Instructional Staff Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Leadership

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INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE

LEADERSHIP

by

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ABSTRACT

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The rise of accountability standards has resulted in an increase of attention regarding the
academic achievement of minority student populations. Instructional leadership styles that
operate within frameworks that specifically address race and ethnicity have been shown to be
positively correlated with academic outcomes of both majority and minority student populations.
Culturally responsive leadership is one of these frameworks. While the literature offers a robust
vision of the behaviors and subsequent results of culturally responsive leadership, we do not yet
know the perceptions held by instructional staff regarding the culturally responsive leadership of
their school leader. This lack of knowledge can not only hinder the ability of school leaders to
respond appropriately in various situations, but it can also pose a threat to the perceived
legitimacy of ones' leadership. The purpose of this study was to understand the range of
perceptions that instructional staff hold regarding the culturally responsive behaviors of their
school leader. I conducted a qualitative single site case study focusing on the instructional staff
of a school in the Midwest to learn what perceptions are held by instructional staff regarding the
culturally responsive behaviors of their school leader.

In this study, I found that the perceptions participants had regarding the culturally
responsive leadership of their school leader was not specific to the school leader (principal) but
instead reflective of interactions held with a variety of individuals (principal. assistant principal,
and instructional coach). I found that initial perceptions did change over time and could be
contextualized through a conceptual change framework. I also found that the notion of safety

played a part in determining if initial perceptions would change or not change. Though not in response to a specific research question, I did identify a repeated occurrence of goal displacement that was viewed across all three guiding research questions. This research provides a basis for exploring teacher perceptions of culturally responsive behaviors of their school principal and identified that there are still opportunities for further research within this topic.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Greg and Glennette Hendrix. I hope I've made both of you proud. It is also dedicated to all of those who came before me and made sacrifices for my benefit.

"If we stand tall, it is because we stand on the shoulders of many ancestors" – African Proverb

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Federal education reforms such as the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act, formally known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, have forced educators to increase attention on state standards, curriculum frameworks, and various assessment measures (Beachum, Dentith, Boyle, & McCray, 2008). This rise of accountability standards resulted in increased attention regarding the achievement of students; with this attention, the lack of achievement among certain student populations has been brought to light (Bainbridge & Lasley, 2002). This heightened awareness has shed light on a continued issue regarding the persistent academic achievement gap between majority and minority students. To address this, theorists have suggested methods of teaching that specifically address the cultural needs of minority students (Ladson Billings, 1995; Gay, 2010). In most school reform efforts, principals have the role of being the school's figurehead for school-wide priorities and vision (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). To be successful in these reforms, education leaders need to operate within leadership frameworks that specifically address issues related to race (Gooden & Dantley, 2012). Culturally responsive leadership is one such framework that equips school leaders to successfully lead reform efforts to address the educational needs of minority students.

Statement of the Problem

While the literature offers a robust vision of the behaviors of culturally responsive leaders, there is a gap in the literature regarding how those behaviors are perceived by others, particularly teachers. Literature exists detailing beliefs, practices, and subsequent impact of leaders who behave in culturally responsive ways. There is also literature that examines the origins of the beliefs held by these leaders as well as how these beliefs shape their interactions

and attitudes with other individuals. Little however has been researched regarding how teachers perceive the actions of culturally responsive leaders. This lack of awareness can not only hinder the ability of educational leaders to respond appropriately in various situations, but it can also pose a threat to the perceived legitimacy of ones' leadership.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions held by teachers regarding culturally responsive actions and behaviors of the school principal. The goal of this research was as follows: examine how instructional staff members perceived the culturally responsive behaviors of their school leader (principal), determine if those perceptions changed over time, and identify what conditions were at play if those initial perceptions changed. Interviews were conducted with the school principal and 11 instructional staff members to gain a rich description of instructional staff perceptions.

Central Research Question

The questions I addressed throughout my research are as follows: (1) What perceptions do instructional staff have regarding the culturally responsive leadership of their school leader?, (2) Over time, do the initial perceptions held by instructional staff change?, and (3) What conditions are at play when the initial perceptions held by instructional staff change or do not change?

Theoretical Framework

Conceptual change is a phenomenon that attempts to describe the process that individuals experience when changing their beliefs. There are multiple models of this framework that all have various shortcomings. Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Gertzog (1982) were one of the original research teams to propose a conceptual change model. Their overarching goal was to answer the question of how learners changed from believing one concept to instead believing a different

(contrasting) concept. Their model does not account for an instance in which teachers experience an event that then motivates them to change. Dual-process theories were then proposed as a way to address this limitation. Dual-process theories argue that there are two ways that information can be processed. Information can be processed centrally; meaning a deliberate and systematic review of the information was conducted. Or information can be processed peripherally; meaning that prior experiences were utilized to passively process the information (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). The heuristic-systematic model is one example of a dual-process theory (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). In this model, persuasion is accounted for in instances in which individuals are seeking to gain the truth; versus a situation in which an individual is trying to control the beliefs of another individual through the use of persuasion. The shortcoming of this model is that while it accounts for motivation, it does not specify under which condition motivation naturally occurs (Gregoire, 2003). Gregoire's frustration with this shortcoming led to her proposal of a Cognitive-Affective model.

The Cognitive-Affective Model of Conceptual Change (CAMCC) as described by Gregoire (2003) was utilized as the framework to guide this research. This framework was originally designed as a way to understand professional development as conceptual change within the context of mathematics (Eberts & Crippen, 2010). This framework differs from other conceptual change frameworks and dual-process models in that it seeks to include participant attitude and belief changes within the theory (Gregoire, 2003). Not only does this model account for attitudes but it also includes the beliefs and goals of an individual. For this reason, the CAMCC theory is uniquely suited to serve as the framework for this study as the primary research question is examining attitudes and subsequent reactions.

Significance of the Study

The study was designed to explore culturally responsive school leadership within the context of an urban charter school. The study adds to existing literature regarding culturally responsive leadership. While there is an abundance of literature regarding the behaviors and subsequent impact of culturally responsive behaviors, this research sought to examine the ways in which these behaviors are perceived. Exploring these perceptions can provide insight to leaders as to how their behaviors impact their staff and teachers thus creating a feedback loop.

Organization of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study including information on the rise of accountability and its subsequent impact on students of color. This chapter also provides the rationale for the study, statement of the problem, the central research question, and definitions of key terms. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of the literature. Chapter Three describes the study's research methods, forms of data collection, how data will be analyzed, study limitations, and the background of the researcher. Chapter Four presents findings and Chapter Five centers on the significance of the findings, implications, and overall conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The background literature surrounding culturally responsive leadership is explored in this chapter. The groundwork for this research is laid out by briefly recounting the history of students of color experiences in K-12 education since the enactment of No Child Left Behind (2002) to the present (2018). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) represented a significant shift within education as it was with the passing of this law that schools were not only held accountable for the academic achievement of all students but also specifically tasked with eliminating the achievement gap on standardized assessments (Noguera, 2008). I examine how the educational outcomes of students of color has continued to be lower than that of White students even with the passing of NCLB and subsequent acts (Logan, Minca, & Adar, 2012). I then propose that it was the increase of accountability and scrutiny that led to new pedagogies specifically created to increase the academic achievement of students of color. Culturally relevant pedagogy was one of these created pedagogies.

The origins of culturally relevant pedagogy, as described by Ladson-Billings, is summarized as one of the suggested methods for use in efforts to increase academic outcomes for students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1995). To date, research regarding culturally relevant pedagogy has been limited to classroom spaces as a pedagogy for teachers (Hyslop, 2009). These research efforts have suggested that there is a link between culturally relevant pedagogy and increased academic outcomes for students of color (Christiannakis, 2011; Ensign, 2003; Gutstein, 2003). Researching the impact of school leadership on school culture, school climate, teacher effectiveness, and student outcomes is not new. However, expanding this research to specifically focus on culturally responsive leadership has been limited. I briefly summarize the

ways in which culturally responsive leadership has been studied in the past and then highlight the scarcity of research surrounding teacher perceptions of culturally responsive leadership.

This research specifically seeks to aid school leaders who practice culturally responsive leadership. These leaders need a level of understanding regarding the reactions that they may experience among their instructional staff in response to their leadership style. Equipping school leaders with this knowledge enables them to plan and appropriately respond to potential reactions from their instructional staff. Having this knowledge will not only prepare and equip school leaders to effectively practice culturally responsive leadership but also may lead to decreases in the current academic achievement gap experienced by students of color.

School Accountability and the Academic Achievement Gap

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was reauthorized in 2001 by former President George W. Bush. This reauthorization was referred to as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) due to the emphasis on increased school accountability (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The intent of this reauthorization was "…to close the achievement gap between high-and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers" (2010). The legislation dramatically increased federal oversight and required yearly testing in core subjects to ensure that students were performing at a proficient level. Unlike standards from prior legislation, schools would now only be classified as successful if all of their students either reached proficiency or showed an increased in achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

NCLB included severe consequences of restructuring or closure if academic achievement scores did not reflect improvement. And while overall student achievement scores improved, the

continued focus and emphasis regarding the "achievement gap" between White students and students of color unintentionally led to schools adopting a deficit-thinking mindset (Zhao, 2016). Gorski (2010) explains that deficit thinking is "…a worldview that explains and justifies outcome inequalities, standardized test scores or levels of educational attainment for example- by pointing to supposed deficiencies within disenfranchised individuals and communities" (p.3). Sleeter (2004) further emphasizes the consequences of this mindset when he stated "…the long-standing deficit ideology still runs rampant in many schools…despite the abstraction that 'all children can learn" (p.133). What this means, is that educators can, at times, be guilty of attributing lack of achievement to be the cause of student or family issues without also considering "…the links between school practice and student outcomes." (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). To counteract the deficit mindset, educational leaders must operate within leadership frameworks that specifically address issues related to race (Gooden & Dantley, 2012). Cultural responsiveness is one such framework.

Origins of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Scholars such as Ladson-Billings (1995), Sleeter and Grant (2003), and Delpit (1998) first began to write about culturally relevant pedagogy in the early 1990s. During this time, a critique of K-12 curriculum was that it was largely Eurocentric and did not include the perspective of students of color (Gorski, 2009). The primary argument was that the lived experiences of students of color were not integrated within the classroom because of the prevailing cultural norms within classroom settings. Several pedagogies have been offered as a response to this critique. The pedagogies most central to my study consit of culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2009), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018), and culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016).

Culturally relevant pedagogy argues that the achievement gap that exists between students of color and white students is caused in part because of a disconnect between school and home (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Students are required to academically perform in an environment that has no reflection of their lived experience at home. Because of this, they academically underperform (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008). As a solution, Ladson-Billings (1995) suggested a culturally relevant pedagogy that includes three pillars consisting of academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. The first pillar of academic success reflects the need for students to develop their own academic skills; so, within the classrooms, teachers are tasked with expecting their students to be academically successful and alternating strategies to achieve this result. The second pillar of cultural competence reflects the practice of teachers using the culture of their students for learning so that the classroom environment becomes a safe and familiar place for students. The third and final pillar is critical consciousness. This pillar means that beyond being academically successful, students also need to be equipped on how to critically analyze society.

Geneva Gay (2000) further expands these concepts in her five characteristics of culturally responsive teaching. These characteristics consist of acknowledging the heritage and impact of various cultures, bridging the gap between students' home experiences and school experiences, acknowledging the many strategies that can be used in response to different learning styles, teaching students how to respect their culture and others, and integrating the culture of students in all offered subjects.

These two teaching styles, culturally relevant and culturally responsive, are both similar and unique. Fundamentally, they both reflect practices of teachers who have cultural competence (Commonwealth of Virginia, Board of Education, 2021). They are similar in that they ultimately

seek to improve the academic outcomes of minority students. Where they are unique in that their center of focus is different; Ladson-Billings' pillars are oriented towards students and Gay's characteristics are oriented towards teachers. Ultimately, their similarities and differences laid the groundwork for culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016) which is oriented towards leaders.

Culturally Responsive Leadership

Leaders who utilize their awareness and knowledge of the background, values, and cultures of their students' communities are defined as practicing culturally responsive leadership (Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2013; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). This literature highlights that the use of culturally responsive leadership counteracts deficit focused perceptions regarding minority student abilities (Klinger, Artilles, Kozleski, Harry, Zion, Tate, Duran, & Riley, 2005). These perceptions, whether they are held intentionally or unintentionally, have a direct threat on the academic achievement of these minority student populations (Warren, 2002). Because of this, implementing a culture where high expectations are the norm can directly impact the presence of deficit perceptions held by both instructional staff and students. It is important to note that culturally responsive leadership is more than just the espousal of high expectations and general knowledge of student's cultures. Rather, culturally responsive leaders are actively visible and engaged with their schools as they are aware of the difficulties they will face when attempting to make a lasting change in the culture and climate of their schools (Smith, 2005).

Khalifa, Gooden, and Temple (2016) conducted a thorough review of literature regarding the topic of culturally responsive leadership. Through this review, they were able to craft a culturally responsive leadership framework consisting of four domains. The first is *critical self-awareness*. This domain showcases how culturally responsive leaders are aware of the beliefs

that they bring to the table when interacting with children of color. The second is *culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparations.* This domain emphasizes that it is the responsibility of culturally responsive leaders to ensure that their instructional staff are and remain culturally responsive. The third is *culturally responsive and inclusive school environments*. This domain concerns the need for culturally responsive leaders to review school environment and climate to ensure that policies, procedures, and practice are culturally responsive. The fourth and final domain is *engaging students and parents in community context*. This domain highlights the need for culturally responsive leaders to interact with students and parents in a way that showcases their cultural responsiveness.

