LEADERS' INFLUENCE ON CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my two wonderful sons, Charles and Ricardo, whose patience, and consistent encouragement has enabled me to bring this study to fruition.
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I would like to thank my family and colleagues who provided the emotional support and encouragement needed to reach the end of this long, educational journey. To my youngest son Ricardo, whose commitment and dedication to soccer provided me with endless hours on the sideline, where I was able to study and complete my assignments and research writings. To my oldest son Charles, who simultaneously endured and persevered through similar educational challenges. To Dr. Scott Bauer, who provided countless hours of advice together with concrete, valuable feedback, and who encouraged me to keep moving forward. To Drs. David Brazer and Beverly Shaklee, who helped me initiate this journey, and guided me whenever their help was sought.
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Abstract

LEADERS’ INFLUENCE ON CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS

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George Mason University, 2012
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Research indicates that the impact of educational leaders on student success is second only to that of teachers’ instruction. This influence arises from a set of core leadership practices, which leaders adjust for the requirements and context of their particular environment (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, 2008). Research shows that culturally responsive practice, that is, creating equitable opportunities for all students, is successful in serving the increasingly diversified student body that all educators face (Bartolome, 1994; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Novick, 1996). How leaders maintain successful teaching practices in multicultural settings, however, needs further exploration and is the central question for this study. A qualitative study using a case study design was conducted, including three purposely selected Mid-Atlantic independent schools. Interviews of 16 school leaders, 3 teacher focus groups, multiple field observations, and document and artifact review provided data. Findings include: (a) Leaders’ adherence to site-specific values was essential to
making their visions a reality. These values surfaced in three core leadership practices: setting direction, developing people, and developing/redesigning the organization in a manner designed to sustain culturally responsive practice. (b) The head of school must set the direction for the school. Specifically, when the head reinforces and models core values critical to culturally responsive practice through specific and visible actions, the community understands these values, embraces them, and works in unison to sustain them, thus building a strong school culture. (c) By distributing leadership, heads of school ensure that the values and culture that fortify these culturally responsive communities are consistently reinforced throughout the community. These findings suggest that school leaders may need to employ a holistic approach to ensure that culturally responsive practice is sustained throughout the school community.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Schools throughout the United States are filled with diverse learners, representing a variety of racial and ethnic groups, from African-American, Asian, Middle-Eastern, Latino backgrounds, and beyond. The percentage of minority students in United States schools increases each year. Between the 1989 and 2009 school years the percentage of White students enrolled in public preschool through secondary school decreased from 68% to 55%, whereas the Hispanic population increased from 11% to 22%. At the start of the 2009 school year the Black student population was 15% and the remaining 8% included: American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and students who identified with more than one race. Moreover, 21% of students spoke a language other than English in their home. The private school racial composition of students for the 2009 school year was: 72.6% White, 9.2% Black, 9.4% Hispanic, 5.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, .4% American Indian/Native Alaskan, 2.7% two or more races (Aud et al., 2011). Students with a mixture of learning styles, cultural values, and learning differences attend these schools. It is clear that the student population continues to diversify. To be successful, educators at all levels must find ways to meet the diverse needs of all students.

Culturally responsive teaching is an approach that evolved to help educators move beyond the introduction of multicultural content in the classroom to the creation of an
instructional climate that validates the cultural backgrounds of all students. Teachers who understand and practice culturally responsive teaching help students build strong cultural identities and succeed in school (Bartolome, 1994; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Novick, 1996). The premise of culturally responsive practice is that student diversity is a gift that enriches learning, instead of a problem that distracts from the learning environment (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Riehl, 2000). The cultural knowledge and background that students bring to the community enhance the learning opportunities in the classroom and enrich the pedagogical possibilities for the teacher. Research shows that by using multiple techniques to incorporate varied student backgrounds, culturally responsive practice has a positive impact on student learning (Gay, 2000). Culturally responsive practice provides educational leaders with an encouraging framework for instructional improvement. Therefore, it is beneficial for leaders to begin to find ways to incorporate this practice into their school communities.

