiencing shifting demographics and diverse community beliefs and values. These diverse beliefs and values interact with Faith's leadership to influence how the school educates diverse students. At WHS, the school district and the superintendent supported the idea of promoting culturally responsive leadership and teaching practices. For example, the district has embraced diversity training as a path toward becoming a culturally responsive

school district. At WHS, the school principal is white. Throughout the study the principal demonstrated that she supported Faith's effort to promote culturally responsive practices. This support helped to legitimize Faith's CRL practices.

### *Micro Ecology*

The inner circle of the Ecology of Culturally Responsive Leadership (Figure 4) represents the micro-ecology of Faith's leadership. The micro ecology is the aggregate of the local contexts of Faith's work, her philosophy of education, her definition of CRL, the six themes that characterize her leadership, the impact of her leadership on the school as a system and on the students, assessment data Faith gathers on the system and students, and the feedback loops that inform Faith's leadership on an ongoing basis

The local contexts of Faith's CRL involve the aggregate of Faith's background, the immediate community served by the school, WHS, and Faith's philosophy of education and vision of the school. These four immediate contexts help to determine how Faith defines and enacts CRL to influence others to be culturally responsive. For Faith, CRL involves enacting her leadership roles through six different themes that include building relationships with all members of the community, persisting and persuading others, modeling cultural responsive behaviors, maintaining presence, fostering cultural responsiveness and caring for others. These leadership behaviors impact the system by creating conditions that allow the school to become a culturally responsive system. The effect on the students is improved students growth and development, including social, personal, and academic development. At the end of the process that drives the micro ecology, Faith gathers data on system and student development. The data is then used to develop new strategies that will inform her CRL and continue to foster change.

Some of the data gathering for the micro system's feedback loops involves conversations with students, teachers, parents and community members to measure how the school is responding to client and community expectations. Campus walk throughs, surveys with teachers, and review of curriculum materials enhance Faith's knowledge about whether social, personal, and academic goals are being met. Faith also reviews students' work products and teachers' lesson plans and listens to the students' testimonies to inform her CRL.

### Interpretations

Faith's philosophy of education emphasized that all students can be assisted to learn by creating positive institutional relationships through collaboration and common purpose. When Faith created relationships with students of color, they developed trust in her, and that caused them to share their ideas regarding the problems they faced and other things that made them feel anxious. Emulating Faith's leadership, teachers embraced the same behaviors with their students and discovered that they were able to understand their students better.

By constantly creating relationships, Faith placed herself at the same level with the teachers, parents, and the students. This approach developed culturally responsive communication channels and encouraged all members of the school community to embrace relationship building. This, in turn, helped to make students of diverse cultures feel welcome in the school. Teachers and staff modeled relationship building for their students and helped to create conditions that promoted collaborative learning. When students found that they succeeded through the different forms of supports that they received, they became encouraged to persist.



Culturally responsive relationships help to reduce power struggles that manifest themselves in forms such as resisting and displaying skeptical attitudes towards others. Consistent with the social constructivist theories on how relationships promote learning, (Cummins, 1986; Fullan, 2001; Delpit, 2002; Bloch, 2005; Chamberlain, 2005; Noddings, 2007), by embracing students of different cultures, Faith empowered those students, and helped them to understand the actions of their teachers. This is consistent with other research findings that students construct knowledge in the context of social interactions with individuals or groups with whom they interact (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Noddings, 2007).

Through a social constructivist leadership and teaching strategy, Faith promoted the idea that there is a strong relationship between students' emotional acceptance in the classroom and their achievement. Social constructivists call that relationship a *teaching-learning* relationship (Berk & Winsler, 1995). When teachers create such relationships, students find ways of getting closer to the teachers and seeking assistance when they need it (Vygotsky, 1978; Berk & Winsler, 1995). This allows the students to construct knowledge from their zones of proximal development (ZPDs). In this study, teachers confirmed that they succeeded more with students when they created relationships with them and consciously valued the students' ways of knowing. This, in turn, helped students to open up and to share their ideas with teachers. Noddings, (2007) posits, "A person earns the label 'caring' by regularly establishing caring relations, and a caring relation requires that the cared-for recognize the caring" (p. 227).

When Faith persisted and persuaded others to care, she convinced teachers to constantly embrace and try those culturally responsive teaching approaches that she

strongly believed in. These approaches included grouping students to form diverse learning teams, dropping hints, using cognates and asking students to use student friendly versions (SFV) of the concepts being learned. All of these approaches helped students from diverse cultures to scaffold their learning of new concepts. Faith persistently encouraged teachers to develop their own understanding of how students use lived experiences to learn. With that understanding, teachers assisted students to build on what others shared, both learning within and expanding their zones of proximal development (ZPDs).

Faith's persistence was one of the strongest personal attributes that she demonstrated during the study. Faith was persistent in her insistence that parents of students of color were welcome and accepted in the school. She consistently encouraged parents to approach her and faculty to share ideas about how teachers could succeed with their children. Faith's persistence convinced parents to accept the idea that she and the teaching staff were genuine and approachable. From my personal experience as a student and teacher, persistence helps to develop confidence and trust. When students develop confidence and trust in their teachers, they become motivated to participate in their classes. Teachers who were persistent and persuasive in their teaching helped me to develop the courage to learn and the voice to express my own ideas.

One characteristic of a school with a diverse student population like WHS is that those from minority cultural and language backgrounds sometimes hold back their ideas because they think that their ideas are not popular with the dominant group. Withdrawal by some groups causes the school community to lose cohesion and helps to widen the gaps among different cultures. At WHS, when Faith's teachers embraced positions and

ideas that she persistently modeled, it helped minority parents and students to realize that the entire school community held the same beliefs about inclusion. Teachers and staff eventually accepted Faith's position as authentic, and they began to devote their time and energy toward improving learning conditions for all students, and especially toward helping students of color to succeed.

Through modeling cultural responsiveness, Faith managed to help her teachers understand her philosophy that students learn better if teachers present information from a wide range of perspectives. For example, when Faith assigned teachers to diverse groups for professional development, teachers were then encouraged to form diverse collaborative learning groups in their classrooms. This approach helped students from different ethnic and racial groups to learn about each other as well as to assist each other's academic learning. Modeling cultural responsiveness for teachers and students required that Faith had to be physically present among the students and teachers, and to persistently communicate messages that encouraged building consensus and creating teams around a common set of school goals. Being physically present among students and teachers was important because it helped to create relationships, energize others' ways of thinking and enhance ideas related to culturally responsive teaching.

Through her culturally responsive presence, Faith helped to transform attitudes and convince teachers to embrace new teaching approaches that were inclusive and empowering to students, especially to students of color. Because Faith openly encouraged students to participate in activities side by side with their teachers, students of color were able to make inputs that enriched how teachers presented new knowledge. Leadership presence helped teachers and students to see that Faith was paying attention, and they in

turn became energized; both students and teachers became more empowered to share their ideas without fear of being shutdown or laughed at. Thus, students and their teachers learned *about* each other and *from* each other. This mutual learning helped to reduce the gap between home and school to reduce achievement gaps among student groups.

For Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs when students' current experiences interact with their past social interactions. Therefore, when teachers unite home and school cultures it provides students with learning tools to help them build new concepts. As with social constructivist philosophy, Faith's leadership philosophy espoused that social contexts are important when teaching diverse students new information. Through her leadership presence and caring approach, Faith encouraged teachers and others to create conversations to help students realize that teachers accepted their ways of knowing in honest and authentic ways. Through her continued leadership presence, Faith was able to show her passion for working with all students regardless of who they were. Faith believed that being present and showing care not only influenced the way students developed academically but also affected the way they viewed teachers. For her teachers, Faith's presence symbolized support and encouragement. Faith helped teachers to tailor topics to suit the needs of individual students or groups of students, especially students of color. This coincides with the notion that when teachers are shown how to show care through their teaching they provide their students genuine opportunities to show their learning abilities (Noddings, 2007).

In a school with diverse demographics like WHS, the school climate determines the way the school community feels when they come to school each day. For Faith, the school climate at WHS was an important component of her

leadership. The positive school climate that Faith fostered raised morale among students and teachers and brought about a spirit of “oneness.” When all members of the school community experience good relationships and have a clear purpose, they are able to interact in cordial ways that allow them to voluntarily contribute to the learning process. Within a positive school climate, all members of the school community can work toward a school vision that reflects common ideas, values and beliefs. Faith and her teachers helped to develop a climate at WHS in which students and faculty worked as a family and learned from each other.

As Faith put it in her philosophical beliefs statements, “When the school environment is inclusive, students learn better because they feel comfortable and safe to be in the school.” Building positive relationships with students helps to reduce barriers that impede learning by making classroom environments safe and interesting places for all students.

In the classrooms and hallways of WHS, Faith modeled increasing inclusiveness through understanding diverse students. Whenever teachers saw Faith in a hallway or classroom, they were reminded to be inclusive. The inclusive environment promoted by Faith led to a transformation in students’ self-discipline, their ways of communicating with teachers and the level of parental involvement.

During the time that I was gathering data for this study, I witnessed a decline in conflicts among students and between teachers and students. Through the presence of parents of students of color, mainstream teachers were provided with multiple viewpoints and sources of information that enriched their understanding of diverse students’

struggles. As relationships of all members of the school community improved, students of color added value to the school culture by expressing how they wanted to be treated.

Rather than engaging themselves in resistant behaviors against mainstream teachers and other students, students of color found themselves empowered to express themselves and seek a common ground with their teachers and other students. This helped to create an even more inclusive school environment.