The table below shows how these four domains can be linked to culturally relevant teaching and culturally responsive teaching.

Table 1

Culturally Responsive and Relevant Framework Comparisons

Culturally Responsive Leadership (Khalifa et al, 2016)	Culturally Relevant Teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995)	Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2000)
Critical Self Awareness	Student Critical Consciousness	Critical Analysis of Society
Culturally Responsive Curriculum	Student Academic Success	Many Strategies to Use
	Student Cultural Competence	Acknowledge Heritage and Impact
Responsive School Environment	N/A	Teach Student to Respect Their and Other's Culture
Engagement of Family in Context	N/A	Bridge Gap Between Home and School

Critical Self-Awareness

This domain is that of the personal. Internal beliefs, values, mindsets, and assumptions all impact the perception towards cultures (Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011). The belief that all cultures have value and cannot be ranked higher or lower than any other culture leads towards

a positive perception of cultures (Vassallo, 2015). In contrast, the belief that cultures can be measured, thus suggesting that some are higher than others, leads towards a more negative perception of some cultures. This negative belief would be exemplified by a comment such as "We don't talk like 'them' in this classroom; we instead talk like we are intelligent" when referencing a group of people who may have a different speech pattern.

Beliefs not only need to be present within this component, but they also need to be recognized and reflected upon on a regular basis (Dantley, 2005). This awareness of beliefs reflects a sophistication regarding continuous personal interrogation of personal biases and assumptions (Vassallo, 2015). To use a continuum with this component, lacking awareness of one's own beliefs would be to the left of the continuum. Being aware of one's beliefs and only espousing them to be high would fall to the middle; and being aware of beliefs and consistently engaging in purposeful reflection would fall to the right of the continuum (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Personal Beliefs Continuum Figure
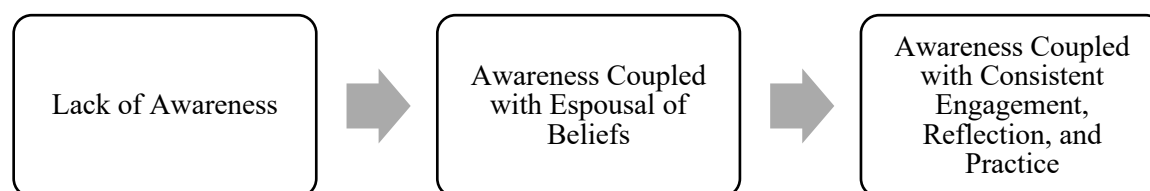
Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers

The second domain, relationships with faculty, centers on the notion of modeling appropriate attitudes and beliefs regarding students (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) to instructional staff. Beliefs held by the leader help dictates their behavior towards students. Instructional then witness this and replicate it within their classroom. Leaders can also model this practice by adopting high beliefs regarding faculty and acting in accordance with those

beliefs. Leaders who neglect to examine their beliefs regarding the cultural background of their faculty would fall to the left. Having high beliefs of faculty but lack of practice as evidence showcasing these beliefs would fall towards the middle; and having high beliefs as well as purposeful practice showcasing these beliefs would fall towards the right.

Promotes Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment

The third domain, promoting culturally responsive/inclusive school environments, highlights the importance of school leaders creating a school environment that is inclusive of all students. Though there are a variety of ways to exemplify this, the key factor lies in intentionality of the leader. One way to showcase this would be using resources to foster an inclusive school environment (Riehl, 2000). This domain is not limited to only actions of the leader; it can also be the leader drawing attention to the actions of others and highlighting changes that would need to occur. Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson (2002) showcased an example of this when a school leader reviewed suspension gaps and noticed a trend determined by race and ultimately had conversations with teachers about how this happened and what would need to change.

Engages Students, Parents, and Community Contexts

The fourth domain includes relationships with students. The very nature of high beliefs regarding students shifts the way students perceive the leader and allows for students to focus their attention on academics (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Because of these high beliefs, leaders are committed to creating an environment in which all students are supported in their learning. It is important to note that this component differs from the component of the professional. The professional component centers more on the field of educational leadership, in that realm, creating petitions regarding curriculum reform may be witnessed. In contrast, student

relationships are more centered on the specific beliefs and practices enacted within a specific school with a set student population.

This domain also includes relationships with the community. This extends the notion of beliefs from the realms of the personal or the realm of relationships with individuals inside of the school and expands it towards beliefs regarding the community associated with the school (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006). Beliefs that the community as a whole is an environment supportive of learning dictates the nature of how the community is included and respected from the perspective of the school. In practice, a leader who has high beliefs on the educational support of the community would likely involve community members with school activities and be active within the community. In contrast, a leader who has low beliefs of the educational support of the community may be more likely to minimize overall community involvement by saying statements along the lines of "Oh in this community they don't care about education, so it would be a waste of my time to try to involve them." Now that a framework for culturally responsive leadership has been laid out, research describing this leadership style can be analyzed.

Culturally Responsive Leadership Research

To date, the majority of research surrounding culturally responsive leadership has been descriptive in nature. Studies have focused on defining culturally responsive leadership. The central research questions for these studies have sought to answer the question of "What is culturally responsive leadership?" Case study has been the methodology heavily utilized with this research. Most studies have shadowed principals for extended periods of time in efforts to define what they were doing. For example, Theoharis and Haddix (2011) focused their research on seven principals to answer the question of how these principals included race within their leadership. They accomplished their research through interviews with the principals, site visits

of their schools, observations of the principals interacting with staff, and document review. Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) studied the practices of six principals. They interviewed the principals to learn how they were approaching leadership and then also interviewed administrators from the district-level to better understand the support that principals were receiving. Most similar to the intent of this current research was a 2012 study conducted by Madhlangobe and Gordon. In this study, the researchers shadowed an assistant principal at a diverse school in an attempt to observe how the assistant principal practiced culturally responsive leadership within her role. They accomplished this through observations of the assistant principal, interviews with family, and surveys distributed to teachers asking them to gauge the cultural responsiveness of the assistant principal. The results of this research suggested that teachers perceived the culturally responsive practices of the assistant principal to be helpful in regard to classroom management.

Existing research has accomplished the task of creating a very clear picture describing exactly what culturally responsive leadership is and is not. However, there has been limited research regarding the perceptions and subsequent reactions of culturally responsive leadership; specifically, in regard to teacher perceptions to the practice of culturally responsive leadership. Madhlangoe and Gordon's 2012 study asked the initial question of how teacher perceive this culturally responsive leadership. This study seeks to expand upon their research by not only determining teacher perceptions but also examining what next steps, if any, teachers took as a result of these perceptions. The underlying assumption of this study is that teacher beliefs may be challenged as a result of the culturally responsive practices of their school leader. The question then arises regarding how teachers perceive this challenge and what are their

subsequent reactions to the challenge. Inclusion of conceptional change theories is needed to fully answer these questions.

Conceptual Change Theories

Conceptual change is a phenomenon that attempts to describe the process that individuals experience when changing their beliefs. Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Gertzog (1982) were one of the original research teams to propose a conceptual change model. Their overarching goal was to answer the question of how learners changed from believing one concept to instead believing a different (contrasting) concept. To relate to this research, the conceptual change model can help explain how teachers can go from a deficit approach to instead a culturally responsive approach. Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Gertzog theorized that four criteria had to be met in order for learners to make this conceptual shift. These four criteria could be summarized as "(a) dissatisfaction with the current conception, (b) intelligibility of the new conception, (c), plausibility of the new conception, and (d) fruitfulness of the new conception" (Posner et al. 1982, p. 214). One of the limitations of this model is that because it has a cognitive approach, it does not take into consideration how motivational factors can also influence changes of beliefs (Patrick and Pintrich, 2001). Within the context of this research, the limitation of this model is that it would only account for teachers who are already dissatisfied with the notion of deficit mindset. This model does not account for an instance in which teachers experience an event that then motivates them to change.

Dual-process theories were then introduced as a way to address this limitation. Dual-process theories argue that there are two ways that information can be processed. Information can be processed centrally; meaning a deliberate and systematic review of the information was conducted. Or information can be processed peripherally; meaning that prior experiences were

utilized to passively process the information (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Within this research, a dual-process theory would argue that teachers can process the message of culturally responsive leadership through the deliberate review of information in the form of a research study or journal article (centrally) or they can process it peripherally. An example of peripherally processing might be a teacher who had a culturally responsive leader in the past and deduces "My prior principal exhibited these key behaviors so that is what culturally responsive leadership is.".

The heuristic-systematic model is one example of a dual-process theory (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). In this model, persuasion is accounted for in instances in which individuals are seeking to gain the truth; versus a situation in which an individual is trying to control the beliefs of another individual through the use of persuasion. Because processing the information (centrally) requires more effort than processing it passively (peripherally), individuals must be motivated to exert this additional effort. Therefore, individuals are more likely to exert this additional effort when they be motivated associated with the information. The shortcoming of this model is that while it accounts for motivation it does not specify which under which condition motivation naturally occurs (Gregoire, 2003). Gregoire's frustration with this shortcoming led to her proposal of a Cognitive-Affective model.

Theoretical Framework: Cognitive-Affective Model of Conceptual Change

The Cognitive-Affective Model of Conceptual Change (CAMCC) as described by Gregoire (2003) will be utilized as the framework to guide this research. This framework was originally designed as a way to understand professional development as conceptual change within the context of mathematics (Eberts & Crippen, 2010). This framework differs from other conceptual change frameworks and dual-process models in that it seeks to include participant attitude and belief changes within the theory (Gregoire, 2003). Not only does this model account

for attitudes but it also includes the beliefs and goals of an individual. For this reason, the

CAMCC theory is uniquely suited to serve as the framework for this study as the primary

research question is examining attitudes and subsequent reactions. Specifically, this research

seeks to utilize the CAMCC theory to understand teacher reactions towards culturally responsive

leadership.

The model first begins with the *presentation of reform message* to an individual. Within

the context of this research, it would be the principal presenting a reform message based in

culturally responsive leadership to a teacher. The model then shifts from presenter (principal) to

receiver (teacher). The receiver (teacher) must decide if they are implicated within the

message. Figure 2 showcases the beginning of this model.

Figure 2

Beginning Stages of the Cognitive-Affect Model
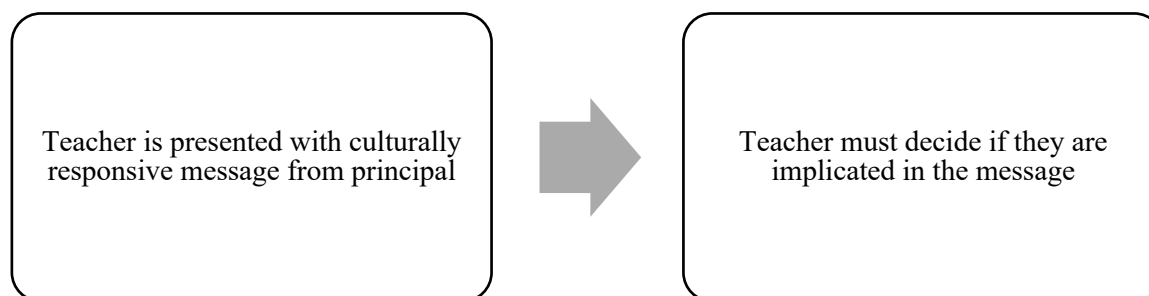
If they are not, the path is to *benign-positive appraisal*. Individuals on this path would think that

the message does not apply to them. In this model, Gregoire (2003) argues that these individuals

do not have the motivation that is necessary for them to systematically process the message, so

they instead reach *heuristic processing*. At this point, there are only two outcomes. The

receiver, after *yielding*, decides that *yes,* they agree with the message or decides that *no* they do

not agree with the message. A decision that they do agree results in *assimilation/superficial belief change* while a decision that they do not agree results in *no belief change*.

In contrast, should the receiver feel that they are implicated within the message then a different path appears. First, *stress appraisal* begins. After the stress of realizing that they are implicated in the reform message the process shifts to analysis of *motivation*. If the receiver has high motivation (in this example it could that the receiver has a strong appreciation for culturally responsive pedagogy) then they would move to the *ability* portion of the model. Their level of ability (time and access to resources needed to fully evaluate the message) dictates the next step within the model.