As leaders integrate culturally responsive practice into their schools, educational communities are more likely to become socially just and more equitable for all of their members. Leading for social justice challenges leaders to address resource distribution, inequities, cultural assumptions, and prejudice in their communities. The literature on social justice in education refers explicitly to a set of moral values (equity, acceptance, cross-cultural understanding) that leaders should incorporate into their practice (Bogotch, 2000; Furman & Shields, 2005; Riehl, 2000; Shields, 2004).

School leaders help create contexts that are supportive and conducive to needed practices. Leadership is second only to teaching practice in contributing toward what
students learn at school (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The literature on leadership explores how leaders influence school success by creating a strong sense of community (Sergiovanni, 1994, 1996; Fullan, 2001). Also reflected in the leadership literature are the strategies that principals use to influence effective instructional practices (Cuban, 1988; Fullan, 2001), as well as the various leadership perspectives, or frames that leaders incorporate to achieve their goals (Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008; Bush, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004). Research also reveals specific leadership behaviors or core practices that appear necessary for school leaders to be successful. These include: setting direction, developing people, and developing/redesigning the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Research carried out in multicultural educational environments helps to illustrate successful teaching practices for diverse populations (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Scholarly literature focuses on the leadership behaviors needed to impact student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Scholars have yet to study, however, leadership behavior in the context of a school environment where culturally responsive practice is both encouraged and sustained. In the face of growing student diversity, it is critical to learn how school leaders work to promote culturally responsive teaching.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to describe how leaders support and sustain culturally responsive practice in schools. School sites were identified that are reputable, culturally
responsive communities in Mid-Atlantic cities. Leadership behaviors and perspectives in these schools were studied to help describe how leaders: (a) communicate their goals and beliefs, (b) interact within the community, and (c) implement different programs to support and sustain the culturally responsive practices in their communities.

This study describes leadership behavior in the context of culturally responsive school communities. Two recognized reviews, based on empirical findings, identify three core leadership behaviors as essential components of effective leadership practice. Specifically, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) and Leithwood et al. (2004) reviewed quantitative studies, as well as single and multiple case studies selected using high-quality research standards, to identify and further group behaviors associated with leadership practices that impact student learning in schools. Their analysis identified three core leadership behaviors: setting direction, developing people, and developing/redesigning the organization. This study is guided by their framework, but extends their work by focusing on identifying the leadership behaviors that are important and contribute to sustaining culturally responsive practice in the three selected school communities.

Gay’s (2000) culturally responsive framework is used, as well, to guide this inquiry. This model includes five essential components: understanding the background knowledge brought to the school by its members, creating a caring environment, communicating cross-culturally, infusing cultural content into teaching practice, and achieving cultural congruency in the classroom. Effective culturally responsive educators incorporate these components into their teaching practice. Thus, in school
environments where culturally responsive practice is the standard, the author used these five essential components to recognize these practices throughout the school.

**Research Questions**

Through this study I examine how leaders influence and sustain culturally responsive practice at their school sites. Specifically, this study looks at what leaders value and believe, and how those values and beliefs are reflected in specific actions and behaviors that support culturally responsive practice in the schools. This research inquiry answers the following research questions:

1. How do the actions of leaders support culturally responsive practice?
2. What are values and beliefs that leaders identify as essential in supporting a culturally responsive school community?
3. How do leaders act to support the values and beliefs of culturally responsive practice in their school?

**Significance**

Understanding how educational leaders support culturally responsive practice in diverse communities has theoretical, research, and practical implications for school improvement. Moreover, as the researcher and a leader in an independent school, grasping what independent school leaders do within a culturally responsive school community to meet the needs of a diverse student population has significance to me personally and professionally.