Faith modeled respect for her teachers. When she modeled that respect, Faith helped teachers to see the benefits of respecting others, to value their students' and parents' ways of doing things, and to engage them in meaningful dialogue about education. The result of that dialogue was that teachers were able to honor and value the cultures and languages of students of color, and to use their cultures as tools for teaching and learning. Students were motivated to use their improved relationships with teachers as opportunities to define and express their desired learning environment through the social contracts that they collaboratively developed with teachers. Through the social contracts, learning needs of both mainstream students and students of color were accounted for in the school curriculum.

By showing empathy to all students, teachers and parents, Faith's leadership helped to embrace diversity and to show that she understood factors that act as barriers to learning for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. When students saw that their context was respected by school leaders and teachers, they felt valued, and they continued to share their ideas to improve the school. Throughout the study, students continued to increase teachers' knowledge about how they should treat students from different cultures. Faith cultivated passion, knowledge and enthusiasm for working with

all students at WHS. In return, teachers promoted varied approaches to learning that demonstrated respect for different ways of knowing. This, in turn, motivated students to try out new ways of learning. Under Faith's leadership, parents were involved in assisting and monitoring their children's progress. When teachers and parents joined together to recognize and celebrate students' accomplishments, they created a strong bond between school and family.

### Conclusions

The key findings from this study support the following conclusions, which cut across three categories, including how Faith *related to people*, how she *promoted culturally responsive curriculum and instruction* and how she *created a culturally responsive school environment*:

1. Faith promoted positive relationships with all members of the school community with an emphasis on including the minority groups in those relationships. This helped all members of the school community to understand that WHS valued diversity and that everyone was welcome in the school.
2. Faith understood the different causes of conflicts that resulted from diversity, and she used that knowledge to teach others to be culturally responsive. Faith relied on both patience and persistence to foster cultural responsiveness throughout her school.
3. Faith's CRL included the inclusion of lived experiences of both teachers and students into the school curriculum. She respected her teachers and considered them as an extension of her CRL. This led teachers to embrace culturally

responsive teaching, which included involving students and parents in constructing new knowledge.

4. Faith's leadership focused on creating a school climate that encouraged teachers and students to define their desired classroom environments. Such environments allowed students and teachers to participate successfully in the teaching-learning process. Faith considered any power struggle or conflict among people of diverse cultures as an opportunity for introducing change that will help both teachers and students to develop.
5. Faith encouraged parental involvement in school-wide activities and decision making. Parent involvement reduced power struggles and improved social relations in the school community.
6. Faith's persistence, persuasiveness, diplomacy and presence were all CRL proficiencies that helped teachers, parents and students to pursue diverse approaches in order to help students succeed.
7. Faith's caring and nurturing of CRL proficiencies helped other members of the school community to become more caring and nurturing and more culturally responsive.
8. Faith's CRL led to systematic change, including improved relationships with students and parents and among staff, more culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, improved student discipline, improved school climate and improved school-community relations. These systematic changes, in turn, led to improved student academic, social and personal growth and development.



### What I Have Learned from This Study

Getting close to Faith and six of her teachers during this study helped me to answer some of the questions that I had as a child, student and a teacher. I learned that, as a young child, my teachers in the city school I attended did not understand me. When I showed behaviors that were meant to communicate confusion, my teachers and fellow students classified that as demonstrating incompetence. Instead of responding to my learning needs they reacted to their misconceptions. This only created a wider gap between my ability to learn and my learning achievement. One observable response on my part was that I was often truant. Both my parents and the school were not able to notice my truancy because there was little communication between them. However, under Faith's leadership, her teachers would have noticed it from the first day because they respond to every sign of change that they see in their students. Some of the basic things that Faith and the teachers at WHS offered to their students which my teachers in elementary school denied me include the following:

- caring and nurturing
- inclusion and belongingness
- love and acceptance
- a safe and secure school environment
- understanding
- freedom of speech

From this study I learned that denying students these basic needs makes school feel like a duty that a student fulfils for his or her parents and teachers. Faith responded to her students' needs by showing them respect, accepting them, using humor, listening to

them, empathizing, caring and embracing different ways of knowing. This study reminded me of the days when both my fourth grade teacher and fellow students deliberately excluded me from their classroom activities. Through this study, I came to the conclusion that somewhere in our leadership and teaching, we need to help others to learn from their ZPD. Observing Faith's leadership helped me realize that CRL and CRP are key variables for closing achievement gaps among diverse student groups.

As a teacher I remember trying to include diverse students in my classroom by allowing them to use their mother language to communicate what they wanted to tell me, but the leader of my school at that time would not allow code switching in his classrooms except when it was related to the main dialect of the country. The classrooms in Zimbabwe at that time were and are still politicized. Therefore, as a disciple of CRL and CRP, I now know that it is the responsibility of school leaders to help other school leaders and teachers to embrace cultural responsiveness. As a result of this study, I have embraced relationship building as a strategy for school improvement. My journey through my doctoral program has also helped me become aware of the fact that, as a leader, there are some risks that I will have to take to help others realize that this form of leadership can help close achievement gaps. Therefore, initiating a school improvement plan based on CRL and CRP in Zimbabwe and other nations of Africa will help the education systems of our countries to improve.

I now know that it is important to look for professional development programs that help teachers to reach all their students through relationship building. Parental involvement is a big component of CRL and CRT. In my case, when I was a student my parents never visited the school to conference with my teachers, which allowed me to

successfully play truancy. This would not have happened in a school like Washington High School where the leader pays attention to even the smallest detail regarding all her students. Under Faith's school leadership, the school has an open door policy for parents. The school where I felt uncomfortable was one in which the leader was rarely seen in the school corridors except on Fridays, when he had to address the whole school and make us repeat the Lord's Prayer.

Reflecting on my experiences with Faith's CRL, I realized that Pfupajena Elementary School (PES), where I experienced exclusion, would have been a different school if Faith had been the principal at that time. Faith would have made minority students in the school feel comfortable by welcoming them and demonstrating to the whole school community that she recognized and valued their presence. I think that would have made a big difference in the classroom where I was excluded. Faith would have modeled inclusiveness for the teacher and students in my class and this in turn would have lead to them accepting me and my ways of knowing. In my school, there was absence of the pedagogy of care and nurturing, as evidenced by the fact that I was able to be truant for almost a month, and neither my teacher nor the school community did anything about it. My parents were not informed about my behavior because the school had no constant communication with parents. This would have been different if Faith was the principal because she would have ensured that there was continuous communication with home and school. Faith had been the principal at PES, she would have taken time to know how new students felt in their new school and classrooms and also how they wanted to be treated—checking the pulse. Through the classroom social contracts, Faith would have helped all teachers to create a classroom environment that was inclusive.

As a teacher and leader I realize today that humor is a powerful leadership behavior. It helps leaders to develop positive relationships. My country, Zimbabwe, has greatly been affected by leadership based on tribes and race. Introducing CRL at the school level would help people to understand each other, which might put us in the road to one day electing a democratic national leader. Introducing culturally responsive leadership proficiencies to the schools of Zimbabwe could lead to school improvement based on sound relationships.

### Reflections on the Research Process

During this study, I realized that carrying out a research project of this magnitude depends on a well thought out and well written research proposal. Throughout the research process, I learned that collecting and organizing data can only succeed if the research proposal carries a research question or problem that really interests the researcher. In my case the research question that I wanted to answer has been part of my life since my first grade in elementary school. I believe this helped to sustain my interest throughout the study. The research proposal should be viewed as a map that helps the researcher find his way through a jungle of data. During the study I learned a lesson regarding flexibility in doing research. Throughout this study, I had to exercise flexibility in response to how the data spoke to me. I had to respond to two types of information; the data that I collected during the research and the expert guidance of my dissertation committee. What I learned from that process is that when diverse thoughts meet on a topic of interest, a lot of ideas emerge, but the responsibility of making meaning from that information was mine. Although I listened to the different voices on my committee, I paid more attention to how data spoke to me. At the beginning of the study I wanted to

remain rigid within the limits of what I had planned during the proposal stage, but with time, I realized that reality changed when I arrived in the field. The most challenging set of data to organize was related to shadowing sessions. It became clear to me that it is important to attend to every detail of what happens around the main unit of analysis; in my case, Faith.

A word of advice to other students; I discovered that when collecting qualitative data there was a stage where I felt overwhelmed. However, I advise that no one should try to put aside the project and take a leave from their research. Rather, the doctoral student should eat, drink, sleep and above all dream with their dissertations until completion.

#### Implications for School Improvement

The significance of this study for school improvement was revealed through data that shows that the United States is experiencing a rapid increase in ethnic and cultural diversity (Fears, 2004). In addition, the literature reveals that in the U.S. students of color consistently perform lower than students from the mainstream (Gay, 2000; Fears, 2004). The changing demographics, therefore, point to the need for the schools to respond to the learning needs of all students (Freire, 1998; Gay, 2000; Fears, 2004).

Researchers and practicing school leaders need to continue to identify culturally responsive leadership proficiencies and behaviors that may help students from diverse cultures to learn on an equal footing with their mainstream counterparts. In this study, creating relationships with students was so important because it helped all students to learn more from their ZPD. Each of the six themes identified in this study interacted with

the theme of creating relationships; therefore, leaders and researchers should be open to the idea of relationship building as the center of cultural responsiveness.

A knowledge base of culturally responsive proficiencies and behaviors may help us to develop culturally responsive schools. Teacher 4 summarized the implications that CRL and CRP may have on school improvement:

Culturally responsive leadership increases student achievement through better communication, better relationships, and better camaraderie. It also assists educators in fortifying their professional relationships with each other, building a stronger team to foster student development, both socially and academically.

Evidence from the literature and this study show that CRL may help teachers understand themselves first and then go further to understand students of color' learning needs, and the to address those needs. The concept *teaching-learning*, is used in this study as a social construct encompasses the belief that teachers and their students learn side by side. The student learns new knowledge from the teacher while the teacher learns how the student learns and changes her teaching accordingly. Thus, the leader needs to provide professional development that help teachers to identify where their students are in order to continue to help them grow. This will encourage students to learn better.