If their ability is *sufficient,* they move on to *challenge appraisal*. This is the stage in the model where the receiver recognizes that it will be a challenge to implement the action required due to receiving the reform message. The receiver then moves to *approach intention*; during this stage they develop a plan for how they will analyze the reform message. After this plan has been developed, they begin *systematic processing* in which they critically analyze the reform message. After systematic processing, receivers reach the *yielding* component of the model in which they decide either *yes* or *no* to belief change. A yes decision results in *accommodation/true conceptual change* while no results in *no belief change*. A full image showing this framework is displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3

The Cognitive-Affective Model of Conceptual Change
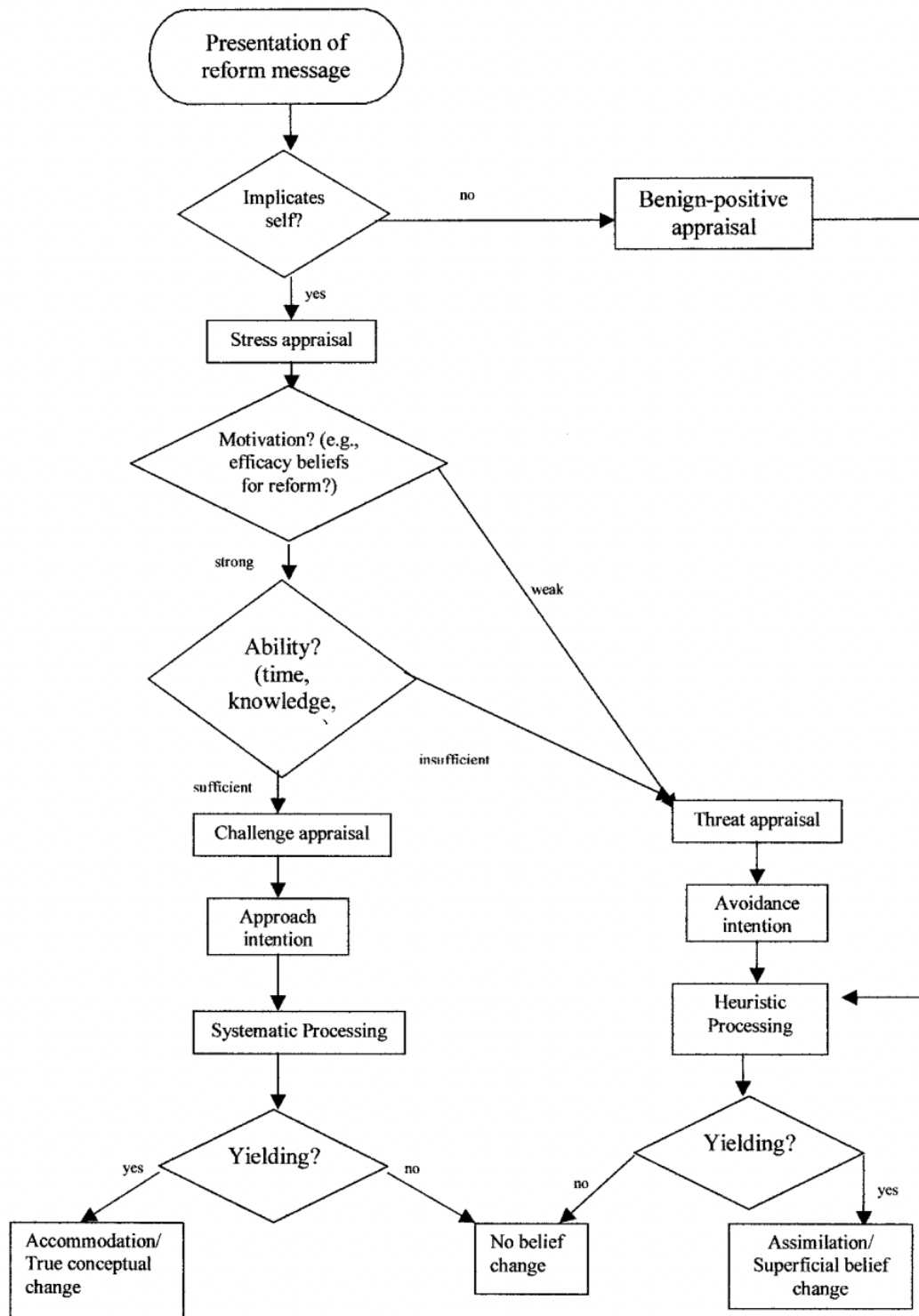
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Chapter One provided an overview on the background of the problem, the need for the current study, the problem statement, guiding research questions, and relevant definitions. Chapter Two provided a focused literature review regarding key aspects of the problem. Additionally, Chapter Two also provided a conceptual framework that could be utilized to both understand both the problem and the research approach. Chapter Three will describe the research design, the purpose of the study, reasoning for the case study approach, the role of the researcher in the study, participant selection, methods for data analysis, and strategies for trustworthiness.

Practicing culturally responsive leadership is one way in which school leaders can be intentional about meeting the academic needs for minority student groups. Current research has detailed the characteristics, behaviors, and associated outcomes associated with this leadership framework. To date, research has not focused on how instructional staff perceive the culturally responsive leadership behaviors of their school leader. This research sought to address this problem by exploring a phenomenon that is currently not well understood.

Qualitative research has been defined as "…research that focuses on qualities such as words or observations that are difficult to quantify and lend themselves to interpretation or deconstruction" (Glesne, 2011, p. 283). The intention behind qualitative research is to gain an understanding of the situation being studied from the participants' perspective versus that of the researchers' (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Patton, 2002). Gaining the understanding of instructional staffs' perceptions regarding the culturally responsive leadership of their school

principal was the focus of this research. For these reasons, qualitative research was well suited for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine how instructional staff perceive the culturally responsive leadership behaviors of their school principal. Specifically, I sought to understand what types of perceptions instructional staff initially had when presented with a new initiative or program from their school principal that is grounded in tenets from cultural responsiveness. I also wanted to discover if over time, these perceptions could change and if so, what led to their change. I also wanted to determine what conditions and factors were at play when the perceptions held by instructional staff did not change. In this study, I used a K-8 charter school in the Midwest as the case to explore teacher perceptions of culturally responsive behaviors of the school's principal. I utilized qualitative methods of both individual interviews and review of submitted journal entries. These methods allowed me to understand if and how perceptions held by instructional staff about the culturally responsive initiative changed over time.

Overview of Research Methods

Case study has been defined as an empirical inquiry that explores contemporary phenomena within a real-life context (Yin, 2013). Case studies are used to study processes, people, and other various phenomena. In my study, the phenomenon being researched was instructional staff's perceptions of culturally responsive leadership behaviors of their school principal. The context of this study was the selected school. I selected the case study approach because my goal is to improve understanding of a specific phenomenon (Stake, 1978). Case study was especially well-suited for this study as it allows for the concept of perception

development to be studied in context. Specifically, I examined the perceptions of instructional

staff members regarding the leadership behaviors of their school leader. Case study allowed for

me to examine these perceptions within the context of the school. Additionally, by interviewing

instructional staff over the course of three separate periods I was further be able to examine the

sequence of perception development. This followed the guidance from Stake (1995) when he

suggested "the qualitative researcher emphasizes the sequence of happenings in context" (p. xii).

Instrumental case study is used when a researcher wants to achieve more than

understanding a specific situation. This is exactly what I did in this study. Rather than just

focusing on one specific teacher's perceptions, I wanted to gain a broader understanding of the

phenomenon to help develop a theory. Instrumental case study is one such approach used when

developing a theory (Stake, 1995). Specific cases of teachers were not my primary focus, instead

the collective cases from a group of teachers assisted me in understanding a broader

phenomenon. By looking at each teacher case in depth, I was able to extrapolate details from

that case to explain the overarching themes. It was my intention to use the cases to explain the

larger overall theme of understanding the range of perceptions that may be held of instructional

staff regarding the culturally responsive leadership of their school principal.

I used case study design to understand how teachers perceive the culturally responsive

behaviors of their school principal (Creswell, 2014). The strategy of inquiry was a case study

that will contribute to understanding a small Midwestern charter school that was adapting to the

changes implemented by the school principal which consisted of offering two distinct learning

options as a response to COVID-19 during the first trimester of the 2020/2021 academic year. A

single case study is an appropriate strategy of inquiry because I am attempting to understand the

real-life experiences of teachers within a school where the school principal made adaptions to serve the needs of all students while in the midst of a pandemic (Yin, 2014).

Data gathering for case study research focuses on an individual's perceptions, in this case the teacher's perceptions of the behaviors of his or her school principal. This was done using interviews and reflective journal entries with both teachers and their school principal. Both teachers and the principal were provided opportunities to share their lived experiences and perceptions related to the experiences with the implementation of providing two learning options. The findings from this small group can be used to understand a representative case as "…the lessons learned from these cases are assumed to be informative about the experience of the average person or institution" (Yin, 2014, p. 47). The goal of this case study was to learn about the real-life experiences of teachers within the school's setting regarding their perceptions of the school principal's culturally responsive behaviors of implementing two learning options for students as a response to the pandemic.

Research questions such as "how" and "why" aid in defining boundaries for the study (Creswell, 2009). Having primary research questions aided me in utilizing the most appropriate case to study. In case study, qualitative questions have two forms, a central question and then sub questions. Creswell, 2009, explains that the central question should be broad and allow for exploration of the case's concept. The sub questions in contrast should focus the study but also remain open ended. In this research, my research question is broad so that the focus of the study can be broad. Using a case study approach allowed me to collect data and answer the following research questions:

1. What perceptions do instructional staff have regarding the culturally responsive leadership of their school leader?

2. Over time, do the initial perceptions held by instructional staff change?

3. What conditions are at play when the initial perceptions held by instructional staff change or do not change?

Research Design and Rationale

Creswell, 2009, defines research design as "…the plan or proposal to conduct research, involves the intersection of philosophy, strategies of inquiry, and specific methods." (p. 5). Merriam's research design (1998) lists the following steps: determine a theoretical framework, write the research problem, select the case, collect data, analyze data, and report data. Both Creswell (2009) and Merriam (1998) advised using the theoretical framework to determine if a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods study should be utilized. The rationale for this research was to seek reactions and perceptions held by instructional staff regarding the culturally responsive leadership of their school principal. I wanted to learn what initial reactions and perceptions instructional staff had when they are presented with an initiative or program that was based on cultural responsiveness.

Not only did I examine these reactions and perceptions over a period of time, but I also asked respondents to utilize a retrospective approach (Pratt, McGuigan, & Katzev, 2000) in the final interview. Gathering data over a period of time allowed me to learn if these initial reactions and perceptions changed over time and if so, what conditions were at play when these changes occurred. Framing questions with a retrospective approach in the final interview allowed participants time to reflect on what they shared at the initial interview and what they perceive (with final knowledge) about what they *thought* they perceived at the beginning of the study. Asking participants to reflect on prior perceptions at the conclusion of the research also minimized occurrences of response shift bias (Goedhart & Hoogstraten, 1992).

With this study, I am able to provide school leaders with knowledge on what reactions to anticipate when they present programs and initiatives to their instructional staff that are derived from culturally responsive practices. School leaders will be better prepared when implementing culturally responsive programs and initiatives because they will be able to anticipate reactions and respond in ways shown to be successful. It is my intention to provide tools to school leaders to aid them in successfully implementing culturally responsive programs at schools with the end goal of improving academic outcomes for students of color.

Data Sources

In the following section, details about the setting of the study, participant sampling, details of the initiative, and the participants are provided.

Context

The study occurred during fall 2020 which was during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, vaccines had not yet been approved so mitigation efforts consisted of sanitation and social distancing. This time period was also at the height of social justice unrest within the nation due to the storming of the nation's capital that occurred in January 2020 and the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in May 2020. Several protests occurred within the general vicinity of the school during the summer months prior to this study. In addition to these two factors, there was also internal organizational change as the principal, assistant principal, and instructional coach were all new hires to the school and had just recently joined the organization in May 2020.

Through my role at the school, I was able to participate in the hiring selection of the new principal. In interviews and presentations, I observed the principal share examples of their approach to work that fell within the four domains of culturally responsive leadership. When the principal began, I observed their behaviors aligning with the four domains through their

interactions with the leadership team, teachers, families, and students. These observations led me to identifying the principal to be culturally responsive.

Site Selection, and Initiative Description

The school chosen for the research is an urban (Jacob, 2012) K-8 charter school in the eastern region of Missouri in the United States. This charter school was situated within a city where 30% of all students were enrolled at a charter school. The uniqueness of charter schools is their ability to be innovative in their instructional and operational approach. The school served 457 students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade and has an ELL population of 14%. Within the student body, 55.7% were considered economically disadvantaged and were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. The ethnicities include African American 50%; Caucasian 18%; Hispanic 12.6%; Multi-Racial 12.2%; and Asian 0.8%. The administrative staff at this school during the time of the study included one superintendent, one principal, one assistant principal, and one instructional coach. During this time period, there was a total of 40 teachers. Of the teachers, 65% were female and 35% were male. Teacher ethnicities included Asian 20%; African American 7.5%; Hispanic 22.5%; Middle Eastern 2.5%; and White 47.5%.

As discussed in the literature review, culturally responsive leadership has four primary domains consisting of critical self-awareness, culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation, an inclusive school environment, and engagement of students and parents in community context. As a consequence of COVID-19, many schools were only offering remote learning to ensure social distancing. The superintendent and school principal engaged in critical self-awareness during summer 2020 in a series of planning sessions in preparation for fall 2020. They reviewed student achievement data which highlighted that students of color had not

received the consistent daily instruction during spring 2020 (when COVID-19 had begun) as did White students. Because of this, they knew that changes would need to be made for fall 2020.

The principal then engaged with parents in a series of conversations (engagement of parents in community context) to learn what they wanted. Parents consistently emphasized that they wanted to have a choice regarding learning options for their children during fall 2020. With this information, the principal then began creating training opportunities for instructional staff on how to effectively create culturally responsive environments for students who would eventually come on site and students who would remain in virtual instruction. Throughout the semester, the principal and administrative staff engaged with students who were on site and virtual to create an inclusive school environment. This initiative was well suited for this study because the focus fell within the domains of culturally responsive leadership.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to obtain a school to take part in this research study. This form of sampling was used based on location, access, and availability of potential participants to be contacted in light of social distancing guidelines that were enacted within the city at the time. After gaining permission from the superintendent and principal, I sent an email to all instructional teachers inviting them to participate in the study. I accepted all 11 teachers who expressed interest. This reflected a 27.5% participation rate.