From a theoretical stance, it is unclear in the literature if leaders influence teaching practice in a particular manner or if they rely on certain skill sets or basic
practices specifically to support a culturally responsive community. The literature base does not directly connect these two areas of inquiry, i.e., culturally responsive practice and school leadership. This study helps bridge this gap in the knowledge base. It helps educational theorists understand what leaders do in a culturally diverse setting, as well as the impact those actions have in the community. Moreover, from an educational leadership research perspective, there are limited empirical studies of effective leaders of multicultural communities. Thus, this investigation of how the leaders’ actions support culturally responsive practice narrows this void in the literature. In summary, this study on culturally responsive leadership informs the scholarly field by identifying the impact certain leadership behaviors have specifically in school settings that use culturally responsive practice to meet the needs of their diverse student populations.

This identification and explanation of the connection between leadership behavior and culturally responsive practice enables educational leaders to incorporate it into their practice. This study provides leaders with key information to help them meet the needs of the increasingly diverse student body in schools across the United States as well as internationally. This study thus offers to educational leaders clear examples of behaviors that sustain culturally responsive practice, providing for leaders a guide to support or create educational contexts that serve diverse students.

Finally, leaders of diverse educational communities require multiple strategies and varied paths to ensure educational opportunities for all students. Providing socially just and equitable educational opportunities is a moral prerogative of school leaders (Bogotch, 2000). Culturally responsive practice can lead to socially just educational
communities. By learning how successful leaders support culturally responsive practice, novice leaders are well equipped to work toward establishing their own socially just and equitable learning communities.

As the researcher I conducted this study in independent schools known to champion culturally responsive practice. My role as an educational leader, teacher and supporter of culturally responsive practice within independent and international school settings is long standing. As a novice scholar, my prior investigations contribute the perspectives of leaders and teachers working within multicultural and international environments. The results of this study guide my continued role as an independent school leader and scholar who seeks to create and enhance opportunities for people of diverse perspectives to learn and interact together within their communities.

**Research Procedures**

To best answer my research questions I used a qualitative multi-case study approach, which enabled me to describe in-depth what Yin (2003) identifies as a real life phenomenon in a specific context. In this study the real life phenomenon is leadership in the context of a culturally responsive community. I used multiple sources of evidence within and across sites to triangulate findings as is customary in case study research. Through interviews I gained the perspective of leaders in schools reported to champion culturally responsive practice, supported by document and artifact analysis, field observations, and a focus group of teacher leaders at each site. I selected three research sites, independent school communities in Mid-Atlantic cities, to explore the phenomenon in-depth and to allow for cross case analysis. My analysis had three
overlapping phases: coding, data display, and making sense of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The purpose of coding was to fracture the data into thick descriptive chunks to facilitate categorizing it for further understanding (Maxwell, 2005). After employing a variety of data displays while simultaneously generating numerous memos, I determined that the best way to organize, analyze, and describe my data was to rely on the leadership behaviors and culturally responsive descriptors presented in Chapter 2 through my conceptual framework, *Culturally Responsive Leadership in the Schoolhouse*. Finally, I used the constant comparison method (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003) to determine patterns and themes that concurred across cases which yielded four findings on how leaders sustain culturally responsive practice at these schools.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms defined here are important to this study:

Culturally responsive practice—a teaching approach that takes into account the cultural backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles of students to plan and implement instruction to effectively meet students’ needs. There are five distinguishing components of culturally responsive practice: background knowledge, a caring community, cross-cultural communication, cultural content, and cultural congruity of instruction (Gay, 2000).

Culturally responsive community—a school environment where culturally responsive practice permeates the community.
Essential leadership practices—a set of three core leadership behaviors deemed necessary for successful leadership within most educational contexts (Leithwood et al. 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

- **Setting Direction**—how a leader develops and articulates goals, creates shared meanings within the organization, monitors school performance, sets expectations, and communicates a clear vision.