## Recommendations

### *Recommendations for Practice*

My degree major is in School Improvement. This study led me to understand what CRL does to help diverse teachers and diverse students succeed. The six major themes

that emerged from conversations with and observations of the participants point to a number of recommendations for practice.

*Professional development.* I suggest that professional development programs for school leaders include learning about how leaders can identify the presence or absence of culturally responsive practices in the school, as well as how to identify inclusive strategies that fit the needs of their schools. It is important that professional development include learning how leaders can help teachers to create relationships with students and their families. During this study I was able to understand how CRL works in a complex ecological system. I suggest that programs that prepare leaders may need to expose leaders to schools where this form of leadership is widely practiced. This will help to persuade them to understand and value CRL and CRP. Inviting experts on diversity to make presentations will help leaders to value and embrace CRL practices.

One question that keeps arising from the findings of this research is “How does one construct a leader like Faith?” The answer to this question may be found in the different leadership models that Faith used to convince faculty and others to be culturally responsive. All but one of the teachers who took part in this study were White. The fact that the school is succeeding under Faith’s watch may help us understand the foundation on which a leader—or teacher leader—like Faith may be developed. Exposing teachers to CRL which is persistent and persuasive is key to developing a leader who is culturally responsive. Faith also mentioned that diversity courses at the university where she went helped her to discover her passion for CRL thus the power of culturally responsive leadership preparation programs should not be underestimated.

*School-wide efforts to increase cultural responsiveness.* Leaders are expected to help develop educational policy at the school level. Therefore, professional development programs need to address culturally responsive school policies that help to increase inclusive practices by all members of the school community. At WHS, both students and teachers helped to create local classroom social contracts which in turn were later developed into school policies.

Teachers and parents look to school leaders for solutions to problems that besiege students. Therefore, school leaders must always be cognizant of changing demographics in their schools and districts, and set up school-based inclusion programs to keep teaching and leadership practices congruent with those changing demographics. In the school and district where this study was carried out, both the leader and the district officials spoke with the same voice on issues related to addressing diversity. District officials need to support leaders in implementing transformational programs. In all the schools identified for the preliminary study, school leaders had developed partnerships with local universities and professional development plans to assist teachers to meet the challenges brought about by ever changing demographics. School leaders in both the preliminary study and the primary study reported that teachers admitted at times they felt overwhelmed by the growing numbers of students who were having problems understanding their teaching approaches. If teachers feel comfortable and confident about teaching students who come from cultures other than their own, this comfort and confidence can transfer to the students. Professional development can help teachers to develop both the skills and confidence needed to work successfully with diverse groups of students.



Leadership presence influences ideas that teachers use to influence how students learn. Culturally responsive school leaders should constantly maintain a non-threatening presence throughout the school, so that students, parents and teachers are encouraged to engage the leader in culturally responsive dialogue. Culturally responsive leadership can create a positive school climate in which all members of the school community learn from each other. Leaders need to be present to model the development of culturally responsive relationships through culturally responsive dialogue.

Practicing leaders may need to tailor their leadership approaches in order to understand the cultural problems that students and teachers face. Leaders also should engage both parents and teachers in conversations about practices that work and those that do not work with particular student groups. School leaders also should seek partnerships with experts on cultural responsiveness to identify other forms of knowledge that may help to improve teaching and leadership practices with diverse students.

According to the findings of this study, students and teachers feel encouraged if they are allowed to participate side by side with school leaders in making decisions about what their school should be like. In this study, both teachers and parents pointed out that improved relationships between them and school leaders helped to improve student learning.

School leaders need to continuously identify professional practices that improve the way they communicate about student learning, increase teacher understanding of the cultural backgrounds of their students, and promote genuine acquisition of new knowledge by diverse students. That will lead to genuine transformation of the teaching-learning process.

*Recommendations for Education Leadership Preparation Programs*

Leadership preparation programs should provide future leaders with the skills to develop authentic institutional relationships with the school communities they will serve. Leaders should be able to assess the level of culturally responsive teaching that exists in the school and respond to needs that are not being met.

This study revealed that creating positive relationships helps to improve teacher commitment and cultural responsiveness. Educational leaders need to learn different strategies for creating and sustaining relationships in schools and with the communities those schools serve. Programs therefore need to expose pre-service leaders to schools where such relationships exist. Future school leaders also need to develop skills for identifying cultural needs at the school level.

Faculty in leadership preparation programs should help future leaders to learn about leadership proficiencies for CRL. In this study a number of leadership proficiencies were identified, including persistence, persuasiveness, modeling cultural responsiveness, presence higher expectations for students of color, holding teachers and students accountable, using humor, showing care and nurturing. In addition to developing particular proficiencies, pre-service leaders should study practitioners identified as culturally responsive leaders and how they interact with students, teachers and parents, how they promote culturally responsive curriculum and instruction and how they foster a culturally responsive school environment. One way to make culturally responsive leaders available to model CRL in leadership preparation programs is to develop partnerships with districts where CRL is practiced, and allow future leaders to observe and converse with exemplary leaders.

### *Recommendations for Further Research*

Throughout this study, I observed and experienced situations that pointed to a need for more research on the topic of culturally responsive leadership. Research on the following topics may help to extend the findings from this study.

1. A study comparing the leadership practices of generally outstanding school leaders who are not considered culturally responsive with culturally responsive school leaders.
2. A study to describe school-wide behaviors and proficiencies of professionals in a school (or number of schools) identified as a culturally responsive *campus*.
3. A modified version of this study with data from students or with a larger group of participants from different schools.
4. A descriptive study of what culturally responsive learning looks like, feels like, and sounds like to students.
5. A study describing a culturally responsive school district superintendent enacts his or her duties within a school system. (Throughout this study Faith talked frequently about how her school district was supportive of CRL and CRP).
6. A description of how a culturally responsive district superintendent and his or her assistants enact their leadership roles in relation to schools that have been identified as culturally responsive.
7. A study on teachers' levels of cultural responsiveness and how professional development can increase a teacher's level of cultural responsiveness.

8. A study to describe how minority teachers, students and leaders deal with power struggles within culturally and linguistically diverse schools.

### Closing Thoughts

My closing thoughts are based on the belief that schools should be places where people are taught to live together in harmony. When I grew up, I was always asked to work side-by-side with my grandfather who taught me how to accept others. One day he said, “You see all those people who are always getting in and out of trouble, they do not know how to live well with other people.” Schools are places where people are shaped and a reflection of the community that they serve. Today Texas and the rest of the world face the reality of the global world—diversity. School leaders need to understand that the current changes in demographics are not a temporal event, but a reflection of what classrooms will look like for the foreseeable future. Leadership strategies need to change to become congruent with the ever-changing demographics of the communities that leaders serve.

## APPENDICES

Appendix A  
Invitation to Serve on Expert Panel

Lewis Madhlangobe  
106 Charles Austin Drive Apt. # A2  
San Marcos, TX 78666  
Home Tel: 512-396-5101 Cell: 512-786-8237

Dear Expert Committee Nominee:

My name is Lewis Madhlangobe and I am a Ph.D. student at Texas State University-San Marcos. I am carrying out a study to describe culturally responsive leadership in culturally and linguistically diverse school. To achieve this, my dissertation committee and I have identified a group of experts to help identify culturally responsive school leaders. We believe that this expert committee possesses knowledge about school leaders in Texas that will help me to identify a truly culturally responsive leader who will provide information needed to describe this form of leadership. You have been nominated to be part of this expert committee. This study is for my dissertation and it has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Texas State University-San Marcos. The IRB approval reference number at Texas State University-San Marcos is 2008T6279. The IRB chairperson Dr. Jon Lasser's contact details are: Office Tel. 512-245-3413 and Email [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu). The OSP administrator Becky Northcut can be contacted by e-mail at [ospirb@txstate.edu](mailto:ospirb@txstate.edu) and telephone 512-245-2314.

Some of the characteristics that I consider to be very important in selecting this type of leader are that the leader must have extensive experience working with diverse populations, must be well known for achieving improved teaching and learning processes that benefit students from diverse populations and have been in the same school for a period of at least three years. If you should decide to join the expert committee, I will also accept other ideas that you have to offer in order to make this study a success. For the nomination process, you will be requested to nominate a leader whom you know to use culturally responsive leadership style. You will then fill out a survey that will take about 25 minutes to complete. The survey contains a list of 16 literature based characteristics of a culturally responsive leader. Using a scoring scale of 1-5 with 1 being the least and 5 the highest, you will determine the leader's level of cultural responsiveness for each of the listed characteristics, and then you may also suggest any other observations by answering the open-ended question.

If you are willing to consider joining this expert committee, please contact me at [LM1276@txstate.edu](mailto:LM1276@txstate.edu), and I will provide additional details.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Sincerely

Lewis Madhlangobe  
Ph.D. Student and Graduate Assistant  
Texas State University-San Marcos

## Appendix B

### Nomination and Rating Scale Score Sheet for Selecting a Culturally Responsive Leader

Expert Panel: Instructions for completing a Nominating and Rating Scale Score Sheet.  
This survey should take about 5 minutes to complete.

1. Please read each of the characteristics used to describe a culturally responsive leader in the figure below.
2. Nominate a leader whom you consider to be outstanding in the use of culturally responsive leadership.
3. Using a scale of 1-5 with one being the lowest and five the highest, rate the leader's level of cultural responsiveness in each case.
4. Write the score for each characteristic in the column provided for the scores on the right hand column of the figure.
5. Put the completed score sheet in the envelope provided for each of the nominations you make.
6. You do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable.