There were three rounds to data collection. The first consisted of 12 interviews, 11 with instructional staff and one with the school principal. The second round of data was reflective journal entries that were completed by nine instructional staff members and the school principal. The final round of data collection was 11 final interviews with instructional staff and one with the school principal.

The participant sample included a total of 11 instructional staff participants and one school principal. With instructional staff, two taught in the school's Middle School, two were specialists, one was a Special Education teacher, and the remaining six taught in lower grades.

Table 2

Participant Information

Pseudonym	Position	Years in Education
Ted	Middle School Science Teacher	35
Marquita	Principal	16
Molly	Middle School ELA Teacher	11
Peter	3rd Grade Teacher	4
Laura	1st Grade Teacher	10
Tonya	Special Education Teacher	1
Grace	4th Grade Teacher	6
Katherine	PE Teacher	7
Brittney	5th/6th Grade Teacher	7
Alice	ELL Teacher	25
Samantha	Art Teacher	8
Jennifer	1st Grade Teacher	23

Data Collection

Interviewing is a common way of collecting qualitative data. Roulston, 2010, states that interviews can be structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. A strength of interviewing is that it allows the researcher "…the opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanation of what you see." (Glesne, 2011, p. 104). Experiences from participants were collected through semi-structured interviews. The first interview for instructional staff consisted of five open-ended questions concerning the participant's educational background,

personal description of the community and students served by the school, their definitional of culturally responsive practices, and then their reaction to the new initiative in combination with their perception of the school's principal. The first interview with the principal consisted of similar questions regarding their background, description of the community and students served by the school, their definition of culturally responsive practices, and then their experience leading the new initiative in combination with their perceptions of instructional staff reactions.

After gaining permission from each participant, interviews were recorded for later review. Additionally, following this first interview- I wrote brief memos of broad themes from the interview, where I thought the individual was in the conceptual change framework, and why.

One month after the initial interview, all participants were asked to respond to journal prompts via an online document that was created and shared via Google Docs. In a staff training that had occurred one week prior, a guest speaker (Baruti K. Kafele) had spoken to staff regarding the importance of having a culturally responsive classroom. The journal prompts asked participants about their reactions to the presentation, their reaction to the implementation of the initiative, if they had any questions regarding the initiative, and if so, had they posed those questions to administration. Finally, participants were asked to share their experience if they had posed any initiative questions to administration. The school principal was provided with similar journal prompts.

One month after the journal entries, a final interview was conducted asking instructional staff two open-ended questions to determine how participants remembered their initial reaction to hearing about the new initiative and to determine their current reaction to the initiative and the school principal. Similar questions were also asked of the principal to compare how they

remembered the experience and subsequent instructional staff reactions to the presenting of the initiative to current experiences and instructional staff reactions to the initiative.

Similar to the first round of interviews, I requested permission from each participant to record the interviews. Again, after each interview I wrote brief memos of broad themes from the interview, where I thought the individual was in the conceptual change framework, and why I thought they may be where they were in that framework.

Data Analysis

I utilized three strategies of analysis which consisted of memoing, thematic analysis, and narrative analysis when I analyzed the qualitative data (Maxwell, 2013) in this study. Analyzing qualitative data requires gathering of data, organizing the data, and then reducing the data through memoing, coding, and narrative analysis. By doing this, a descriptive analysis is able to serve as the response to research questions (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). I utilized these strategies in the data analysis of my conducted interviews and in the collection of journal responses.

The initial and final interviews were recorded and then transcribed using an online website resource (Otter.ai). I reviewed all transcripts for errors by listening to the audio recording while reviewing the transcript. Doing this allowed me to familiarize myself with the participants' answers during the interview and gave me the opportunity to understand the entirety of the conversation prior to dissecting it into parts (Creswell, 2013). Once I cleaned the transcript, I then sent it to the interviewee with the request that they review it for accuracy and to verify that what they said in the interview accurately captured their sentiments. Once the interviewee confirmed the transcript was accurate in both content and in their intent, I then sorted the transcripts into three separate documents. One document contained all transcripts from the

first round of interviews. The second document contained all entries from the journal entries.

The third document contained all transcripts from the final round of interviews.

I then grouped data by data collection method in preparation for open coding. I reviewed

all transcripts from the first round of interviews. Open coding consisted of reviewing the

transcripts and journal entries and highlighting or underlining words or phrases that I believed

highlighted key themes of the participant's response. I then repeated this process with the

journal entries and with the final round of interviews. Open coding transcripts in this way

allowed for me to identify major emerging themes that were then used for axial coding

(Creswell, 2013).

To prepare for axial coding, I aggregated the codes that I had identified in open coding

into overall categories related to perceptions and reactions towards the culturally responsive

behaviors of the school leader. I then revised each set of data (again, by data collection method)

to notate responses by individual. Finally, I aggregated the data so that I could review all

responses to each question. Taking my list of codes, I went through all collected data and

identified narrative passage sthat supported the identified codes. I then utilized the frequency of

codes supported by narrative passages to create themes to answer the research questions.

Role of Researcher

The role of the researcher is based on the context of the study and the researcher's

personal values. The purpose of this case study was to paint a rich description of the realities

and perceptions of the study participants. To do this, I had to not only be aware of my own

identified personal biases and assumptions but also recognize the un-identified biases and

assumptions that I also possess and how all of this can influence the research process (Hays &

Singh, 2012). Additionally, I also acknowledge how the presence impacts how others see me,

and thus how they respond to me, and how I then interpret what I see and experience. The purpose of sharing this is not to imply that it is futile to account for biases and assumptions within research and therefore I should not try. Instead, my intent with sharing this is to make it transparent and explore the ways that it interacts with the research (Hammersley, 2000).

For example, my personal experiences working within education as a Black woman shapes my view of the research. My positive and negative experiences of being a student within educational institutions and then working in the field has exposed me to situations that have heightened my awareness and sensitivity of issues regarding race and culture. Working within education and participating as a student has heightened my awareness regarding issues of culture and diversity. My career began in higher education, student affairs and shifted to K-12 education urban areas. For the past five years I have worked in operational leadership roles, and doing so has given me a unique vantage point on the impact of leadership within a school. These experiences and observations are what led to my decision to pursue these research questions. Throughout the research, I had to consistently remind myself to observe the research in its entirety versus intentionally seeking the examples that affirmed my prior experiences.

Another example is that during the time of this study I was not only employed by the school in this case study, but also held a leadership role. To provide additional context, I was the third most senior person in a leadership role the year that this research took place as the principal, assistant principal, and instructional coach were all hired during the summer of my second year. Because of the nature of my position, I had first-hand knowledge of the stated intent of the initiative. While gathering data for this research I continuously had to focus on the narrative being shared by teachers and limit my position-specific knowledge to refrain from allowing my thoughts of "Oh but that is not why this decision was made/task assigned" impact

how I interpreted the provided narrative. To a degree, memoing throughout data collection and analysis assisted with minimizing this potential bias as it allowed me the space to reflect and recognize the disconnect and then intentionally conduct the analysis for what was there versus explaining why the respondents were "wrong" in their experience of the initiative.

Though my leadership position gave me context to the initiative it also proved at times to be a barrier as individuals questioned how confidential their responses could be since I was still in a leadership role. I reassured these participants on how I was storing the data in an account separate from our employer provided accounts and that I would honor my commitment to their privacy and I also recognize that this may not have been enough for some staff and could have hindered what they shared with me.

Strategies for Trustworthiness

I utilized a variety of approaches within my study to address four areas of research trustworthiness. For credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I sent the transcribed interviews to each interview participant so that they could review the document and authenticate that I had not only captured what they had said but also provide clarification for anything that they believed was not thoroughly captured in their responses to my posed questions. In the next chapter, I have consistently utilized direct quotes from participants to support the identification of themes within the data. Additionally, I gathered data in three waves over a period of time so that I could use them (first interview, reflective journal, and final interview) in conjunction with my memos to triangulate the data, thus allowing for there to be transferability of the findings (Marshal & Rossman, 1995). These approaches, triangulation and use of memoing, also strengthen the dependability of the research as future researchers could use my memos to guide their own research (Patton, 2002). Confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of my research was further

strengthened through my acknowledgement of my known biases and recognition of my unknown

biases; this was another area that was also strengthened by the incorporation of direct quotes

from participants within the analysis.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions held by teachers regarding the culturally responsive actions and behaviors of the school principal. The research questions were: (1) What perceptions do instructional staff (teachers) have regarding the culturally responsive leadership of their school leader (principal), (2) Over time, do the initial perceptions held by teachers change, and (3) What conditions are at play when initial perceptions held by teachers change or do not change. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with teachers and the school principal to address all posed research questions.

Analyzed data ultimately answered the posed research questions. For the first research question, it was found that the teacher's perceptions of the culturally responsive leadership behaviors of their principal were not limited to, nor consistently attributed to solely that of the principal. Instead, these perceptions were distributed to members of the leadership team (principal, assistant principal, and instructional coach) based on agency exercised by the teacher to gain answers to questions they had after learning about the culturally responsive initiative (the hybrid learning plan). For the second research question, it was found that these perceptions could change over time. And for the third research question, conditions specific to teacher's individual journey through the Cognitive-Affective Model of Conceptual Change (CAMCC) framework (Gregoire, 2003) combined with their notion of safety were at play when their initial perceptions that they held changed or did not change.

Across all three research questions, tension was observed between the intent of the initiative (culturally responsive tenets) and implementation of the initiative (logistics). For many

of the teachers who were a part of this research, this tension led to goal displacement as the conversation regarding the initiative shifted to be only that of implementation questions and critiques and no longer was centered on cultural responsiveness. This tension is explored in the discussion of findings for each research question.

Discussion of Findings

Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Leadership

My first research question was to determine how teachers perceived the culturally responsive leadership of the school's principal. What I learned is that teachers did not attribute these perceptions to only that of the principal. Instead, the data revealed that teachers perceived the culturally responsive leadership of the principal through their subsequent interactions and conversations with members of the leadership team (principal, assistant principal, and instructional coach) regarding the culturally responsive initiative. This approach towards understanding teacher's perceptions reflected a flipped model of distributed leadership.

Flipped Model of Distributed Leadership

Hallinger and Heck (2009) explain that distributed leadership is a term used when leadership is being exercised by the school principal and assigned (by leadership) to other select members of school staff. This traditional definition of distributed leadership, though similar, does not fully capture what was observed in the data. Instead, instructional staff members flipping this traditional model by deciding that they needed additional information, exercising their own agency in seeking answers, and attributing leadership to members of the leadership team. At times instructional staff went directly to the school principal but it was often the case that they went to a different member of the leadership team. In all cases, whether the

instructional staff members went to the principal or another member of the leadership team, this pro-active act of seeking information revealed teacher agency.

Overview

In each round of data collection, participants were provided with the opportunity to broadly describe their experiences with the school principal. I was intentional in not specifying which experiences I wanted participants to speak to in efforts to determine the overall perceptions that they had. It became clear in all three rounds of data collection that the participants did not separate their perceptions among the three primary school administrators (principal, assistant principal, and instructional coach). In the first interview, participants were first asked to speak of their background, experience as a teacher, and then asked, "What has been your experience with Principal Marquita?" Several participants provided stories of brief and limited interactions with the principal. Later in the interview when asked specifically about the initiative, it was revealed that they had often gone to other members of the leadership team to gain answers to their questions.

An additional observation from the data showcased that the questions participants had for the administrators and discussion regarding the initiative were often solely focused on the logistics surrounding implementation. In this way, while the intent and development of the plan demonstrated cultural responsiveness of school leadership the question posed by study participants revealed a singular focus on logistics associated with implementing the initiative.

First Interview

In the first interview, participants were asked to share their backgrounds, describe the students who attended the school and the community that the school served, share their personal definition of culturally responsive practices, explain what culturally responsive practices looked

like at the leadership level, and then discuss if they agreed or disagreed with the claim that the school's initiative was a culturally responsive practice. All participants were able to speak to their personal definition of culturally responsive practices and many believed that their definitions of culturally responsive practices could apply to the leadership level as well. For example, one participant – Tonya – when asked to share her definition of culturally responsive practices, shared "I guess that involves teaching to different cultures and about different cultures. So, making sure students are aware and celebrating cultures other than their own, and also learning about their own." When asked what that meant for leadership, she stated "I guess, kind of enforcing that for teachers making sure that they are ensuring that all the students can access education and have an equitable education and experience at the school." Tonya went on to agree that the initiative of the school was culturally responsive when she shared "I guess its culturally responsive in that we're doing what's best for each family because each family has different job situations and things like that. And different traditions, different believes, and preferences as far as like keeping our children safe; keeping them healthy."

However, when Tonya was asked to describe her specific experience implementing the initiative, and specifically what her experience had been gaining guidance from the principal, the tension between intent and implementation was observed as Tonya's responses were centered on procedures and logistics versus the intent of the initiative. This was observed when she shared

> I definitely had questions, like I said about my caseload, what grade levels I'd be working
>
> with and how I would be teaching online and in person…I had a lot of help from Liz and
>
> Kate (special education staff) as far as my caseload goes and then as far as making sure
>
> that coming to the building was safe, making sure that I knew exactly what I needed to be
>
> doing, Mr. Wheeler and Ms. Marquita just reassured me and I guess Dr. Hill as well; kind

of just reassuring me and making sure everything was safe and that we had everything we

needed to get started.