- **Developing People**—how a leader facilitates and encourages professional growth and personal reflection, provides individualized support to teachers, models effective practice and sets example.

- **Developing/Redesigning the Organization**—how a leader creates and maintains organizational structures and processes to strengthen school culture, ensure a collaborative decision making process and/or use the knowledge of the staff to make informed decisions, manage the environment and ensure proper use and allocation of resources.

Social justice leadership—the deliberate practice of leaders used to address resource distribution, inequities, cultural assumptions, and prejudice in their communities.

**Conclusion**

It is imperative that educators work to meet the varied needs of a diverse student body in an increasingly global society. In this introductory chapter, I identified culturally responsive teaching practice as a pedagogical approach that meets the needs of diverse students (Bartolome, 1994; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Novick,
1996) and introduced leadership as a significant component in contributing toward the learning environment of schools (Leithwood et al., 2004). I then identified the purpose of this study, to describe how leaders support culturally responsive practice in schools. In Chapter 2, I review this literature base to introduce the important components that oriented this study. Chapter 3 explains in-depth the procedures followed to carry out this qualitative, multi case study on culturally responsive leadership. In Chapters 4 through 6, I present both within and cross case findings to discuss how the actions of leaders sustain culturally responsive practice in these three schools.

Leaders have the ability to positively impact the schools they serve. This study provides insight for those leaders who aspire to meet the needs of the growing diversity of schools across the United States and internationally by acting to create and sustain school communities that employ culturally responsive practices in their schools.
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Leaders act in a variety of ways that influence the communities they serve; ultimately, when effectively combined, these behaviors contribute toward positive learning outcomes. This study specifically looks at leaders’ basic core practices identified in the research as important to promoting school effectiveness (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) to consider how these leadership behaviors influence culturally responsive practice in schools. To understand leadership within a culturally responsive community, this chapter first outlines the characteristics that help recognize culturally responsive practice within a school community, and then proceeds to identify different leadership perspectives as well as specific leadership behaviors that could be useful to explain how leaders act in the context of a culturally responsive community. In closing, a conceptual framework is presented that depicts how leader behavior contributes to sustaining culturally responsive schools.

Culturally Responsive Practice

The premise of culturally responsive practice is to use the varied cultural backgrounds within a classroom community to create an effective instructional climate for student success. Effective culturally responsive teachers consider student diversity to be a gift that enriches learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Riehl, 2000). Teachers who understand and practice culturally responsive pedagogy help students build strong

I used Gay’s (2000) culturally responsive framework as the criterion of selection to determine if a school is culturally responsive, as well as to identify the specific characteristics that reinforce the community’s cultural responsiveness. Gay defines culturally responsive teaching as:

Using the cultural characteristics, experiences and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits of teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly. (p. 29)

Gay (2000) identifies five specific components to characterize culturally responsive teaching. They are:

- developing a culturally diverse knowledge base;
- demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community;
- developing effective cross-cultural communication;
- designing culturally relevant curricula; and
- developing cultural congruity of instruction.
In essence, teachers and leaders in an effective culturally responsive community use multiple avenues to learn about and understand the students and families they serve (develop a culturally diverse knowledge base). With this information they are able to develop communication strategies that best serve their students (effective cross-cultural communication), identify both resources and content that acknowledge the students’ backgrounds and interests (design culturally relevant curricula), and create lessons plans and integrate varied methodologies that complement students’ learning profiles (cultural congruity in instruction). The combination of these components, together with an intentionally created physical environment that highlights the school’s values and diversity and encourages caring human interactions (establishing a caring learning environment), exemplifies a culturally responsive school culture. Thus, when teachers effectively integrate each of these components, a thriving culturally responsive classroom community is likely, increasing the probability of student success.