### Rating Scale Score Sheet for Selecting a Culturally Responsive Leader

Nomination of a Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

School District \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school \_\_\_\_\_

Characteristics are scored on a scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

1 Weak	2	3 Moderate	4	5 Strong	Score
1. Understands the importance of culture in the teaching-learning process					
2. Understands beliefs, values, traditions, experiences, funds of knowledge, and learning styles of different cultures					
3. Helps teachers to be aware of the diverse learning needs of different student groups, and to use culturally responsive teaching practices					
4. Promotes an empowering school culture that fosters equity for diverse student groups					
5. Brings together diverse groups from inside and outside of the school to create an inclusive school community					
6. Democratically develops an inclusive school vision and mission that fosters the wellbeing of all members of the school community					



7. Creates culturally responsive leadership throughout the school community	
8. Participates in personal and professional development that increases her or his cultural knowledge and responsiveness	
9. Provides for professional development that enhances teachers cultural knowledge and responsiveness	
10. Provides direct feedback and assistance to teachers and other staff members to increase their cultural knowledge and responsiveness	
11. Promotes data-based inquiry that enables teachers to asses and improve their level of cultural responsiveness	
12. Works directly with students, parents, and community members to foster cultural understanding	
13. Engages the community in efforts to meet educational and social needs of diverse students, families and the community as a whole	
14. Puts cultural responsiveness at the center of efforts to improve performance of underachieving groups	
15. Critically reflects on how her or his culture, personal history, beliefs and attitudes affects the way she or he interacts with students and teachers from different cultures and uses that critical reflection as a basis for changing his or her behavior and becoming more culturally responsive	

16. Are there any other questions that you think I should ask in order to describe the leader's level of cultural responsiveness? If so, please write suggested question(s) below.

## Appendix C

### School District: Official Request for Permission to Carry out a Study with School Leader, Staff and Parents

Lewis Madhlangobe  
106 Charles Austin Drive Apt. # A2  
San Marcos, TX 78666  
Home Tel: 512-396-5101 Cell: 512-786-8237

Dear District Officer's Name and Position:

My name is Lewis Madhlangobe and I am a Ph.D. student at Texas State University-San Marcos. I am requesting for permission to carry out a study in \_\_\_\_\_ School in your district. The purpose is to describe culturally responsive leadership in that school. The school leaders have been identified as leaders who use culturally responsive leadership style by a panel of experts comprised of university professors and education experts.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB approval reference # 2008T6279) at Texas State University-San Marcos. The IRB chairperson Dr. Jon Lasser, contact details are: Office Tel. 512-245-3413 and Email [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu). The OSP administrator Becky Northcut can be contacted by e-mail at [ospirb@txstate.edu](mailto:ospirb@txstate.edu) and telephone 512-245-2314. Dr. S. P. Gordon, EAPS Department, my advisor, has approved my submission of this application. He can be contacted at [sg07@txstate.edu](mailto:sg07@txstate.edu) or by telephone on 512-245-2441.

During the study, I will shadow the school leader for three days. The three days of shadowing will be carried out at the beginning, middle and end of the semester. After each shadowing session I will interview the school leader once to clarify certain observations. The length of each interview will depend on the questions that I will have developed during each shadowing session. I hope to carry out each interview soon after each shadowing session. Shadowing the leader will involve spending time with the leader and following him or her around the campus, observing and taking field notes on all the work activities in which the leader engages. It will also involve paying close attention to the leader in order to record detailed information about what the leader does in particular contexts.

I also will carry out three interviews each with a group of six teachers and six parents as well as gathering of some school and classroom artifacts related to cultural proficiency. The interviews with the teachers and parents will be carried out in two separate groups. Each of the first interviews with the groups is expected to last 1 hour. The length of the

second round interviews will depend on the interview guide that will be informed by the first interview. Participants do not have to answer any question that makes them uncomfortable.

Teachers and parents will be required to sign consent forms to before they can participate in the study. All the data collected from the leader will be treated confidentially, and the data from surveying teachers will be treated anonymously. All the data that I will collect will be kept secure in a steel file cabinet in my office at Texas State University-San Marcos, and thereafter I will keep the data safely locked up in a cabinet in my house after completion of the dissertation.

I am therefore requesting your permission to allow me to carry out the study in the mentioned schools. At the end of the study, I will share a summary of the results of my observations with the school leader, teachers and parents. I hope that other school leaders will also benefit from this study and they will know why it is important to use this form of leadership style. The results of the study will also help you to help teachers understand the importance of using inclusive teaching learn methods. I also hope that policy formulation processes will benefit from the result of this study.

I very much hope that you will allow me to carry out the study in the school. Please contact me at 512-245-4724 (Office 8:00a.m -2:30p.m) or 512-396-5101 home and 512-786-8237 (Cell). I am also contactable through e-mail on [lm1276@txstate.edu](mailto:lm1276@txstate.edu).

Thank you for considering this application.  
Sincerely

Lewis Madhlangobe  
Ph.D. Student and Graduate Assistant  
College of Education Texas State University-San Marcos

## Appendix D

### School Leaders' Invitation to Participate in Preliminary Study

Lewis Madhlangobe  
106 Charles Austin Drive Apt. # A2  
San Marcos, TX 78666  
Home Tel: 512-396-5101 Cell: 512-786-8237

Dear School Leader's Name:

My name is Lewis Madhlangobe and I am a Ph.D. student at Texas State University-San Marcos. I am currently carrying out a study to describe how culturally responsive leadership is acted out in schools. A committee of experts, comprised of school officials and university professors, has nominated you as a culturally responsive leader. I am inviting you to participate in a preliminary study of culturally responsive leadership.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Texas State University-San Marcos. The IRB approval reference number at Texas State University-San Marcos is 2008T6279. The IRB chairperson Dr. Jon Lasser, contact details are: Office Tel. 512-245-3413 and Email [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu). The OSP administrator Becky Northcut can be contacted by e-mail at [ospirb@txstate.edu](mailto:ospirb@txstate.edu) and telephone 512-245-2314.

If you decide to participate in the preliminary study, I will interview you to establish your level of cultural responsiveness. The interview should take about 45 minutes to complete. I will also survey teachers in your school. Teachers will fill out a survey that will take about 25 minutes. The survey contains a list of 16 literature based characteristics of a culturally responsive leader. Using a scoring scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least and 5 the highest, teachers will determine your level of cultural responsiveness and suggest any other observations by answering the open-ended question at the end of the survey. At the end of the whole study, I will share a summary of the results of my observations with you and your teachers. Other leaders will also benefit from this study and they will know why it is important to use this form of leadership style. The results of the study will also help you to help your teachers to understand the importance of using inclusive teaching learn methods.

There is a possibility that you will be asked to participate in a more extensive study on culturally responsive leadership after the preliminary study is complete. This expanded study would involve your being shadowed for three days and an additional interview with a new group of six teachers, and a new group of six parents (two interviews of each of these groups) as well as gathering of some school and classroom artifacts related to cultural proficiency. Although at this point your participation in the extended study is

only a possibility, please only accept my invitation for the initial study if you are willing to seriously consider participation in the extended study should you eventually will be invited to participate in that study as well. All data collected from you will be treated confidentially, and the data from surveying teachers will be treated anonymously.

I very much hope that you will agree to participate in the preliminary study. If you are willing to do so please contact me at [LM1276@txstate.edu](mailto:LM1276@txstate.edu). Thank you for considering this invitation.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Sincerely

Lewis Madhlangobe  
Ph.D. Student and Graduate Assistant  
College of Education  
Texas State University-San Marcos

## Appendix E

### Leader's Consent Form to Participate in the Preliminary Study

Research Study: *Culturally Responsive Leadership in a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse High School: A Case Study of the Practices of one High School Leader*

I, (print name in full) \_\_\_\_\_, am a leader at \_\_\_\_\_ School. In signing this consent form, I agree to volunteer in the *Culturally Responsive Leadership in Education* preliminary research project to be conducted by the researcher **Lewis Madhlangobe** from Texas State University-San Marcos. Lewis Madhlangobe's contact details are: (Home tel. 512-396-5101; (Cell) 512-786-8237 and on 512-245-4724 (Office). His e-mail addresses are: [LM1276@txstate.edu](mailto:LM1276@txstate.edu) (Work) and [chimbga@gmail.com](mailto:chimbga@gmail.com) (Personal).

I understand that this study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB approval reference # 2008T6279) at Texas State University-San Marcos. The IRB chairperson Dr. Jon Lasser, contact details are: Office Tel. 512-245-3413 and e-mail [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu). The OSP administrator Ms. Becky Northcut can be contacted by e-mail at [ospirb@txstate.edu](mailto:ospirb@txstate.edu) and telephone 512-245-2314.

I understand that the preliminary study being conducted relates to the selection of a leader who will participate in the primary study and describe how culturally responsive leadership is performed in a culturally diverse school. I also understand that during the preliminary study I will be interviewed once by the researcher for about 45 minutes and that my comments will be recorded on an audio tape. In the interview, the researcher will ask me 14 open-ended questions that relate to leadership in my school. During the interview, I do not have to answer any questions that make me feel uncomfortable. I have also been informed that some excerpts from written transcripts and my tape-recorded verbal communications with the researcher may be quoted in future papers and/or journal articles that will be written by the researcher; however, I understand that my name or other identifying information will not be disclosed or referenced in any way in any written or verbal context. Upon completion of the study, a summary of the findings will be provided through my office to all participants if requested.

Therefore, I grant authorization for the use of the above information with the full understanding that my confidentiality will be preserved at all times. I understand that all the information collected from my school will be kept secure for the duration of the study and used for the project completion. I also understand that the researcher will keep the

data collected in a locked cabinet in his office at Texas State University-San Marcos and if he graduates from the university he will keep that data under lock and key in his house. I have received a copy of this consent form to keep for myself and have read and understand all of it. Anything that I did not understand was explained to me by the researcher. Therefore, I agree to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my permission to participate in this study at any point without prejudice to the university.

I have signed below to indicate my consent.