We observe a few things with this participant. First, we see that while they had

knowledge on what culturally responsive practices were and could use that knowledge to explain

what it would look like at the leadership level when asked to contextualize their knowledge

within the context of the initiative, the participant focused on the procedural logistics (i.e.,

caseload) versus their own prior definition regarding students having an equitable experience.

Second, when contextualizing this response through the CAMCC framework (Gregoire, 2003)

we can see that this teacher recognized that they were implicated by the message (initiative)

which led to stress appraisal (the questions that they had) but because they had strong motivation

they showcased their motivation by seeking answers to their question.

Additional Observations

This pattern of the flipped distributed leadership model, combined with tension between

intent and implementation was also observed among other participants. For example, when asked

to share his definition of culturally responsive practices Peter stated, "So with a culturally

responsive teacher, they are supposed to proactively understand each student's background, their

lives, families, socio-economic status…this will help the teacher to foster a sense of belonging

and ensure that all students feel respected." He went on to share that the same definition applied

at the leadership level. He stated, "And as for culturally responsive leadership, I think they

should proactively understand each teacher's strengths, weaknesses, and what their teaching

style and personalities are like." Though Peter did have questions, he ultimately decided to not

ask them. Contextualizing this through the CAMCC framework (Gregoire, 2003) would indicate

that this teacher was likely implicated in the presentation of the message and experienced stress

appraisal. Their responses towards the definition of cultural responsiveness indicates that their motivation was strong (in that they had general beliefs surrounding the message) but their ability (time and access to resources) was insufficient as they ultimately avoided asking the questions that they had. When asked to predict what experience he would have had if he would have asked his questions Peter shared "I have had meetings with the principals and [Instructional Coach]. Usually they give me the answers but sometimes…. [they] tell me to hold the question and wait until they get a better solution." With Peter's usage of the word "they" the theme of the flipped distributed leadership continues to be observed within the data.

Another teacher, Molly gave this definition of culturally responsive practices: "I think it goes back to really being able to understand first where somebody's coming from…"; when asked what this would look like at the leadership level she shared "And I think that's the same way at the leadership level, it's just being able to be open to different cultures." When asked to share her experiences implementing the initiative with specific focus on her interaction with school leadership- this teacher shared how learning about the initiative gave her anxiety, in part because she taught older students. She went on to share "I emailed [Principal] but then it was funny because [Assistant Principal] just ended up in our classroom three minutes later. And I was like, Okay- I guess I'll ask him. And so, I asked him, and he was telling us about how anybody that stays home basically has a reason." This is another example of not only how teachers self-attributed leadership to members of the leadership team but also experienced the tension of intent and implementation.

Journal Entries and Final Interview

Because of this observation of the flipped model of distributive leadership, I adapted the questions in the reflective journal entry and final interview to ask about instructional leadership

as a whole (principal, assistant principal, and instructional coach) versus specifically the leadership of the principal. Responses provided to these questions highlighted again how instructional staff have adopted a distributed view of leadership. Similar to the first interview, there were consistent mentions of staff gaining clarity, having discussions, and receiving explanations from members of instructional administration – and beyond just the principal- regarding the culturally responsive initiative.

The reflective journal entry prompts were sent to staff a few weeks after they had completed the first interview. One of the prompts asked them if they had questions about the initiatives and if so, had they shared the questions with a member of the instructional leadership team. Analysis of responses showcased that participants did have questions and gain responses from a variety of individuals and in different modes. Specifically, staff shared that they gain responses from either a member of the leadership team or through provided professional development/staff meetings.

For example, Katherine shared "Fortunately, all the questions above have been answered during our previous PD meeting and left me again feeling reassured and confident that our leadership team not only plans accordingly but is also there to support us." This response shows that this instructional staff member did have questions and gained answers through a PD session. Another teacher, Ted, shared "[Assistant Principal] has consistently and constantly updated us with projections of numbers…"; in this response it is seen that the assistant principal was identified as the source for consistent updates regarding the initiative. One teacher, Tonya, shared "The only question or concern that I had about the hybrid learning plan [initiative] was in regard to Trimester 2 and I did speak with both [Assistant Principal] and Principal Marquita about it." In this response it is clear that this staff member gained a response to their questions

from both the principal and the assistant principal and also clear that the focus was on procedure versus the overall cultural responsiveness intent of the initiative.

In the final interview, the analysis of responses showed that teachers had shifted from receiving answers from the instructional team overall to instead sharing that they did not need as much support nor have as many questions that they had earlier in the study. For example, when asked what support, if any, she had received from the instructional team, Katherine shared "I'm not very dependent on them." Another teacher, Laura, when asked the same question responded, "I'm just really figuring things out myself, like how to navigate everything".

In summary, the answer to the question of "How do instructional staff perceive the culturally responsive behaviors of their school instructional leader?" is that they do not view the behaviors as solely being attributed to that of the principal. Instead, teachers in this study exercised agency by seeking their own answers form members of the leadership team to whom the teachers had self-attributed leadership. Because of this flipped distributive view, perceptions of these behaviors become contextual due to the specific interactions that participants have with members of the leadership team. Just as importantly, interwoven within the data was the tendency for goal displacement in that participants were more focused on how to implement the initiative versus focusing their implementation to be in alignment with practicing cultural responsiveness. The intent and basis of the initiative was to provide a learning environment that was not only reflective of the students within the classroom but that also acknowledged and built upon the cultures of the students. Due to goal displacement, participants of this study frequently centered their questions on the logistics of the plan (examples included ensuring that there were enough masks for students and seating charts to be in adherence with pandemic response requirements) versus the plan's "why".

Perceptions Over Time

My second research question was to determine if the initial perceptions held by teachers changed over time. All participants were initially concerned about the implementation of the plan. The findings in this study indicate that over time, one of two (2) things occurred. For some participants, their initial concerns that were shared in the first interview, continued to be observed within the journal prompts, and grew to such an extent that they were actively against the implementation of the plan by the final interview. Through the CAMCC framework, these participants would be classified as not having a belief change. In other instances, participants shared in the first interview that while they had been concerned about the implementation of the plan originally- over time (and by the first interview) they had grown more comfortable with the plan. For these participants, in the journal entry and in the final interview they continued to express support of the plan. Through the CAMCC framework, these participants would be classified as experiencing true conceptual change. It should be noted that both groups continued to espouse belief in the cultural responsiveness throughout the course of the research but that it was also observed that both groups contextualized their approach (support or objection) to be centered on the logistics of implementing the plan versus the intent of the initiative; thus, again revealing tension between intent and implementation. This is explored within the sub-themes of "continued support" and "reluctant acquiescence".

Continued Support

All participants shared during the first interview that they had been concerned about the plan and the requirement for many of them to be in the building to provide instruction to students. However, some of the participants were able to say that while they had initial concerns, with time and experience they had grown comfortable with participating in the hybrid learning

plan. For example, one participant shared that she had been surprised about the plan and wasn't in agreement but that over time- she grew to trust and support the plan. She shared "So to be honest, when I heard about it, I was like nope- that can't happen...I was like we need to stay home. You know I don't have any type of conditions [that would have exempted her from the on-site requirement], but I know that I'm very sensitive to anything that is a virus...so I was very nervous…" Due to circumstances, this teacher was not eligible to enter the building until the third week of the school year. During this time when she wasn't in the building, she still spoke to teachers who were in the building to learn about what was happening. She summarized her overall experience when she shared "So when I first heard about it, I was like no- this is not something that will work. But then when I started to see the plans, I started to calm down and thought maybe I could give it a try." This teacher shared that she had questions about the plan and had received answers to her questions but was still nervous and reached back out to teachers who were in the building to learn about their observations and experiences specific to adherence to health department guidance. She explained "The other question that I asked [teacher] was if the kids were wearing masks and if staff were social distancing; I was really nervous...and [teacher] was like "Yeah, you'll be fine. Come in." and so I came in and it was quiet and calm, and I thought 'Oh I like this.' So, yeah."

A few things are observed with the responses from this teacher. First, while this teacher ultimately supported the initiative, her comments displayed that her primary concerns were with the implementation of the plan versus focused on how to implement the intent (cultural responsiveness) of the plan thus exemplifying the continuously observed theme of tension between intent and implementation. Second, if this teacher's experience is viewed through the

CAMCC framework it can clearly be seen how they progress through the process before ultimately yielding and appearing to experience true conceptual change.

The sentiments held by the above-mentioned teacher were shared by others. Another teacher shared "I really thought we would not actually open...and here we are in week six. I was taking a wait and see approach and knew I had to be flexible and ready for either, you know-virtually or in person. It was stressful though because I was thinking 'Oh, how am I going to do this?'...but I think it worked out fine." When asked if she had any questions and what those questions had been this teacher shared "My one level of concern is the playground and how we distance." again showing attention to logistics of implementation of the initiative.

Another teacher, Brittney, summarized her initial thoughts regarding the plan. When she was asked, "What was your initial reaction when you heard about the initiative?" she also shared having initial concerns and questions specific to implementation. She stated:

> Well, first off, I was super happy to be back at work. But when school was about to start, I mean it is one thing to see a plan on paper but something else to live it. And I had questions about what is it going to look like, are we going to have enough teachers, are all of my students going to be from the same (language) program?...There was a big part of me that felt 'well, we are only going to be in school for two weeks. There's no way we are going to make it out for more than a month.' I went through stages. And I think one of my stages was that I'd do whatever I was asked to do and so at this point, I've stuck with that idea, I'll do what I'm asked to do.

Over time, Brittney's initial hesitation towards the initiative changed. She later went on to share "But I had stages, I don't know, I was excited about going back to work. I was a little bit nervous

because of COVID, I really thought I'd have more kids and I ended up with 10; so, it was perfect. I'm happy with the first trimester right now."

Tonya had a similar experience. She explained "I guess I was overwhelmed to start with. I had a lot of questions of course, mainly just like- how is this going to work, what am I going to be doing. It was obviously stressful; and for a long time, I didn't know what I was going to be doing, whether I was going to be at home or at school; meeting online only or teaching in person; what my groups would like or even what grade levels I would be working with." Like other instructional staff, over time Tonya grew more familiar and comfortable with the logistics regarding the initiative. She emphasized this when she later shared "So it was overwhelming. But at the same time, I knew that they (instructional leadership) were working on a plan and that they had something in the works, and I was confident that they would take care of us and I was open to the change."

Reluctant Acquiescence

For other instructional staff, they too verbalized feelings of uncertainty and questioned the overall initiative. However, unlike other staff, their feelings of apprehension grew stronger over time. For example, Ted shared in the initial interview "I was very torn about it because of my age and health concerns. And I also have a concern that all of our families that we serve may not be educated or have the same concerns that I have had since January about this whole virus thing. It is possible that our kids may have had more exposure (to COVID-19) than I would have wanted...Now I'll talk out both sides of my mouth because I know, and I see every day that some of our kids are hungry when they get here at 8:15am. I'm very saddened that the schools have become the social entity or program that is best suited to provide these kids with what they need." Throughout the course of the initial interview Ted was specifically asked about the hybrid

learning model and what his initial reaction had been. He responded "Well, let me tell you, it wasn't like it was a life changing event like 9-11. I don't remember exactly where I was or what I was doing. I had been seeing what other districts were doing (for the upcoming school year) and I felt up for the challenge because just like snow days, we usually follow what other districts do...And so I was really surprised to learn that even going back was an option and wasn't shut down (by local city leadership) to begin with." When asked if he had questions about the plan, and if so- if he had asked those questions he shared "I did consider approaching a medical waiver and whatever, but I didn't think it would be fair to the team. They (the MS team) had to go in so I figured I would go in. And they kept asking 'Did you talk to Linda (HR Director) about this?' but I didn't even broach it with Linda. I just went in and accepted it." In the journal prompt, Ted's response indicated that he was receiving support from leadership and gaining answers to his questions. He wrote in the reflective journal entry "The questions that we the MS team has had and voiced in our team meetings have been addressed."

However, by the final interview Ted's responses indicated his decreased support of the plan due to the logistics required for its successful implementation. In the final interview he was asked to share his thoughts on the initiative had changed over time. He shared, "I try to choose my battles. I mean, I understand what the principal is doing and I understand what the assistant principal is doing and what the instructional coach is doing…I understand when you come into a new position, I get that whole mindset that you want to change things and you want to make your mark...But my argument is, now is not the time to make all those changes." Viewing this teacher's experiences through the CAMCC framework indicates that they went through the process but due to insufficient ability ultimately ended in superficial belief change in that they

continued to show up to work and adhere to guidelines but no longer had true support for the initiative.

A similar reaction was observed with Molly. When asked for her initial reaction to the hybrid learning plan she stated "I was scared half to death. I was like 'Okay, I think this is going to change.' Like I was pretty much banking on it changing. I felt it was unsafe, like to go back because even though the kids aren't carriers- the kids I teach are because they are over 10 years old and those are the ones I'm primarily exposed to...So first of all it seems unfair that there are some teachers teaching virtually and they don't have to wear masks, they don't have to pay for food and for gas, so there is question of what is the advantage of going in- except for exposure? And so yeah- I was really struggling a lot with it." By the final interview, Molly continued to share similar themes in her responses. When asked to reflect on her experience, she shared "...there's more work instead of less. I also feel more unsafe at school because they put a lot more students in our classroom and in the CDC guidelines it says to avoid mixing cohorts and we mixed them. If you don't have a health issue you are pretty much forced to be here...yeah, it's not worth it...And then there's consistent emails and they are all saying "Get this done"; there's all this new paperwork we have to finish. There are lesson plans and if it doesn't say "Students will be able to..." then it's 'wrong'...and I get it, like change. We need to change some things but there's a way to change things and there's a way to change things during a pandemic...people need more time." These statements showcase a decrease in support of the hybrid learning plan and similar to the other instructional staff members- also exemplified focus on the logistics of the plan versus the overall intent of the plan.