How teachers create the classroom community and integrate the academic program into that community is important to the successful implementation of culturally responsive practice. First, culturally responsive practice is by definition dependent upon the context of the classroom environment, which is formed by the students (Irvine, 2001). This reality redoubles the need for teachers to understand the cultural background of each of their students and to use those varied backgrounds to create a classroom community conducive to learning. Second, culturally responsive teachers intentionally create caring learning environments (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). To do this, teachers model specific values, facilitate respectful interactions,
demonstrate compassion, and encourage and expect student voices to be heard throughout the learning process. Third, culturally responsive teachers connect the academic and socio-cultural realities of the students to determine the most effective instruction to meet students’ needs (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Fourth, effective culturally responsive educators are reflective practitioners who are culturally self-aware and continue to engage in professional dialog and reflection that challenge cultural, social, and academic assumptions (Gay, 2000).

The empirical research that identifies and describes the characteristics and successes of culturally responsive practice as noted above stems from studies that focus specifically on teaching practice within multicultural communities. Whether the researcher synthesizes examples, vignettes, and experiences directly through the voices of teachers to create a theoretical framework that identifies the elements of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000), or uses a case study approach to describe effective culturally responsive teaching (Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994), the majority of research in this area is situated within the classroom setting.

Presently there is a void in the literature that explains the role leaders play in supporting culturally responsive teachers, or how school leaders contribute toward sustaining culturally responsive practice throughout a school community. Literature that addresses leaders’ roles in promoting a socially just and equitable environment has surfaced as important in meeting certain needs of schools with diverse student populations (Bogotch, 2000; Furman & Shields, 2005; Riehl, 2000; Shields,
2004). Understanding how leaders promote social justice could provide useful information to determine the ways leaders sustain culturally responsive practice.

**Leading for Social Justice**

The literature base on leading for social justice complements the culturally responsive practice framework and provides a bridge to the literature on educational leadership. Leading for social justice challenges leaders to address resource distribution, inequities, cultural assumptions, and prejudice in their communities. The literature on social justice refers explicitly to a set of moral values (equity, acceptance, cross-cultural understanding) that leaders should incorporate into their practice (Bogotch, 2000; Brown, 2006; Furman & Shields, 2005; Riehl, 2000; Shields, 2004). Moreover, a leader’s deliberate use of power is seen as a means to achieve these moral goals. “Educational leadership is a deliberate intervention that requires the use of moral power” (Bogotch, 2000, p. 2). Culturally responsive practice may serve as a gateway toward achieving social justice in schools.

Both leadership for social justice and culturally responsive practice are value laden. Leaders are charged with transferring moral and ethical values to their community, helping all constituencies to strive for equity, mutual understanding, and a common good for society (Furman & Shields, 2005). In a culturally responsive classroom, teachers model respectful interactions, compassion, collaborative engagement and expect each community member to be supportive, understanding, and knowledgeable of each member’s needs (Gay, 2000).
Leaders for social justice use sense making (Riehl, 2000; Shields, 2004), reflective dialog, democratic discourse (Riehl, 2000; Shields, 2005), and knowledge sharing (Furman & Shields, 2005) as strategies to create new knowledge and meanings (Bogotch, 2000; Riehl, 2000) needed within a diverse community. These strategies are similar to those teachers model and rely upon to gather and use the background knowledge of their students to create a caring, learning environment. Developing relationships is highlighted in the leading for social justice literature (Furman & Shields, 2005; Riehl, 2000; Shields, 2004) as it is in forming the learning community in culturally responsive classrooms. From a social justice perspective, leaders are called upon to encourage relational pedagogy, a pedagogy that guides teachers to develop strong relationships with their students and to help them make sense of the course content as they apply it to their life experiences (Bogotch, 2000; Furman & Shields 2005; Shields, 2004). This relational pedagogy is similar to the role of teachers as cultural mediators within the culturally responsive classroom (Gay, 2000). Leaders’ continual modeling of inclusive practices; interacting with students, teachers, and staff throughout the community; and promoting dialog and reflective discourse (Riehl 2000; Shields, 2004) are also seen as essential practices of leaders promoting social justice. The same expectations of human interaction and engagement hold true in the culturally responsive classroom (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