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Participant's Signature

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Date

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Researcher's Signature

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Date

## Appendix F

### Interview Guide for the Preliminary Study: School Leader

1. Tell me about yourself
  - a) Personal history
  - b) Experience as a teacher
  - c) Experience as a leader
2. Describe the teachers in this school.
3. Describe the students in this school.
4. Describe the community this school serves.
5. Describe your philosophy of education.
6. Describe your vision for this school.
7. How does the diversity in your school and community influence your leadership style?
8. How do you as a leader understand culturally responsive leadership? What makes culturally responsive leadership different from other forms of leadership?
9. What experiences have helped you to become a culturally responsive leader?
10. How do you model culturally responsive leadership?
11. How do you influence others in the school community to be culturally responsive?
12. How do you foster culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom?
13. How do teachers in the school demonstrate cultural responsiveness?
14. Are there any questions that you feel I need to ask to be able to collect enough information to describe how leadership helps you teach your students using culturally responsive approaches?



## Appendix G

### Scoring Guide for Leader Interviews-Preliminary Study

Leader's responses are scored on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

#### Section A

(1) Leader's Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_ (2) Length of service as a leader: \_\_\_\_\_

(3) Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ (4) Length of service as a classroom teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section B Survey

Interview Rating Scale Score Sheet for Selecting a Culturally Responsive Leader

Name of Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Leader's responses to the interview questions are scored on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

1 Weak	2	3 Moderate	4	5 Strong	Score
1. Articulated her or his personal history, experience as a teacher and leader, and critically reflected on how her or his culture, personal history, beliefs and attitudes affect the way she or he interacts with people from different cultures and uses that critical reflection as a basis for changing his or her behavior and becoming more culturally responsive					
2. The description of the teacher population shows diversity					
3. The description of the student population shows diversity					
4. The description of the community served by the school shows that the community is diverse and that these challenges come into the school					
5. The leader's philosophy embraces diversity					
6. The vision was clearly articulated and it includes using cultural responsiveness to move the school forward					
7. Clearly demonstrated how diversity in the school and community influence her or his leadership style					
8. The leader shows a clear understanding of CRL , and managed to explain how CRL differs from all the other forms of leadership					
9. Clearly articulated experiences that have helped her or him to become a CR-leader (As a student, teacher, leader and from the community)					
10. Clearly explained how she or he models CRL on campus					

11. Works directly with students, parents, and community members to foster cultural understanding	
12. Works directly with teachers to foster culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom	
13. Clearly understands how teachers demonstrate cultural responsiveness with students, families and the community as a whole	
14. Puts cultural responsiveness at the center of efforts to improve performance of underachieving groups	

Are there any other questions that you think I should ask in order to describe your level of cultural responsiveness?

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## Appendix H

### Cover Letter for Teachers' Survey

#### Teachers: Instructions for completing a survey for selecting a Culturally Responsive Leader

Dear Teachers

My name is Lewis Madhlangobe and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education at Texas State University-San Marcos. I am carrying out a research project for my dissertation. The purpose of the project is to describe how culturally responsive leadership is performed in a school. My dissertation chair is Dr. S. P. Gordon, Professor, EAPS. [sp07@txstate.edu](mailto:sp07@txstate.edu) Telephone: (512) 245-2441. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Texas State University-San Marcos. The IRB chairperson Dr. Jon Lasser, contact details are: Office Tel. 512-245-3413 and Email [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu). The OSP administrator Becky Northcut can be contacted by e-mail at [ospirb@txstate.edu](mailto:ospirb@txstate.edu) and by telephone on 512-245-2314.

The leader of your school has been nominated by a panel of experts as one leader who uses culturally responsive leadership. Since you have the experience working with this leader, I consider you to be the best person to provide me with information that can inform my study. I am therefore inviting you to complete the attached survey to help me rate the level of cultural responsiveness of your leader. The survey will take about 45 minutes to complete. The 45 characteristics are literature based characteristics of a culturally responsive leader. At the end of the whole study, I will share a summary of the results of my observations with you. Other leaders will also benefit from this study and hopefully it will help them to understand the importance of using this form of leadership style. The results of the study will also help you to help other teachers to understand the importance of using inclusive teaching learn methods.

There is a possibility that you will be asked to participate in a more extensive study on culturally responsive leadership after the preliminary study is complete. This expanded study would involve your being interviewed twice in a group as well as gathering of some school and classroom artifacts related to cultural proficiency. Interviews will last approximately 50 minutes each, and classroom observations will take half a day for each of the six teachers who will participate. After each classroom observation I may ask questions to clarify certain observations.

I very much hope that you will agree to participate in the preliminary study. If you are willing to do so please contact me at [LM1276@txstate.edu](mailto:LM1276@txstate.edu). Other contact details include: (Home) 512-396-5101 (Office), 512-245.4724 and (Cell) 512-786-8237.

Thank you for considering this invitation.  
Sincerely

Lewis Madhlangobe  
Ph.D. Student and Graduate Assistant  
College of Education  
Texas State University-San Marcos

## Appendix H continued

### Survey to be Completed by Teachers

#### Instructions for Completing the Survey

Please read these instructions carefully and then complete the attached survey

1. Please read each of the characteristics used to describe a culturally responsive leader in the figure below.
2. You do not have to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.
3. Using a scale of 1-5 with one being the lowest and five the highest, rate the leader's level of cultural responsiveness in each case
4. Write your rating score for each of your leader's characteristic in the column provided for the scores on the right hand column of the figure.
5. Put the completed score sheet in the envelope provided.
6. You do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable.

#### Section A

1. What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have been working with the leader? \_\_\_\_\_
4. For how long have you been a teacher? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which grade level do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Briefly describe the composition of the group(s) that you teach by race/ethnicity and languages spoken \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section B Survey

##### Rating Scale Score Sheet for Selecting a Culturally Responsive Leader

Name of Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Characteristics are scored on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

1 Weak	2	3 Moderate	4	5 Strong	Score
1. Understands the importance of culture in the teaching-learning process					
2. Understands beliefs, values, traditions, experiences, funds of knowledge, and learning styles of different cultures					
3. Helps teachers to be aware of the diverse learning needs of different student groups, and to use culturally responsive teaching practices					
4. Promotes an empowering school culture that fosters equity for diverse student groups					
5. Brings together diverse groups from inside and outside of the school to create an inclusive school community					

6. Democratically develops an inclusive school vision and mission that fosters the wellbeing of all members of the school community	
7. Creates culturally responsive leadership throughout the school community	
8. Participates in personal and professional development that increases her or his cultural knowledge and responsiveness	
9. Provides for professional development that enhances teachers cultural knowledge and responsiveness	
10. Provides direct feedback and assistance to teachers and other staff members to increase their cultural knowledge and responsiveness	
11. Promotes data-based inquiry that enables teachers to assess and improve their level of cultural responsiveness	
12. Works directly with students, parents, and community members to foster cultural understanding	
13. Engages the community in efforts to meet educational and social needs of diverse students, families and the community as a whole	
14. Puts cultural responsiveness at the center of efforts to improve performance of underachieving groups	
15. Critically reflects on how her or his culture, personal history, beliefs and attitudes affect the way she or he interacts with students and teachers from different cultures and uses that critical reflection as a basis for changing his or her behavior and becoming more culturally responsive	

Are there any other questions that you think I should ask in order to describe the leader's level of cultural responsiveness? If so, please write suggested question(s) below.

## Appendix I

### Teachers' Consent Form to Participate in the Preliminary Study

Research Study: *Culturally Responsive Leadership in a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse High School: A Case Study of the Practices of one High School Leader*

I, (print name in full) \_\_\_\_\_, am a teacher at \_\_\_\_\_ School. In signing this consent form, I agree to volunteer in the *Culturally Responsive Leadership in Education* preliminary research project to be conducted by the researcher **Lewis Madhlangobe** a graduate student from Texas State University-San Marcos. The purpose of the preliminary research project is to select a leader who best exemplifies culturally responsive leadership. Lewis Madhlangobe can be contacted by phone at 512-396-5101 (Home) and 512-786-8237 (Cell). His e-mail addresses are: [LM1276@txstate.edu](mailto:LM1276@txstate.edu) (Work) and [chimbga@gmail.com](mailto:chimbga@gmail.com) (Personal).

I understand that the preliminary study, research being conducted relates to the selection of a leader who will participate in the primary study of how of culturally responsive leadership is performed in a culturally diverse school. The researcher has informed me that I have been selected to participate in the preliminary study because I have experience working with the leader to be studied, and hence I have information that can best be used for describing and selecting a truly culturally responsive leader. To achieve this, I understand that I will be surveyed by the researcher and that my comments will be will be used only for selecting the leader to participate in the primary study. The survey, which will take about 30 minutes to complete, contains a list of 16 literature based characteristics of a culturally responsive leader. Using a scoring scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least and 5 the highest, I am being asked to determine my leader's level of cultural responsiveness and suggest any other observations by answering an open-ended question at the end of the survey. I understand that I do not have to answer any question that will make me uncomfortable. The researcher has also informed me that the information I will give will be treated anonymously in any written or verbal context. Upon completion of the study, a summary of the findings will be provided through the leader's office to all participants if requested.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB approval reference # 2008T6279) at Texas State University-San Marcos. The IRB chairperson Dr. Jon Lasser, contact details are: Office Tel. 512-245-3413 and Email [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu). The OSP administrator Becky Northcut can be contacted by e-mail at [ospirb@txstate.edu](mailto:ospirb@txstate.edu) and telephone 512-245-2314.

Therefore, I grant authorization for the use of the above information with the full understanding that my anonymity will be preserved at all times. I understand that surveys will be assigned pseudonyms and kept secure in researcher's office at the university until the completion of the research project. When I graduate from the university, the information collected from me will be kept secured in the researcher's home for future use, and further publications which contain my personal information will continue to be handled anonymously.