Summary

In summary, the answer to the question of "Do initial perceptions held by instructional staff change over time?" is that these perceptions do change. For some staff, their initial perceptions were that of hesitancy and uncertainty but for many of them by the time of the initial interview their perceptions had changed to be aligned with implementation of the plan. For other staff, they also had initial perceptions of hesitancy and uncertainty but over time (and within this study by the final interview) their initial hesitation developed into strong opposition towards the plan. As seen in the first theme, both groups centralized their responses to interview questions and prompts to be focused on the logistics supporting the implementation of the plan versus the underlying purpose of the plan.

Conditions Leading to Perceptions Changing

My third and final research question sought to determine what conditions were at play when initial perceptions held by staff changed or did not change throughout the course of the study. The data revealed that the concept of safety, both physical and psychological, was the main condition at play when perceptions regarding the plan both changed and did not change throughout the course of this study. It should be noted that safety in this context was in reference to the logistics about implementation of the plan and not the culturally responsive intent of the plan. When instructional staff provided responses to interview questions and journal prompts that indicated that they felt safe- changes regarding their perception of the plan were not observed within the data. When staff shared that they did not feel safe but through time began to believe that they were safe and positive changes (regarding perception of the plan) were observed. However, when instructional staff provided responses to interview questions and journal prompts

that indicated that they did not feel safe and continued to not feel safe, negative changes within their perceptions to the plan were more frequently observed within the data.

Safety

For some staff, they experienced the feeling of safety regarding the plan. And because of this safety, their initial hesitant perceptions changed. For example, one teacher shared in the first interview "I don't think we do the same things or have the same level of responsibility and risk as compared to the teachers who are only virtual but I feel like we are doing the right thing because of the population of students we serve, and I feel secure." This comment showcases that the staff member recognized the physical risk being accepted by nature of being in the building but also followed that recognition with the emphasis of the underlying goal of the entire plan; they then followed this emphasis by sharing their statement of feeling secure. Throughout data collection efforts, this staff member continued to support the plan. Another teacher shared "Once I found out that I'd be doing both (teaching online and in person) I had a lot of questions about to balance it all...I had a lot of help from Liz and Kate, as far as my caseload goals and then as far as making sure coming to the building was safe, making sure that I knew exactly what I needed to be doing, Mr. Wheeler and Ms. Marquita were very reassuring to me...kind of reassuring me that everything was safe…". Similar with other analyzed comments, the concept of physical safety ("…making sure coming to the building was safe…") was observed.

Like in prior themes, the specifics shared in the data collection were focused on the logistics of implementation. By this I mean that staff needed reassurance that physically being in the space was safe. And while this is important, it should be noted that the discussion of the initiative ended at discussion of physical safety versus continuing to also need a safe space to discuss the intent of the initiative. Examples of this would have consisted of staff sharing that

they had been provided with opportunities to discuss and question the philosophy and intent that guided the creation of the plan. It also would have centered on conversations of staff sharing any research and further reflection staff did on their own to increase their own personal knowledge on the assumptions and beliefs that drove the creation of the plan.

For other staff, their interviews and journal entries reflected that they did not feel safe at the beginning of the initiative and that they never did feel safe throughout the entirety of the research. For example, Ted shared:

> In August, I think I was a little surprised that we were coming back and surprised at how we were doing it. And then I think I got into the mode of...not even thinking about that, and as the days and weeks progressed, I'm telling you it got harder and harder. And then last week was just the capstone. Some of the anxiety and angst that I felt- had I been exposed for days and just didn't know? And I mean, I still don't know...I've chosen this particular age group (MS) because I love working with them. But it just continues to get harder and harder...I feel like I'm dealing with a life or death thing."

This same sentiment was echoed by Molly when she shared during her first interview:

> As it approached (the first day of school) then I was like 'Well, I guess I'll start school.' And it was like, this doesn't seem right. Like all these other schools are canceling and pushing back their start date. And then also, you know, the numbers were getting higher and higher. I wasn't too thrilled. I wasn't excited. I was not. I was more fearful and I think it was a Saturday that I broke down. A complete breakdown. I had to call in (for the first day of school).

Later within the interview she continued to share "I don't even know if I'm supposed to say this. But I mean, it needs to be said because we are super uncomfortable...and as its progressed, like

its high anxiety." This sentiment continued to be shared in the final interview. Molly explained this when she shared "And even though local guidance says to interact with less than 10 people, I'm having to interact with 60. How is that safe? And so, I feel like I can't even go visit my mom because you're forcing me to be in someplace that's not safe. Yeah, it's not worth it." And similar to other groups of instructional staff, the concept of safety in these statements were focused on logistics versus intent of the initiative.

In summary, the answer to the question of "What conditions are at play when initial perceptions held by instructional staff change or do not change?" is safety. Within this study (and within the context of this initiative being implemented during a global pandemic), teachers who felt safe at the beginning of the study and continued to feel safe throughout the time in which the study was conducted did not showcase changes to their initial positive perception regarding the initiative. Staff who did not feel safe but through time and experience began to believe they were safe and positive changes in their perception of the initiative were observed. However, staff who did not feel safe when the first round of data collection began and continued to not feel safe throughout the study were likely to change their perception from being neutral about the initiative to being against the initiative. Like what was explained in the other themes, staff separated the implementation of the hybrid learning plan from the culturally responsive intent of the initiative.

Tensions Between Intent and Implementation

Continuously observed in the data was tension between the intent of the plan and the implementation of the plan. Ultimately, this tension led to goal displacement in that the underlying goals that led to the creation of the plan were no longer the center of focus. Instead, the logistics of plan implementation became the focus; and with this shift of focus the plan

became less about practicing cultural responsiveness and more about logistics of adhering to the plan. This tension was observed throughout the data. In the initial interview, participants were asked to describe their personal definition of cultural responsiveness and also asked to share what cultural responsiveness looked like within leadership. All participants were able to speak to the basic tenets associated with cultural responsiveness. Participants were then asked to share if they agreed with the statement that the plan was culturally responsive; and again, all participants were able to not only agree but also explain why they believed that the plan was culturally responsive. However, when these same participants were asked to describe their experiences with the plan- they all shifted to describing the logistical components of the plan. And this shift was observed with both participants who ultimately supported the plan as well as those who ultimately did not support the plan.

This was also observed in the reflective journal entries. Participants were asked to reflect on a recent professional development that they had attended in which the guest speaker emphasized the importance of creating culturally responsive classrooms. And again, similar to the first interview, participants were able to reflect on how they interpreted the message from the PD and agreed with its importance. These responses showcased that the participants had the knowledge needed to have conversations that went beyond surface level understanding of cultural responsiveness. However, within the same journal entries, when asked to reflect on their continued experience with the plan, these same participants shifted to the mechanical and logistical portions of plan implementation.

In the final interview, participants were asked to reflect on their experience overall with the plan and share, not only what they originally thought, but also their current thoughts and experiences about the plan. As with the first two data collections, the theme of goal displacement

also showed up in the final interview. All participants continued to center their focus on the logistical components surrounding the plan's implementation. To be clear, attention must be paid to any plan in order to move it from the ideation/conceptualization phase to implementation. However, what I propose was observed within this research, was that the emphasis of logistics surrounding the plan ultimately created goal displacement in that the goal was no longer to be culturally responsive, but to instead implement the mechanics of the plan. Ultimately this reflected a disconnect between mechanics and values in that a plan created based on values resulted in being a plan focused on mechanics.

Summary

This chapter summarized the data and findings in this study to answer the three posed research questions regarding instructional staff perceptions of culturally responsive behaviors of their school leader. Within this study, a total of twelve instructional staff members and the school principal participated in an initial interview, responded to reflective journal prompts, and participated in a final interview over the course of three months. The purpose of this approach was to determine if perceptions changed over time. Ultimately, this data collection resulted in findings to address the three posed research questions.

For the question of "How do instructional staff perceive the culturally responsive behaviors of their school instructional leader (principal)?" it was found that instructional staff do not view behaviors as being solely attributed to that of the principal. Instead, instructional staff in this study exercised agency to find answers to their questions and attributed leadership to other members of the leadership team resulting in a flipped model of distributed leadership. Because of this flipped model, perceptions of these behaviors become contextual due to the specific interactions that staff have with members of the instructional leadership team. Therefore, the

perceptions of instructional staff varied regarding the culturally responsive behaviors of the instructional leader.

For the second question of "Over time, do initial perceptions held by instructional staff change?" the answer was that they can, and as the data showed, they did for some instructional staff. Two observations resulted from analysis of the data. First, some instructional staff espoused belief and support of the initiative at the beginning of the study (first interview) and continued with this espoused belief and support at the end of the study (final interview). However, other instructional staff exhibited reluctant acquiescence of the initiative at the beginning of the study but by the end of the study their resolve had weakened. For those staff members, time and experience with the initiative caused them to shift from reluctantly agreeing, to instead objecting to the initiative.

And for the third question of "What conditions are at play when initial perceptions held by instructional staff change or do not change?", the answer was safety. What I found was that instructional staff who felt safe at the beginning of the study and continued to feel safe throughout the time in which the study was conducted did not showcase changes to their initial positive perception regarding the initiative. I observed that instructional staff who did not feel safe, but through time and experience, began to believe they were safe- positive changes in their perception of the initiative were observed. I also found that instructional staff who did not feel safe when the first round of data collection began and continued to not feel safe throughout the study were likely to experience negative changes in their perception regarding the initiative.

Throughout all three research questions I discovered a consistent pattern of teachers focusing their perceptions and experiences to be within the context of logistical implications associated with the hybrid learning plan. This means that comments and inferences gathered

from the data were focused on operational logistics such as social distancing, mask wearing, and understanding scheduling implications. And while these conversations were necessary and needed, they also revealed that to an extent, the intent of the hybrid learning plan (which was to provide a culturally responsive learning environment) was missed; and that the focus was less on "How do we create a culturally responsive learning environment" and more on "What do I have to do/complete/accomplish to be in compliance with expectations?".

I suggest that it is not the occurrence of goal displacement that should be emphasized in this research but that it is instead the continued occurrence of goal displacement that should be emphasized in this research. As seen in the data, the participants within this study had questions that were appropriate given the circumstances of implementing a hybrid instructional plan during a pandemic. The data revealed that the principal and members of the leadership team consistently provided answers and clarification throughout the course of the study. Additionally, the data also revealed that even for participants who ultimately did not ask their questions, they still had the perception that if they would have asked the questions that they would receive answers. What the data did not reveal was members of the leadership team redirecting the conversation (after provision of answers to posed questions) to recenter focus on the intent and values surrounding the initiative.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Overview

The purpose of this research was to examine how instructional staff perceive the culturally responsive leadership behaviors of their school principal. Specifically, I sought to understand what types of perceptions instructional staff initially had when presented with a new initiative or program from their school principal that was grounded in tenets from cultural responsiveness. I also wanted to discover if over time, these perceptions could change and if so, what led to their change. Finally, I wanted to determine what conditions and factors were at play when the perceptions held by instructional staff did or did not change. In this study, I used a K-8 charter school district in the Midwest as the main case to explore teacher perceptions of culturally responsive behaviors of the school's principal. I utilized qualitative methods of both individual interviews and artifact review of submitted journal entries. These methods allowed me to understand if and how perceptions held by instructional staff about the culturally responsive initiative changed over time.

Restatement of the Problem

The problem is that while we know the behaviors of culturally responsive leaders, there has been a gap in the literature regarding how those behaviors are perceived by others. Literature exists detailing beliefs, practices, and subsequent impact of leaders who behave in culturally responsive ways. There is also literature that examines the origins of the beliefs held by these leaders as well as how these beliefs shape their interactions and attitudes with other individuals. Little research, however, has been conducted regarding how teachers perceive the actions of culturally responsive leaders. This lack of awareness can not only hinder the ability of education

leaders to respond appropriately in various situations, but it can also pose a threat to the perceived legitimacy of one's leadership.

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions held by instructional staff (teachers) regarding the culturally responsive actions and behaviors of the school principal. The specific goal of this research was to examine how teachers perceive culturally responsive leadership behaviors within the context of an urban school. The research was guided by three research questions which consisted of (1) What perceptions do instructional staff have regarding the culturally responsive leadership of their school leader?, (2) Over time, do the initial perceptions held by instructional staff change?, and, (3) What conditions are at play when the initial perceptions held by instructional staff change or do not change?

Summary of Methodology

I used case study design to understand how teachers perceive the culturally responsive behaviors of their school principal (Creswell, 2014). A total of 12 individuals participated in this study. Experiences from participants were collected through semi-structured interviews. One month after the initial interview, all participants were asked to respond to journal prompts via an online document that was created and shared via Google Docs. One month after the journal entries, a final interview was conducted asking instructional staff two open-ended questions to determine how participants remembered their initial reaction to hearing about the new initiative and to determine their current reaction to the initiative and the school principal. Similar questions were also asked of the principal to compare how they remembered the experience and subsequent instructional staff reactions to the presenting of the initiative to current experiences and instructional staff reactions to the initiative. All interviews were conducted through Zoom, an online video platform. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using an online program

(Otter.ai). Transcripts were then sent to participants for authentication. I utilized three strategies of analysis which consisted of memoing, thematic analysis, and narrative analysis when I analyzed the qualitative data (Maxwell, 2013) in this study. Open coding was done first on all authenticated transcripts and journal entries. And then axial coding was done to identify trends and themes within the data. Iterative analysis was done after each round of data collection to ensure that data saturation had been achieved.