In summary, the descriptions in the literature of how leaders lead for social justice is similar to that of how teachers implement culturally responsive practice in their classroom communities, and focuses on specific values, supported by concrete practices
that serve to meet the needs of a diverse community. This social justice lens offers a sharper focus on leadership behaviors that could provide insight to understanding which practices leaders use that support their leadership within a culturally responsive community. Moreover, leaders orient their leadership practice using a variety of perspectives depending on the context and needs of their communities. Understanding how leaders orient themselves within a culturally responsive environment and which leadership perspectives they rely on may help explain how they sustain culturally responsive practice in their communities.

**Leadership Frames**

The position of a school leader is multi-layered. Using different leadership perspectives or frames helps to explain how a leader explicitly and implicitly adapts behaviors to accomplish goals (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Leadership frames include the mechanisms and strategies leaders use to communicate a school’s mission, to connect it to program, and to promote and support identified policies and practices throughout the school community (Cuban, 1988). Leaders act differently depending upon the context, the situation, and the working relationships established (Leithwood et al., 2004). Certain leadership frames resonate depending on a particular circumstance or a specific goal that needs to be accomplished. Therefore, leadership practice needs to be flexible and adaptive to the context and situation. Ultimately, successful leaders may need to pull from all frames—instructional, political, symbolic, and structural—to accomplish their goals.
**Instructional leadership.** Instructional leaders put teaching and learning at the center of their decisions (Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). An instructional leader considers how the school’s mission, the instructional program, and the school climate support one another (Leithwood et al., 2004). Cuban (1988) delineates this process by emphasizing how a principal shapes the mission, builds a climate of respect, and communicates a sense of purpose to teachers. Bush (2003) considers different perspectives of instructional leadership and points to leadership behavior that includes modeling practice, monitoring the program, and ensuring opportunities to discuss pedagogical and professional progress. Both setting professional expectations and providing formal and informal professional development reinforce the mission, foster a positive learning environment, and support the instructional program.

Research covers how leaders support these instructional priorities. Some effective practices include: implementing a curriculum that meets the needs of the student population; evaluating teachers with an emphasis on improving student learning; providing training that supports the curricular framework; and ensuring opportunities for professional collaboration, sharing, and reflection (Leithwood et al., 2004). In summary, leaders exhibit instructional leadership by modeling effective instructional practice, by encouraging and providing opportunities to share knowledge (Fullan, 2001), by connecting decision making directly to learning (Leithwood et al., 2004), and by creating strong learning climates (Fullan, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2004; Sergiovanni, 1996).

A primary purpose of this study is to determine the instructional leadership behaviors most critical to sustaining a culturally responsive community. Based on
existing studies, it may be hypothesized that effective instructional leadership in these contexts includes ensuring that the methodologies implemented, pedagogical resources used, and human resources available support the diverse backgrounds of the student population. It is also likely that leaders must ensure that professional development opportunities enable teachers and leaders to reflect upon their own cultural identities and assumptions, as well as those of the populations they serve in order to share knowledge among the learning community and foster cross-cultural understandings.

**Political leadership.** Political leadership involves using influence (Bush, 2003; Cuban, 1988; Leithwood et al., 2004), and power (Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008) to make decisions that affect the school community. Leaders use their influence in a variety of ways to seek support for their goals. In the end, leaders aim to transfer their personal and professional goals to the community to create shared community goals (Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008). To move in this direction leaders seek out allies with similar interests or with needed strengths. This strategy helps form effective coalitions that facilitate support of the leaders’ goals (Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008; Bush, 2003). Simultaneously, leaders acting politically manage and establish working relationships with opponents, and work to overcome opposition (Bolman & Deal; Bush, 2003; Cuban, 1988). Bargaining, negotiating, and persuading are skills used to overcome opposition (Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008; Bush, 2003; Cuban, 1988). The interaction between coalitions is key in the political model.