I have received a copy of this consent form to keep for myself and have read and understand all of it. Anything that I did not understand was explained to me by the researcher. Therefore, I agree to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my permission to participate in this study at any point.

I have signed below to indicate my consent.

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Participant's Signature

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Date

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Researcher's Signature

---

Date



## Appendix J

### School Leader's Invitation to Participate in the Primary Study

Lewis Madhlangobe  
106 Charles Austin Drive Apt. # A2  
San Marcos, TX 78666  
Home Tel: 512-396-5101

Dear School Leader's Name:

My name is Lewis Madhlangobe and I am a Ph.D. student at Texas State University-San Marcos. Recently I carried out a preliminary study with you, teachers, and parents from your school. The purpose was to establish the level of culturally responsive leadership in your school and to select one leader who best exemplifies culturally responsive leadership to participate in an extended study.

Following the results of the preliminary study that I carried out with you and several other school leaders elsewhere, you have been chosen to participate in a more extensive study on culturally responsive leadership as the principal informant. I am therefore inviting you to participate in the primary study to describe how culturally responsive leadership is acted out in a school. At the end of the study, I will share a summary of the results of my observations with you. Other school leaders will also benefit from this study and they will know why it is important to use this form of leadership style. The results of the study will also help you to help your teachers to understand the importance of using inclusive teaching learn methods.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Texas State University-San Marcos. The IRB approval reference number for this project at Texas State University-San Marcos is 2008T6279. The IRB chairperson Dr. Jon Lasser's contact details are: Office Tel. 512-245-3413 and Email [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu). The OSP administrator Becky Northcut can be contacted by phone at [ospirb@txstate.edu](mailto:ospirb@txstate.edu) and telephone 512-245-2314. Dr. Stephen P. Gordon, EAPS Department, my advisor, has approved my submission of this application. He can be contacted at [sg07@txstate.edu](mailto:sg07@txstate.edu) or by telephone on 512-245-2441.

In this part of the study, I will shadow you for three full days. The three days of shadowing will be carried out at the beginning, middle and end of the fall 2008 semester. After each shadowing session I will interview you once to clarify certain observations. The length of each interview will depend on the questions that I will have developed during each shadowing session. Shadowing will involve spending time with you and

following you around the campus, observing and taking field notes on all the work activities in which you engage. It will involve paying close attention to you as a leader in order to record detailed information about what you do in a particular context. I will also carry out two group interviews, each with a group of six teachers, and a new group of six parents, as well as gathering of some school and classroom artifacts related to cultural proficiency. For the interviews, I will interview the teachers and parents in two separate groups. Each of the first interviews with the groups is expected to last 1 hour. The lengths of the second round interviews will depend on the second interview guide that will be informed by the first interview.

If you are willing to participate, please sign the attached consent form and return it to me at the above postal address. I very much hope that you will agree to participate in the extended study.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Sincerely

Lewis Madhlangobe  
Ph.D. Student and Graduate Assistant  
College of Education  
Texas State University-San Marcos

## Appendix K

### Consent Form to Participate in the Primary Study: Leader

Research Study: *Culturally Responsive Leadership in a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse High School: A Case Study of the Practices of one High School Leader*

I, (print name in full) \_\_\_\_\_, am a school leader at \_\_\_\_\_ School. In signing this consent form, I agree to volunteer in the *Culturally Responsive Leadership in Education* research project being conducted by Lewis **Madhlangobe** a graduate student from Texas State University-San Marcos. The purpose of the research project is to describe culturally responsive leadership. Lewis Madhlangobe can be contacted by phone at 512-396-5101 (Home) and 512-786-8237 (Cell). His e-mail addresses are: [LM1276@txstate.edu](mailto:LM1276@txstate.edu) (Work) and [chimbga@gmail.com](mailto:chimbga@gmail.com) (Personal).

The researcher has explained to me that this research project is for writing a dissertation, and it has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB approval reference # 2008T6279) at Texas State University-San Marcos. The researcher also explained to me that the IRB is charged with protecting the rights and welfare of human research participants. The IRB reviews proposed research to ensure that the proposed project follows federal guidelines and accepted ethical principles to meet that goal. I understand that if I have questions about this study I may contact the IRB chairperson Dr. Jon Lasser, by phone at 512-245-3413 (office) and by e-mail at [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu). The OSP administrator Ms. Becky Northcut can also be contacted by e-mail at [ospirb@txstate.edu](mailto:ospirb@txstate.edu) and by telephone at 512-245-2314. Results from this study may help to inform education leadership practices including teaching practices. This will benefit culturally and linguistically diverse schools, and policy making processes may also benefit from the results of this study.

The researcher has explained to me that the study to be conducted at my school relates to the description of how culturally responsive leadership is performed in a culturally diverse school. To achieve this, his dissertation committee and a committee of education experts, selected me as the principal informant because I can provide rich descriptive data regarding culturally responsive leadership. I also understand that I will be shadowed and interviewed three times by the researcher and that my comments will be recorded on audio tape. The three days of shadowing will be carried out at the beginning, middle and end of the semester. After each shadowing session I will be interviewed once to clarify certain observations that the researcher will have made. The length of each interview will depend on the questions developed by the researcher during each shadowing session. I

understand that shadowing will involve the researcher spending time with me and following me around the campus, observing and taking field notes on all the work activities in which I engage. It will also involve paying close attention to me as a leader in order to record detailed information about what I do in a particular context. The researcher will also carry out two group interviews with the same group of six teachers and parents, as well as gather some school and classroom artifacts related to cultural proficiency. For the interviews, I will interview teachers and parents in separate groups. Each of the first interviews with the groups is expected to last 1 hour. The length of the second round interviews will only be determined by the interview guide that will be informed by the first interview, and hence will only be developed after the first interview. I understand that excerpts from written transcripts and my tape-recorded verbal communications with I may be quoted in future papers and/or journal articles that will be written by the researcher; however, I understand that my name or other identifying information will not be disclosed or referenced in any way in any written or verbal context. Pseudonyms will be used to refer to me, my school and the district where the school is located. The researcher has informed me that all the data to be collected will be kept secure in a locked cabinet in his office at Texas State University-San Marcos and thereafter in a locked place in his home after graduating from the university. Upon completion of the study, a summary of the findings will be provided through the leader's office to all participants if requested.

Therefore, I grant authorization for the use of the above information with the full understanding that my confidentiality will be preserved at all times. I understand that transcripts, both paper and electronic versions, will be kept secure and that any audio tapes of my conversations with Is will be erased within a year of project completion.

I have received a copy of this consent form to keep for myself and have read and understand all of it. Anything that I did not understand was explained to me by the researcher. Therefore, I agree to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my permission to participate in this study at any point.

I have signed below to indicate my consent.

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 Participant's Signature

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 Date

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 Researcher's Signature

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 Date

## Appendix L

### First Interview Guide for the Primary Study: Leader

1. Describe how you promote/model relationship building as a tool for cultural responsiveness
  - a. When dealing with students (Please give specific examples)
  - b. When dealing with teachers (Please give specific examples)
  - c. When dealing with parents (Please give specific examples)How does relationship building promote cultural responsiveness in this school?
2. Describe the approaches that you use when handling disciplinary problems related to the diverse groups in your school:
  - a. African American students (Please give specific examples)
  - b. Hispanic students (Please give specific examples)
  - c. White students (Please give specific examples)
  - d. Other students (Please give specific examples)
3. In what ways, if any, do you involve parents/family in school business Teaching (Please give specific examples)
  - a. Selecting curriculum materials
  - b. Behavior monitoring (Please give specific examples)
4. Describe your relationship with the community the school serves, including diverse cultural groups within the community. (Please give specific examples).
5. Discuss how the economic diversity in your school and community influences your leadership style (Give specific examples).
6. Explain how gender related issues in this school influence the way you perform your leadership duties
  - a. when dealing with students (Please give specific examples)
  - b. When dealing with parents (Please give specific examples)
  - c. When dealing with teachers
7. Describe how students who come from single parent family influence the way you perform your leadership roles. (Use specific examples)
8. How do you handle conflict that may include students from diverse socio economic classes?
9. Describe how you are helping to make the school more responsive to diverse cultural groups through
  - a. Professional development (Please give specific examples)
  - b. Curriculum changes (Please give specific examples)
  - c. Changes in school instructional program (Please give specific examples)
  - d. School staffing (Please give specific examples)
  - e. Faculty and other meetings (Please give specific examples)

## Appendix M

### Second Interview Guide for the Primary Study: Leader

#### Part I

#### Verification of conclusions from first interview

#### Part II

#### New Questions

1. Discuss how the racial, ethnic and economic diversity in your school and community influences your leadership style (Give specific examples).
2. Describe how you promote/model relationship building as a tool for cultural responsiveness
  - a. When dealing with students (Please give specific examples)
  - b. When dealing with teachers (Please give specific examples)
  - c. When dealing with parents (Please give specific examples)How does relationship building promote cultural responsiveness in this school?
3. Do you use different approaches when handling disciplinary problems related to different racial and ethnic groups? If so, how does your approach differ with:
  - a. African American students (Please give specific examples)
  - b. Hispanic students (Please give specific examples)
  - c. White students (Please give specific examples)
  - d. Other students (Please give specific examples)
4. In what ways, if any, do you involve parents/family in school matters?
  - a. Teaching (Please give specific examples)
  - b. Selecting curriculum materials
  - c. Behavior monitoring (Please give specific examples)
  - d. School leadership
  - e. Other types of involvement
5. Describe your relationship with the community the school serves, including diverse cultural groups within the community. (Please give specific examples).
6. Describe how students who come from single parent family influence the way you perform your leadership roles. (Use specific examples)
7. How do you handle conflict that may include students from different racial, ethnic, or socio economic groups?
8. Describe how you are helping to make the school more responsive to diverse cultural groups through
  - a. Professional development (Please give specific examples)
  - b. Curriculum changes (Please give specific examples)
  - c. Changes in how students are grouped

- d. Changes in school instructional program (Please give specific examples)
  - e. School staffing (Please give specific examples)
  - f. Faculty and other meetings (Please give specific examples)
9. What else can we talk about that will help me understand your role as a leader within a school with so much diversity?