Summary of the Findings

The findings for this research are categorized by the research questions. For the first research question, "How do instructional staff perceive the culturally responsive behaviors of their school instructional leader?" it was found that ultimately, perceptions were not limited to nor consistently attributed to that of the principal. Instead, through what I offered as a flipped model of distributed leadership, participants exercised their own agency to gain answers to questions that they had which resulted in them holding perceptions of the leadership team collectively versus solely that of the principal. For the second research question, "Do initial perceptions held by instructional staff change over time", it was found that in this study the perceptions did change over time. And for the final research question, "What conditions are at play when initial perceptions held by instructional staff change or do not change?" it was found that participant's individual journey through the Cognitive-Affective Model of Conceptual Change (CAMCC) framework (Gregoire, 2003) along with participants notion of safety influenced when their initial perceptions changed or did not change.

Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Leadership

My first research question sough to determine what perceptions teachers had regarding the culturally responsive leadership behaviors of their school principal. The data revealed that

participants instead perceived the culturally responsive leadership of the principal through their interactions with the leadership team. This indicated a flip to the traditional model of distributed leadership in that participants exercised their own agency to find answers to their questions by attributing leadership to the other members of the leadership team (assistant principal and instructional coach) versus the principal intentionally assigning leadership to those two individuals. It should be noted that there were instances in which participants did go directly to the principal; however, it was most often the case that they went to a different member of the leadership team. In all cases, this pro-active approach of seeking information ultimately indicated teacher agency.

In all three rounds of data collection, research participants were provided with the opportunity to broadly describe their experience with the school principal. In the first round (initial interview) participants were asked to speak of their background, experience as a teacher, personal understanding of cultural responsiveness, reaction to the initiative (hybrid learning plan), and experience with the principal. Across the board, participants were able to provide a definition of cultural responsiveness, indicate that they believed that model could be applied to leadership, and indicate that the initiative was culturally responsive. All participants had questions regarding the initiative; viewed through this study's selected framework of Cognitive Affective Model for Conceptual Change (CAMCC) (Gregoire, 2003) this would indicate that they received a message and believed they were implicated by the message which then led to stress appraisal of them having questions. For some participants, their motivation was high which led to them utilizing the flipped distributed leadership model to find answers to their questions (when they ultimately asked questions of members of the leadership team who were

not the principal). But for some participants, though they had questions, their motivation was lower and resulted in them ultimately not asking their questions.

With both groups, I asked them to share and describe the types of questions that they had. Their responses led to a finding of goal displacement. Though the participants understood cultural responsiveness and agreed that the initiative was culturally responsive, when implicated by the message and experiencing stress appraisal, their questions were focused on the logistics of the initiative versus the intent of the initiative. Ultimately, this tension between intent and implementation was observed throughout all phases of the data collection.

In summary, participants in this study exercised agency when they sought their own answers from members of the leadership team. With this flipped distributive view, perceptions of culturally responsive behaviors become contextual due to the specific interactions that participants had with leadership team members. Additionally, within the data it was discovered that there was a tendency for goal displacement in that participants were more focused on how to implement the initiatives versus focusing their implementation to be aligned with the practice of cultural responsiveness.

Perceptions Over Time

My second research question sought to determine if initial perceptions held by instructional staff changed over time. The data revealed that over time, these perceptions did change in one of two ways. For some participants, their initial perception changed in strength. For example, some participants shared their initial concern regarding the initiative and this concern increased in strength and vigor throughout the research. By the final interview, these participants were vocal in actively being against the initiative. Using the CAMC framework that guided this research, these individuals ultimately would be described as not experiencing a belief

change. In contrast, there were other participants who also shared concerns in the early stages of the research but throughout the research indicated that they had grown more comfortable and ultimately expressed full support. Again, using the CAMC framework these participants would have been described as experiencing conceptual change. Similar to what was observed in the first research question, both groups centered their support (either positive or negative) to be in regard to the logistics of the initiative thus continuing the observance of goal displacement.

The data revealed that at the beginning of the research, all participants indicated concern regarding the initiative. These concerns were heavily centered in the logistics of implementation. Review of transcripts and interviews showed how these reactions and perceptions did in fact change over time. Interpreting these changes through the theoretical framework of CAMC revealed how individuals were initially implicated by the message (presentation of the initiative), encountered stress appraisal, and based on their ability to do further research either experienced conceptual change or did not.

Conditions Leading to Changed Perceptions

My third and final research question sought to determine what conditions were at play when initial perceptions held by staff changed or did not change throughout the course of the study. I found that the concept of safety (both physical and psychological) was at play for participants. Within this study, the concept of safety was specific to the implementation of the plan (not about the concept of cultural responsiveness). Data analysis revealed that when participants did not initially feel safe but through time began to believe they were safe then positive changes (regarding perception of the initiative) were observed. In contrast, when participants did not feel safe and continued to not feel safe then negative changes regarding perception of the initiative were observed.

As was observed with the other research questions, the specifics shared in the data regarding these changes of perceptions were grounded in the logistics of the initiative. This means that conversation of safety was specific to ways to implement the plan (examples included seating charts, personal protective equipment, cleaning schedules, etc.) In the findings, I offered that it was the continued focus of the implementation of plan that should be emphasized when interpreting the data. The concept of safety is understandable and appropriate considering the contextual circumstances of the initiative. What the data did not capture was leadership redirecting the conversation towards the intent of the initiative after providing participants with answers to their questions which in many cases provided them with feeling safe.

Theoretical Implications

The Cognitive-Affective Model of Conceptual Change

The Cognitive-Affective Model of Conceptual Change (CAMCC) as described by Gregoire (2003) was utilized as the framework to guide this research. Within the context of this research, it was the principal presenting a reform message based on culturally responsive tenets of leadership to a teacher. Once this reform message was provided, that is the hybrid learning plan, the model then shifted from presenter (principal) to receiver (teachers). The receiver (teachers) had to decide if they were implicated within the message. If the receivers are not implicated within the message, then their course would have been benign-*positive appraisal*. With this path, individuals would not think that the message applies to them so their next course is *heuristic processing* which would mean their motivation to consider the topic would be low. Individuals on this path have only two outcomes. They either experience *no belief change* or assimilate into a *superficial belief change*. In this research, all participants believed themselves to be implicated in the message, so this path was not observed.

In my research, I observed receivers (participants) being implicated by the message. Once participants were implicated, *stress appraisal* began. Evidence of participants experiencing this stress included instances of participants expressing doubt about the initiative and sharing the questions that they had about the initiative. After the stress of realizing that they were implicated in the reform message the process then shifted to strength appraisal of *motivation*. In this study, all participants had strong *motivation*; this was observed in that all participants were able to provide a personal definition of cultural responsiveness and espoused belief that they agreed that cultural responsiveness was needed and reflected within the initiative.

Differences in CAMC model were observed specific to *ability*. Some participants had *sufficient ability* to seek answers to their questions which ultimately increased their knowledge of the initiative while others had *insufficient ability*. For those with *insufficient ability*, they ultimately began to perceive the initiative as a threat. Once the initiative was seen as a threat, participants began *avoidance intention*. When participants experience *avoidance intention,* they are intentionally removing themselves from opportunities to interact with the thing that they see as a threat. In this study, this was observed in the research when participants provided remarks suggesting that they were "keeping their head down" and staying "under the radar". With this context, it is understandable why when faced with the decision of *yielding*, they ultimately choose one of two options; they either had *no belief change* or they had *assimilation/superficial belief change*.

In contrast, participants who had *sufficient ability* had a markedly different experience. For these participants, they viewed the initiative as a challenge (versus a threat). They approached the *intention* (in this research, the initiative) versus avoiding it. It is through the intentional approach that they develop a plan for how they will analyze the reform message

(initiative). After this plan has been developed, they begin *systematic processing* in which they critically analyze the reform message. This was observed in the research when participants would provide examples of how they thought through the initiative, observed it being practiced over time, and then ultimately indicated it was a plan that they could support. When participants indicated this type of support of the initiative, I was able to reference the framework to understand that they had reached *systematic processing* and ultimately decided *yes* thus indicating *accommodation/true conceptual change*.

In this research, participants who made it to the stage of systematic processing did ultimately experience *accommodation/ true conceptual change*. However, based on the framework there is a path in which individuals can reach *systematic processing* and still select *no belief change*. While this path is an option, it was not observed in my research.

Culturally Responsive Leadership

These findings offer potential refining insights on the theoretical basis of culturally responsive leadership. In this case, while leadership certainly played a role in the development and implementation of the initiative, the teachers' own agency prompted them to seek clarification and understanding about the initiative from the leadership team – taking ownership for their own understanding and implementation of the plan. This flipped orientation of distributed leadership, where there is a reciprocal and bi-directional interaction between teachers and administrators may represent more of a complex and dynamic interaction rather than a linear, chain of command perspective. While these data don't speak to this directly, these findings could provide a starting point for conceptualizing leadership within the culturally responsive framework in less linear and hierarchical ways that reflect more reciprocal and dynamic conceptualizations that recognize the importance of teacher agency. A shift from more

traditional managerial and neo-managerial perspectives could help to overcome the hegemonic

foundations of these traditional leadership frameworks. Such new conceptualizations of

leadership could help to advance the goals of culturally responsive practice.

Similarly, the finding regarding goal displacement may offer further theoretical

refinements to the culturally responsive framework. This finding suggests a potential need to

better understand the tension between the intent and implementation of culturally responsive

leadership practices and the tendency observed in this case for the managerial logistics of the

initiative to displace the goal of culturally responsive practices.

Implications for Practice

Culturally Responsive Leadership

The implications of this study are significant for school leaders who are seeking to

exemplify culturally responsive leadership behaviors. First, it provides reassurance for leaders

who are experiencing push-back and tension regarding their leadership behaviors. Based on the

conceptual framework model that was used, initial pushback and questioning of leadership

behaviors, programs, and initiatives is a positive occurrence as it indicates that teachers have not

taken the "benign positive approach" and instead have identified that they are implicated in the

message and taking an active path. This occurrence of taking the active path is essential as it is

the only action that can eventually lead to a true cognitive change. I argue that leaders who

present behaviors, ideas, programs, and initiatives to their staff and receive no follow-up

questions or pushback should actually be concerned that their instructional staff have taken the

path towards a benign positive approach which results in superficial changes. Leaders should

anticipate and plan for pushback, be encouraged when it occurs, and provide the time and

resources needed by their teachers to thoroughly examine and understand the behaviors,

programs, and initiatives that are presented to them. Leaders who do this are creating an environment for their instructional staff to experience true conceptual change.

Second, instructional leaders should be mindful that their conversations regarding new ideas, programs, and initiatives be grounded in the culturally responsive reasoning that led to the creation of the ideas, programs, and initiatives. When this happens, conversations can focus on individuals understanding the reasoning behind an initiative. Conversations of this nature create space for conceptual change. When this does not occur, it is easy for the focus of conversation to shift towards compliance or the logistics surrounding the initiative. These types of conversation can then lead to benign positiveness.

Third, school leadership must acknowledge that time and a joint leadership approach is needed for there to be an environment conducive to true conceptual change. Providing a one-off workshop or inviting a guest speaker for a special presentation does not allow for the time and space needed for true conceptual change. This is not to suggest that these one off occurrences are negative and should not be hosted. In contrast, I offer that they can serve as a first step to a series of conversations versus a single occurrence.

Finally, though the contextual factors associated with this study are unique (charter school designation, social justice unrest and the political climate that occurred during the time of the study, and new organizational leadership), I caution researchers and practitioners from believing that the offered implications are specific only to environments like the one where this study was conducted. Regardless of context and environment, school leaders will always be responsible for leading their schools through times of change. Sometimes this change will be in response to a new program or initiative and sometimes it will be in response to s current political climate. When these situations arise, it is my hope that the implications I have offered about

teacher perceptions and their experience of conceptual change can ultimately provide guidance to their school leaders.

Navigating the High Conflict Political Climate

Leadership is challenging. It is even more challenging when conducted in a climate experiencing a high degree political conflict. While culturally responsive leadership is well situated for these instances, leaders must be especially intentional with their behaviors and approach. Specifically, leaders must be cognizant that in these climates, their instructional staff are receiving a multitude of *reform messages* external to the school that can impact their perceptions and understandings of the *reform messages* they are receiving within the school. With this, leaders must recognize that their instructional staff are likely experiencing the conceptual change and may be at various stages of the model. Because of this, leaders will need to do two things.

First, leaders will need to establish an environment and culture where instructional staff know that it is safe for them to discuss topics that may be aligned or misaligned with what is being presented within the political climate. Failure to do this can hinder the *ability* and *motivation* of instructional staff to interrogate the *reform message*; without this, instructional staff are unlikely to experience conceptual change. And second, leaders will need to identify where their instructional staff are within the conceptual change model since they have received reform messages outside of the school. Doing this allows for the leader to tailor their approach with the instructional staff members. For example, the leader may discover with one staff member that they have been *implicated* by the reform message and need support (time or access to resources) with their *ability*. Or a leader may identify that the staff member was not implicated in the *reform message* in which case the leader will need to re-deliver the message so

that the instructional staff member is implicated. The combination of these two things allows for the leader to navigate the practice of culturally responsive leadership within a high conflict political climate.