The direct use of power is another mechanism used by a leader to achieve personal and group goals. Once again, political leaders look for community members
with shared beliefs to form coalitions that increase their power to effect change (Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008; Bush, 2003). Leaders use both formal and informal power to achieve their goals. Their position power, given to them through their contracted role, provides them with the legitimate power to make decisions. Their informal power, provided through expertise, knowledge, and personal characteristics, also helps them to achieve their goals (Bush, 2003).

From a political perspective, a community is filled with divergent interests and scarce resources; competition for those resources breeds conflict. A political leader views conflict as an opportunity to be creative, problem solve, and effectively use power to stimulate change and make decisions (Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008). The use of influence and power in the political frame can be summarized as: “Political leaders persuade first, negotiate second, and coerce only if necessary” (Bolman & Deal, 2006, p. 359). Leaders, relying upon political leadership in a culturally responsive community, are likely to seek out individuals with certain expertise to promote diversity-related goals across departments and school structures.

**Symbolic leadership.** In the symbolic frame, leaders use rituals, symbols, stories, myths, ceremonies, and traditions to transfer beliefs and values into visible representations that support the school’s mission and/or leader’s goals (Argyris, 1999; Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008; Fullan, 2001; March, 1994; Sergiovanni, 1994). Each of these symbolic elements helps to establish meaning and clarity in the face of ambiguous and unfamiliar challenges (Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008; Bush, 2003). They help create a
community identity (Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008) and reveal an organizational culture (Bush, 2003).

Symbols serve as visual representations of the community’s identity. At ceremonies and events they serve as reminders of the purpose behind the event, and help solidify traditions. Stories not only help to create community identity, but also serve as mechanisms to communicate messages, highlight meaning, explain successes and challenges, and transmit history. Incorporating heroes and heroines into stories helps communicate history, as well as reinforce positive role models. Rituals add stability to daily life and help to balance the irregularities of community life, and may be used as organizational tools to open lines of communication and to contribute to the functioning of the organization. Rituals do not always lead to significant accomplishments; however, they can be an important mechanism in bringing the community together. Similarly, traditions and ceremonies may be used to unify people, to help stabilize situations during times of need, and to celebrate accomplishments as well as socialize the community (Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008). In essence these symbolic components help leaders to illustrate the meaning behind the organization’s values and formal mission statement (Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008).

In a culturally responsive community, it may be hypothesized that leaders use symbols, rituals, and traditions to visually and actively reinforce and celebrate the diversity of the school community. More importantly, the extent to which elements of diversity are incorporated into the daily life of the school determines how likely it is that community members will learn to interact within a multicultural setting.
**Structural leadership.** Structure helps an organization to achieve its goals. Just as leadership styles must be flexible to meet the needs of a particular educational community (Leithwood et al., 2004), the organizational structure must also adapt to the specific demands and circumstances of that educational institution (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The different structural components of an organization include how labor is divided, how policies and procedures are developed and implemented, and which tasks are assigned to certain roles (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Division of labor may be assigned vertically, from the top down through a detailed organizational chart, or laterally where coalitions may form naturally as people collaborate based on similar interests or needs (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In most educational communities, some type of hierarchy and division of labor exists in the form of curricular departments and administrative posts, which form part of the organizational structure. Through these structures relationships and patterns of interactions develop and help to achieve certain goals (Bush, 2003). Existing structures and processes can take on normative qualities and become part of the taken-for-granted aspects of a school’s organizations, thus helping to maintain the organization’s or group’s values and serving to support the mission. An operational function simply ensures that tasks are carried out (Bush, 2003).