## Appendix N

### Third Interview Guide for the Primary Study: Leader

#### Part I

#### Verification of conclusions from first interview

1. Both teachers and parents agree that you are persistent and persuasive. I also observed the same traits. How do you demonstrate persistence and persuasiveness with
  - a. Teachers (give examples)
  - b. Students (give examples)
  - c. Parents (give examples)Why are both persistence and persuasiveness important in leading and teaching in this culturally and linguistically diverse school?
2. How do you encourage content integration as a tool for cultural responsive teaching? Why is it important for teachers to implement content integration?
3. Describe situations when you have demonstrated/modeled flexibility when dealing with teachers and then with students. How do your teachers demonstrate flexibility with their students?
4. Define empathy for me and describe how you model empathy with
  - a. Teachers
  - b. Students
  - c. ParentsHow does empathy help this school to be culturally responsive?
5. Both teachers and I have observed that you are highly visible in the hallways, classrooms and other places in the building. Why do you do that? How does high visibility help the school to be responsive?
6. Describe some of the external staff development programs that you have helped your teachers to attend. How does each of the programs help
  - a. teachers to be inclusive (give examples)
  - b. your leadership (give examples)Say how the programs help the school to be culturally responsive?
7. Describe the forms of support that you get from
  - a. your principals
  - b. the district
  - c. universities and experts from universities
  - d. otherSay how the support helps the school to be culturally responsive?



8. *Language:* This school is linguistically and culturally diverse. We know that language is the main tool that people use to communicate. If students are not very proficient in English, such students will have problems in the classrooms.
  - a. How do teachers deal with the problem of language diversity in the classroom?
  - b. What role do you see language
8. *Language:* If students do not understand the language used by the teacher in their classroom, they will find it difficult to learn. How do you help teachers in this school to teach students who have a limited level of proficiency in English?
9. *Culture:* culture can be defined as those values or norms, and traditions that affect how individuals or groups perceive situations, interact, behave, think, and understand the world. How do you ensure that your own cultural ways of thinking and acting do not affect the cultural ways of others?
10. Are there any other areas of your leadership that you think need help to improve? How did the diversity in this school help you to recognize them? How would that help to make this school to be culturally responsive

## Appendix O

### Consent Form for the Teachers: Primary Study

Research Study: *Culturally Responsive Leadership in a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse High School: A Case Study of the Practices of one High School Leader*

I, (print name in full) \_\_\_\_\_, am a teacher at \_\_\_\_\_ School. In signing this consent form, I agree to volunteer in the *Culturally Responsive Leadership in Education* research project being conducted by the researcher **Lewis Madhlangobe** a graduate student from Texas State University-San Marcos. The purpose of the research project is to describe culturally responsive leadership. Lewis Madhlangobe can be contacted by phone at 512-396-5101 (Home) and 512-786-8237 (Cell). His e-mail addresses are: [LM1276@txstate.edu](mailto:LM1276@txstate.edu) (Work) and [chimbga@gmail.com](mailto:chimbga@gmail.com) (Personal).

The researcher has informed me that I have been selected to participate because I have experience working with the leader to be studied, and hence I have information that can best be used for describing culturally responsive leadership. I understand that this research project is for writing a dissertation and it has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB approval reference # 2008T6279) at Texas State University-San Marcos. The researcher explained to me that the IRB is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of human research participants. The IRB reviews proposed research to ensure that the proposed project follows federal guidelines and accepted ethical principles to meet that goal. I understand that if I have questions about this study I may contact the IRB chairperson Dr. Jon Lasser, by phone at 512-245-3413 (office) and by e-mail at [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu). The OSP administrator Ms. Becky Northcut can be contacted by e-mail at [ospirb@txstate.edu](mailto:ospirb@txstate.edu) and by telephone at 512-245-2314. Results from this study may help to inform education leadership practices including teaching practices. This will benefit culturally and linguistically diverse schools.

I understand that the research being conducted relates to the description of how culturally responsive leadership is performed in a culturally diverse school. I also understand that I will be interviewed three times, and that I will also be observed three times by the researcher while I am teaching. After each observation session the researcher may ask me some questions to clarify certain observations. Each of the group interviews with teachers is expected to take about 50 minutes and each observation will take half a day. The two group interviews with teachers will follow the completion of the classroom observations that I will make with the six teachers who will participate in the study. The first group interview will include 14 questions. I understand that the second set of interviews will be

informed by the first set of interviews and observations. The duration of the second interview will only be determined after the first round of observations and interviews. The first observations and interviews will be carried out during the first half of the \_\_\_\_\_ semester, and the second round of interviews and observations will be done during the second half of the same semester. After each classroom observation, the researcher may ask me some questions to clarify certain observations and also request for samples of artifacts that will be related to cultural responsiveness. My comments during the interviews will be recorded on audio tape with my permission. I understand that excerpts from written transcripts and my tape-recorded verbal communications with the researcher may be quoted in future papers and/or journal articles that will be written by the researcher; however, I understand that the information I give out will be treated anonymously at all times by the researcher. Pseudonyms will be used to refer to all the participants in the study. Upon completion of the study, a summary of the findings will be provided through the leader's office to all participants if requested.

Therefore, I grant authorization for the use of the above information with the full understanding that my anonymity will be preserved at all times. I understand that transcripts, both paper and electronic will be kept secure in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office and that any audio tapes of my conversations with me will always be treated anonymously until project completion and during any future publications by the author. However, I understand that besides the researcher, his dissertation chair will also have access to the information.

I have received a copy of this consent form to keep for myself and have read and understand all of it. Anything that I did not understand was explained to me by the researcher. Therefore, I agree to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my permission to participate in this study at any point without prejudice to the university.

I have signed below to indicate my consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix P

### First Interview Guide for the Primary Study: Teachers

1. Will you each tell me about yourself (one teacher at a time)
  - a. Personal history
  - b. Experience as a teacher
  - c. Experience with the leader that I am studying
2. Describe the community this school serves, including different cultural groups within the community.
3. Describe the students in this school.
4. Describe the teachers this school serves.
5. Describe the philosophy of education of the leader who I am studying
6. Describe the vision for this school espoused by the leader who I am studying.
7. How do you define cultural responsiveness?
  - a. Culturally responsive teaching?
  - b. Culturally responsive leadership?
  - c. A culturally responsive school?
8. In what ways, if any, has the leader I am studying modeled cultural responsiveness?
  - a. When interacting with students. (Please give specific examples)
  - b. When interacting with teachers (Please give specific examples)
  - c. When interacting with staff members. (Please give specific examples)
  - d. When interacting with parents. (Please give specific examples)
9. Discuss the leader's relationship with the community the school serves, including diverse cultural groups within the community. (Please give specific examples)
10. What has the leader who I am studying done to make the school more responsive to diverse cultural groups?
  - a. Professional development (Please give specific examples)
  - b. Curriculum changes (Please give specific examples)
  - c. Changes in school instructional program (Please give specific examples)
  - d. School-parent or school-community programs (Please give specific examples)
  - e. Faculty and other meetings (Please give specific examples)
  - f. Other school wide efforts (Please give specific examples)
11. How do you demonstrate cultural understanding and cultural responsiveness in the classroom? (Please give specific examples)
12. How, if at all, has the assistant principal helped you to be more culturally responsive in your classroom? (One teacher at a time. Please give specific examples)

13. Are there any questions that you believe I need to ask in order to describe the leader I am studying as a culturally responsive leader?

## Appendix Q

### Second Interview Guide for the Primary Study: Teachers

#### Part I

##### Verification of common conclusions from first interview

1. In which ways do you demonstrate embracing students' culture, in terms of language, values, behavior and teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships?
2. Describe a teaching aid or method that you use with your groups and say how it was culturally neutral?

#### Part II

##### New Questions

1. Discuss how the racial, ethnic and economic diversity in your school and community influences the leader's style (Give specific examples).
2. Describe how you promote/model relationship building as a tool for cultural responsiveness when you deal with:
  - a. students (Please give specific examples)
  - b. other teachers (Please give specific examples)
  - c. parents (Please give specific examples)How does relationship building promote cultural responsiveness in this school? In what ways, if any, has the leader helped you to promote/model cultural responsiveness?
3. Describe the leader approaches when handling disciplinary problems related to different racial and ethnic groups. Say how her approaches differ, if at all, with:
  - a. African American students (Please give specific examples)
  - b. Hispanic students (Please give specific examples)
  - c. White students (Please give specific examples)
  - d. Other students (Please give specific examples)
4. In what ways, if any, does the leader involve parents/family in school matters?
  - a. Assisting student learning (Please give specific examples)
  - b. Selecting curriculum materials
  - c. Behavior monitoring (Please give specific examples)
  - d. Please name any other types of involvement
5. Describe how you as teachers demonstrate each of the following
  - a. Content integration
  - b. Celebrating multicultural events with students
  - c. Using teaching aids that try to reach all students
  - d. Using stories to model cultural responsiveness

- e. Embracing students cultures
- 6. Describe the leader's relationship with the community the school serves, including diverse cultural groups within the community. (Please give specific examples).
- 7. Describe how you respond to special needs of students from single-parent families in your teaching.
- 8. How does the leader address conflict that includes students from different racial, ethnic, or socio economic groups? (Please give specific examples)
- 9. Describe how the leader is helping to make the school more responsive to diverse cultural groups through
  - a. Professional development (Please give specific examples)
  - b. Curriculum changes (Please give specific examples)
  - c. Changes in how students are grouped
  - d. Changes in school instructional program (Please give specific examples)
  - e. School staffing (Please give specific examples)
  - f. Faculty and other meetings (Please give specific examples)
- 10. What else can we talk about that will help me understand your role as a leader within a school with so much diversity?