Limitations of the Study

It is necessary to address identified limitations associated with this research in efforts to provide suggestions for future researchers who may complete similar research in the future (Creswell, 2005). The first identified limitation is that this research was only conducted at one school district. Due to circumstances surrounding COVID-19 at the time of this study, access to other sites was not possible as all districts were limiting presence within the building to only be necessary staff and enrolled students. Expanding the research to include the addition of other sites could strengthen the findings.

Another identified limitation of this study regards the history and climate specific to the school. As a member of the leadership team, I was privy to the historical context of the district having a negative climate further exacerbated by continuous changes in school principals. Though I was intentional in question wording to encourage participants to base their responses on the identified culturally responsive initiative, it is possible that participants also drew from their own historical experiences working within the district which also could have impacted the findings.

A third limitation of this study is specific to the conceptual framework used. While the CAMC Model was overall a great fit for this study, the model did not account for environment which is a limitation. Individual's beliefs and attitudes can be greatly impacted by environment and to explore their experience of conceptual change without considering the environment is a limitation.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are three primary suggestions for consideration for future research. The first is to be intentional with language when selecting sites for research participation. It was my experience that when asking school site leadership to identify their leadership style(s) that many did not immediately state "culturally responsive". To advertise one's research as being focused on culturally responsive leadership could limit the number of individuals who believe that they would be a good fit for the study. Instead, I advise that researchers conduct a series of conversations with school site leaders to hear more about their approach towards their work and use those conversations as a way to identify leaders who are exhibiting culturally responsive behaviors.

The second recommendation is to expand data sources to also include annual leadership evaluations. Incorporating these evaluations into the research will allow the researcher access to another data source that could contain insight into teacher's perceptions regarding the behavior of their instructional leader. Not only can evaluation data show insights regarding overall perceptions of the behaviors of their instructional leader but it can also show how teachers rate their instructional leader.

The third recommendation for research is to take what was found in this research and expand upon it to identify practices and approaches that school leadership can provide to their instructional staff who are at varying stages of the conceptual change framework. Additionally, future researchers could aim to describe and account for environment should they expand upon this research as this is one of the limitations from this study. This research has shown that the path to conceptual change is filled with decision points where the receiver of the message does something or experiences something to progress them to the next part of the framework. While

this research has shown what must be accomplished in each stage (example: receiver must be *implicated,* or receiver must have strong *motivation*) it hasn't identified interventions that can be deployed to influence how individuals experience each stage.

In this study, I examined teacher perceptions regarding the culturally responsive behaviors of their school leader. What this study did not examine was teacher behaviors and actions as a response to the culturally responsive behaviors of their leader. Future research inclusive of teacher behaviors and actions can explore this to determine if the phenomenon experienced in this study, the focus on implementation of the plan versus the intention of the plan, is reflective of a theory to practice gap or if it is simply reflective of misdirected focus.

Conclusion

There is a need for school site leadership to have insight into how their teachers are perceiving their culturally responsive behaviors as having this insight equips school site leaders to understand the experiences of their teachers and ensure that their approaches lead to the actions and behaviors they hope to see in their schools. While research has explored the impact that culturally responsive leadership has on school culture and student outcomes, there has been limited research specific to how teachers perceive culturally responsive behaviors of their school principal.

This gap within the literature is what led to this study. In this study, I explored the perceptions held by teachers regarding the culturally responsive actions and behaviors of the school principal. I specifically examined how teachers perceived culturally responsive leadership behaviors within the context of an urban charter school in the Midwest. I framed my study by three primary research questions of (1) What perceptions do instructional staff have regarding the culturally responsive leadership of their school leader?, (2) Over time, do the initial

perceptions held by instructional staff change?, and, (3) What conditions are at play when the initial perceptions held by instructional staff change or do not change?

Using a case study design, I conducted semi-structured interviews and collected journal entries from 12 individuals. The results of this research showed that teachers viewed leadership in a flipped version of distributive leadership. This means that teachers exercised agency by determining who on the leadership team they viewed as having the leadership to answer their questions versus the traditional understanding of the term being the school principal intentionally distributing leadership to members of their team. Because of this flipped practice of distributive leadership, to my first research question- I found that the perceptions participants had regarding the culturally responsive leadership of their school leader was not specific to the school leader (principal) but instead reflective of interactions held with a variety of individuals (principal. assistant principal, and instructional coach). For the second research question, I found that initial perceptions did change over time and could be contextualized through a conceptual change framework. For the third research question, I found that the notion of safety played a part in determining if initial perceptions would change or not change.

Though not in response to a specific research question, I did identify a repeated occurrence of goal displacement that was viewed across all three guiding research questions. This was viewed in the research when participants centered their focus on the logistical implementation of the initiative versus the underlying goal of the initiative. This research provides a basis for exploring teacher perceptions of culturally responsive behaviors of their school principal and identified that there is still opportunities for further with this topic.

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APPENDIX A
PRINCIPAL SEMI-STRUCTURED FIRST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Q1. Please tell me about yourself.
- What is your background?
- What has been your experience as a teacher?
- What has been your experience as a leader?

Q2. How would you describe the community that [SCHOOL NAME] serves?

Q3. How would you describe the teachers at [SCHOOL NAME]?

Q4. Please describe your vision for this school.

Q5. How do you as a leader understand culturally responsive behaviors in leadership practices?

Q6. Please describe a culturally responsive practice you are leading this academic year.

Q7. When I looked at what the literature said was a culturally responsive school, one thing that I found is that you have to create opportunities for all students to be successful, no matter their background. And in part, [SCHOOL NAME] did this because we're having on-site learning and we're have the virtual learning. So, when you hear someone descriptive what we're doing at [SCHOOL NAME] right now as being culturally responsive, what are your first thoughts?

APPENDIX B
INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF SEMI-STRUCTURED FIRST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Q1. Please tell me about yourself.
-   What is your background?
-   What has been your experience as a teacher?
-   What has been your experience with the principal?

Q2. How would you describe the community that [SCHOOL NAME] serves?

Q3. How would you describe the students at [SCHOOL NAME]?

Q4. How do you define culturally responsive practices?

Q5. When I looked at what the literature said was a culturally responsive school, one thing that I found is that you have to create opportunities for all students to be successful, no matter their background. And in part, [SCHOOL NAME] did this because we're having on-site learning and we're have the virtual learning. So, when you hear someone descriptive what we're doing at [SCHOOL NAME] right now as being culturally responsive, what are your first thoughts?

APPENDIX C
PRINCIPAL JOURNAL ENTRY PROMPT

Reflective Journal Entry

Overview: A few weeks ago, we had our initial interview regarding your professional background, your personal definition of culturally responsive instruction and leadership, and your initial reactions to hearing SLLIS' Hybrid Instruction approach for Trimester 1 described as a culturally responsive practice. As a follow-up, I have three questions that I would like for you to use to guide your journal entry. Please feel free to write as much or as little as you desire.

Prompt #1: Staff were recently provided the opportunity to listen to a presentation from Principal Kafele. During the presentation, he referenced the importance of having a culturally responsive classroom. How do you think staff reacted to this statement as well as the overall presentation?

Prompt #2: In your opinion, how have staff reacted to the Hybrid Instruction Model? Have staff reactions changed (positive or negative) since we last spoke?

APPENDIX D
INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF JOURNAL ENTRY PROMPT
Reflective Journal Entry

Overview: A few weeks ago, we had our initial interview regarding your professional background, your personal definition of culturally responsive instruction and leadership, and your initial reactions to hearing SLLIS' Hybrid Instruction approach for Trimester 1 described as a culturally responsive practice. As a follow-up, I have three questions that I would like for you to use to guide your journal entry. Please feel free to write as much or as little as you desire.

Prompt #1: You were recently provided the opportunity to listen to a presentation from Principal Kafele. During the presentation, he referenced the importance of having a culturally responsive classroom. What were your thoughts of this statement as well as his overall presentation?

Prompt #2: Since we last spoke about your perception and reaction to SLLIS Hybrid Instructional approach for Trimester 1- has anything changed? Do you still believe this approach is a culturally responsive practice?

Prompt #3: Since we last spoke, have you had questions about the hybrid learning plan (either for Trimester 1 or in anticipation for Trimester 2)? If so, have you shared these questions with SLLIS Leadership (Principal, Assistant Principal, and/or Instructional Coach)? What has been your experience?

APPENDIX E
PRINCIPAL SEMI-STRUCTURED FINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Q1. Please walk me through your lived experience regarding this initiative.
- How are you thinking about it now?

Q2. In your opinion, have your thoughts about this initiative changed over time?
- Why?
- What factors contributed to this?

APPENDIX F
INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF SEMI-STRUCTURED FINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Q1. Please walk me through your lived experience regarding this initiative. Think back to when you first heard about this initiative compared to how you think about it today.
- How do you remember thinking about it then?
- How do you remember thinking about it during the time when you submitted your reflective journal entry?
- How are you thinking about it now?

Q2. In your opinion, have your thoughts about this initiative changed over time?
- Why?
- What factors contributed to this?

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EDUCATION

Old Dominion University
Ph.D., Educational Leadership, May 2022
M.S.ED., Educational Leadership, May 2013

University of Virginia
B.A., Sociology, May 2009

EXPERIENCE

Gladiator Consulting LLC   **July 2021 - Present**
Director of Strategic Initiatives
Hired to serve as lead for strategic planning, planning, and evaluation projects. I also assist with internal organization work such as the codification of templates, processes, and procedures.

Career Highlight:
- Successfully navigated a strategic planning and DEI project for an organization that was experiencing distrust among board members. Through clear communication and establishment of norms was able to present a three-year strategic plan and obtain full board support.

Strategic Solutions + Consulting   **January 2020 - Present**
Principal + Founder
Founded an evaluation and project management consulting business serving primarily nonprofits and K-12 schools.

Career Highlights:
- Created an evaluation framework for a charter school network to use for their school-site Operations Managers (SOMs) through an inclusive planning process that included input from SOMs, school principals, and members from Central Office.
- Coached a Founder through an annual goal setting process that resulted in them achieving 85% of stated goals for the year.

Quality Measures LLC   **April 2020 - Present**
Remote Team Lead
Promoted to manage a team of 10 Independent Contractors who complete data collection, data analysis, formative and summative report writing.
- Recruit Independent Contractors and manage their on-boarding process
- Manage the workflow of all work that is assigned to Independent Contractors
- Assist the CEO in creating a budget that ensures all tasks are efficiently completed while also ensuring that a profit is earned

Independent Contractor   *May 2013-March 2020*
Hired to complete a variety of quantitative and qualitative data analysis to support a consulting firm specializing in program and project evaluation.
- Created and managed a 5-year database of data collected for an NSF grant designed to re-invigorate STEM education

- Conducted interviews and focus groups to support evaluation efforts

St. Louis Language Immersion School   **May 2019 - June 2022**
Operations Director
Hired to oversee all non-instructional school operations. I addressed all operational issues and created protocols and procedures to prevent future problems.
- Oversaw building facilities and created plans for future facility improvement projects
- Implemented school-wide systems to ensure safety and efficiency
- Supervised Front Desk Coordinator and all non-instructional contracted staff

Career Highlight:
- I was able to achieve a 75% on-time metric for the school's six daily routes during fall 2019. This was significant as transportation issues was noted as a key pain-point during the school's annual review for the 2018/2019 school year. I accomplished this by providing consistent communication and feedback to the contracted vendor and also forming strong relationships with the drivers of the routes.

St. Louis College Prep   **July 2018-July 2019**
Operations Manager
Hired to manage school-site operations and serve on the school leadership team.
- Managed all contracted vendors such as bus transportation, cab transportation, food services, technology, and custodial
- Analyzed operational processes to identify areas for procedural improvement

Career Highlight:
- Saved the school $30K by designing and executing a revised operational budget during spring 2019

Green Dot Public Schools, Tennessee   **June 2017-July 2018**
Manager of Operational Effectiveness
Promoted to increase efficiency of region's operational efforts and on-board new transportation vendor.
- Managed the creation and delivery of professional development to OPS personnel within region
- Supervised the After-School program ensuring region remained in compliance with 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant
- Met with school site operations teams to identify appropriate metrics to collect and monitor for the purpose of increasing operational functions at each school

Career Highlight:
- Managed a grant budget of $312,258 and ensured all funds were properly spent

Operations Analyst   May 2016-June 2017
Hired to assist Director of Operations with management of region's operations consisting of four (4) schools.
- Coached and increased capacity of four School Operations Managers in day-to-day operations of their individual schools
- Provided tools, data, and information to region to achieve compliance with authorizer, state, and federal requirements
- Analyzed data from state database to determine feeder school patterns and identified appropriate enrollment targets

Old Dominion University   **March 2015-May 2016**
Research Associate
Hired by Office of Institutional Research to manage all data analysis tasks associated with student
enrollment and conferred degrees
- Managed data analysis and reporting for federal and state reporting needs
- Collaborated with institutional committees and staff to respond to reputational surveys
- Presented data analysis in clear, concise, and understandable format for senior level administrators

Assistant Director for Assessment & Planning   June 2013-March 2015
Hired by Student Engagement and Enrollment Services to assist department with assessment efforts
- Coached faculty and staff on suggested best practices for planning, designing, and implementing
  assessment efforts
- Organized and directed the compilation of data relating to assessment to include planning, evaluation,
  budgeting, and oversight of reporting of related data and information to stakeholders