## Appendix R

### Third Interview Guide for the Primary Study: Teachers

#### Part I

#### Verification of common conclusions from first interview

#### Part II

1. Describe how the leader shows persistence and persuasiveness with
  - a. Teachers (give examples)
  - b. Students (give examples)

Why are both persistence and persuasiveness important for leadership in a culturally and linguistically diverse school?

2. How does she encourage content integration or cross-curricular teaching as a tool for cultural responsive teaching? Why is it important for you teachers to implement content integration?
3. Describe situations when the leader has demonstrated/modeled flexibility when dealing with you teachers and then with students. How do you as teachers demonstrate flexibility with your students?
4. Define empathy for me and describe how the leader models empathy with
  - a. Teachers
  - b. Students

How does empathy help this school to be culturally responsive?

7. I have observed that the leader is highly visible in the hallways, classrooms and other places in the building. How does high visibility help the school to be culturally responsive?
8. Describe some of the external staff development programs that the leader has helped you to attend. How did each program help you to be inclusive?
9. Describe other forms of support that you get from the leader and experts from universities
10. Say how the support helps the school to be culturally responsive?
11. **Language:** This school is linguistically and culturally diverse. We know that language is the main tool that people use to communicate. If students are not very proficient in English, such students will have problems in the classrooms. How do you teachers deal with the problem of language diversity in the classroom?
12. **Culture:** culture can be defined as those values or norms, and traditions that affect how individuals or groups perceive situations, interact, behave, think, and understand the world. How do you ensure that your own cultural ways of thinking and acting do not affect the cultural ways of others?



13. The administration would like this school to be recognized (School Improvement). How do some of the leadership qualities related to culturally responsiveness help you to make this goal a reality?

## Appendix S

### Consent Form for the Parents: Primary Study

Research Study: *Describing how a culturally responsive school leader performs his or her leadership duties*

I, (print name in full) \_\_\_\_\_, am a parent of a child at \_\_\_\_\_ School. In signing this consent form, I agree to volunteer in the study to provide information that will be used in a research project whose purpose is to describe how a school leader in a culturally diverse school performs his or her duties. The research project is being conducted by the researcher **Lewis Madhlangobe** from Texas State University. He can be contacted at 512-396-5101 (home) and 512-786-8237 (Cell). His e-mail address is [LM1276@txstate.edu](mailto:LM1276@txstate.edu) and [chimbga@gmail.com](mailto:chimbga@gmail.com).

I have been selected to participate because I have experience working with the leader to be studied. I understand that this research project is for writing a dissertation and it has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB approval reference # 2008T6279) at Texas State University-San Marcos. The researcher explained to me that the IRB is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of human research participants. The IRB reviews proposed research to ensure that the research project that will be carried out follows federal guidelines and accepted ethical principles to meet that goal. I understand that if I have questions about this study I may contact the IRB chairperson Dr. Jon Lasser on the phone at 512-245-3413 and on the e-mail [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu). The OSP administrator Becky Northcut can be contacted by e-mail at [ospirb@txstate.edu](mailto:ospirb@txstate.edu) and telephone 512-245-2314.

I understand that the research being conducted is to collect information that will be used to describe how *culturally responsive leadership* is performed in a culturally diverse school. The researcher has selected me to participate because I have experience working with the selected leader. I understand that I will participate in two group interviews with five other parents and that my comments will be recorded on audio tape by the researcher. It is estimated that each interview will take 1 hour to complete. All the questions that the researcher will ask us will be open-ended questions, and I am aware that I do not have to answer any questions that make me uncomfortable. Open-ended questions allow us as respondents to give our independent views about what we know about leadership in the school. If the researcher does not understand certain comments from the interview, he will contact me for further clarification. The researcher has also informed me that excerpts from written transcripts and my tape-recorded verbal communications with the researcher may be quoted in future papers and/or journal

articles that will be written by the researcher; however, I understand that information that I give him will be referenced anonymously in any written or verbal context. To do so the researcher will use pseudonyms to refer to the information that I will give. A pseudonym is a name that is not somebody's original name, especially one used by an author in publications. Students, teachers and education leaders may benefit from the results of this study. Educational policy making may also be informed by the results from this study. Upon completion of the study, a summary of the findings will be provided through the leader's office to all participants if requested.

Therefore, I grant authorization for the use of the above information with the full understanding that my confidentiality will be preserved at all times. I also understand that transcripts, both paper and electronic will be assigned pseudonyms and, will be kept secure in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office at Texas State University-San Marcos, and that any audio tapes of my conversations with I will continue to be kept secure and used anonymously in any future publications by the researcher. When the study has been completed the researcher will share a summary of his findings with the school, and then I may have access to the results of the study through the school. However, for the duration of the study, I understand that the researcher's project supervisor will also have access to the information.

I have received a copy of this consent form to keep for myself and have read and understand all of it. Anything that I did not understand was explained to me by the researcher. Therefore, I agree to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my permission to participate in this study at any point without prejudice to the university.

I have signed below to indicate my consent.

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Participant's Signature

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Date

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Researcher's Signature

---

Date

## Appendix T

### First Interview Guide for the Primary Study: Parents

1. Will each one of you tell me a little about yourselves and your families?
  - a. Your race and ethnicity
  - b. Your personal history
  - c. Your family
  - d. Your child/children who attend this school?
  - e. Your experiences with the leader who I am studying?
2. Describe the community this school serves.
3. Describe the students who go to this school.
4. Describe the teachers and staff at this school.
5. Describe your beliefs about education and your expectations for this school.
6. Describe the leader I am studying
7. In what ways, if any does the leader I am studying understand and respond to families and students from different cultures? (Please name specific examples.)
8. Describe the leader's relationship with your child or children who attend—or have attended—this school. (Please give specific examples).
9. Describe the relationship of the leader that I am studying with the community that the school serves. What are her connections to the community? (Please give specific examples)
10. Discuss the quality of education your child or children who attend this school receive. (Please give specific examples).
11. To what extent, if any, do the teachers and staff at this school understand and respond to the students from diverse cultures? (Please give specific examples)
12. In what ways, if any, does the leader I am studying help the teachers and staff members to understand and respond to students from diverse cultures? (Please give specific examples)
13. Are there any other questions you believe I should ask in order to describe the leader I am studying as a culturally responsive leader?

## Appendix U

### Second Interview Guide for the Primary Study: Parents

#### Part I

#### Verification of conclusions from first interview

#### Part II

#### New Questions

1. Discuss how the racial, ethnic and economic diversity in the school and community influences the leader's style (Give specific examples).
2. Describe how the leader promotes/models relationship building as a tool for cultural responsiveness
  - a. When dealing with students (Please give specific examples)
  - b. When dealing with parents (Please give specific examples)How does relationship building help to make this school responsive to the needs of your child?
3. Does the leader use different approaches when handling disciplinary problems related to different racial and ethnic groups? If so, how does her approach differ with:
  - a. African American students (Please give specific examples)
  - b. Hispanic students (Please give specific examples)
  - c. White students (Please give specific examples)
  - d. Other students (Please give specific examples)
4. In what ways, if any, does the leader involve parents/family in school matters?
  - a. Teaching (Please give specific examples)
  - b. Selecting curriculum materials
  - c. Behavior monitoring (Please give specific examples)
  - d. School leadership
  - e. Other types of involvement
5. Describe how teachers demonstrate each of the following in their classrooms (Please give specific examples for each)
  - a. Content integration
  - b. Celebrating multicultural events with students
  - c. Embracing students' cultures
6. Describe leader's relationship with the community the school serves, including diverse cultural groups within the community. (Please give specific examples).
7. Describe how students who come from single parent family influence the way the (a) leader performs her leadership roles (b) teachers perform their duties. (Use specific examples)
8. What else can we talk about that will help me understand your role as a leader within a school with so much diversity?

## Part II

1. Describe how the leader shows persistence and persuasiveness with
  - a. Teachers (give examples)
  - b. Students (give examples)

Why are both persistence and persuasiveness important for leadership in a culturally and linguistically diverse school?
2. Describe situations when the leader has demonstrated/modeled flexibility when dealing with you and then with your child. How do you as teachers demonstrate flexibility with your students?
3. Define empathy for me and describe how the leader models empathy with
  - a. parents
  - b. Students

How does empathy help this school to be culturally responsive?

4. I have observed that the leader is highly visible in the hallways, classrooms and other places in the building. How does high visibility help the school to be culturally responsive?
5. *Language:* This school is linguistically and culturally diverse. We know that language is the main tool that people use to communicate. If students are not very proficient in English, such students will have problems in the classrooms. How do you teachers deal with the problem of language diversity in the classroom?

*Culture:* culture can be defined as those values or norms, and traditions that affect how individuals or groups perceive situations, interact, behave, think, and understand the world. How do you ensure that your own cultural ways of thinking and acting do not affect the cultural ways of others?

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## VITA

**Lewis Madhlangobe (M.A)** is a Zimbabwean who came to the United States via Mexico to study for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education, majoring in School Improvement. In 1983, Lewis received a Certificate of Education from Mkoba Teachers College in Zimbabwe and a bachelor's degree in Educational Administration from the University of Zimbabwe (1997). After graduating from UZ he went to study for a Masters Degree in Educational Administration from Instituto Politecnico Nacional-Mexico (IPN, 2001-04). Lewis is fluent in English, Spanish, and Karanga.

Permanent Address: [chimbga@gmail.com](mailto:chimbga@gmail.com).

This dissertation was typed by Lewis Madhlangobe.