Structure also involves assignment of specific roles and work to accomplish common goals. This process of assigning roles, identifying goals, and carrying them out among members is an important part of the structural frame of leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The leaders’ roles, or the roles assigned by the leader may include completing a variety of tasks, for example, scheduling programs and classes, writing and
distributing reports, assigning students to class sections, and maintaining facilities and necessary resources. Cuban (1988) referred to these tasks under the managerial frame, which is comparable to the structural frame and serves to maintain organizational stability. The guidelines, policies, and procedures established for the community provide a structured framework for the leader and community to follow through to meet the organization’s goals (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Thus, the roles leaders assign to themselves and others, together with the types of tasks they designate in order to reach the goals of the organization fall under the structural/managerial frame of leadership. The structures leaders employ in a culturally responsive community may differ depending upon the priorities and varied goals they would like to address. Structures may include separate committees that attend to specific diversity goals, or each department and division within a school may be responsible for advocating for their diversity needs. For example, there may be a diversity committee to help oversee that multicultural components are represented in the curriculum, or a member of the curriculum committee may be responsible for keeping diversity issues front and center. Identified policies and practices that support diversity within a community would also fall under the structural frame.

Overall, the frames serve as lenses through which leadership behavior can be described and explained. Leaders exhibit behaviors that reflect the different frames depending upon the specific goals they are trying to achieve and the organizational context they are in. Certain behaviors also help to adapt their practice so they can effectively carry out different components of the school’s mission. The leadership lens
must be clearly focused to understand which of a leader’s behaviors support a culturally responsive community. If leadership is an important component to the culturally responsive practice that exists within schools, then leaders will act in a manner that supports a culturally responsive community; the various leadership frames offer theoretical lenses to assist in deciphering the patterns within these behaviors.

**Core Leadership Practices**

Effective culturally responsive practice facilitates positive learning outcomes for students (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Effective leadership is second only to teaching practice in positively contributing to student learning (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). It is important to understand what effective leaders do to influence the learning environment in culturally responsive school settings.

Scholars using robust empirical evidence to look more closely at the behaviors, practices, and actions of leaders identify a set of core leadership practices leaders rely on in most educational contexts (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Empirical evidence points to the following categories of leadership practice as minimal requirements for effective leadership in most educational contexts: (a) setting direction, (b) developing people, and (c) developing/redesigning the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). These behavioral categories can be used to identify actions of leaders that influence culturally responsive practice. To elaborate on the three core leadership practices the above-mentioned scholars include the following descriptions:
• Setting Direction—how a leader develops and articulates goals, creates shared meanings within the organization, monitors school performance, sets expectations, and communicates a clear vision.

• Developing People—how a leader facilitates and encourages professional growth and personal reflection, provides individualized support to teachers, models effective practice and sets example.

• Developing/Redesigning the Organization—how a leader creates and maintains organizational structures and processes to strengthen school culture, ensure a collaborative decision making process and/or use the knowledge of the staff to make informed decisions, manage the environment and ensure proper use and allocation of resources.

Leaders set direction for the community by articulating goals, communicating the vision, and developing shared meanings. In a culturally responsive community the vision includes creating a caring community where different cultural backgrounds are understood, respected, and used in order to meet learning goals (Gay, 2000). Leaders develop people within their organization by modeling practice, guiding teachers through instructional improvements, and providing opportunities to share knowledge. In a culturally responsive community developing people may include promoting cultural congruity by ensuring that methodologies meet the varied student needs, sharing and incorporating resources that support the diverse populations of the community, as well as providing opportunities to share and reflect upon diverse viewpoints (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2001). Developing or redesigning the organization includes creating structures that
encourage teamwork and collaboration, as well as creating efficient schedules, assigning roles, and allocating resources (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). In a culturally responsive community this responsibility might be hypothesized to include creating policies, practices, and structures that acknowledge and support diversity within the community.

In summary, research notes the impact of effective leadership on student learning, and outlines a set of practices leaders rely on to ensure this positive impact. What determines the extent of the impact of leadership, however, is the manner in which leaders balance and apply these practices in response to the particular needs and context of their school communities (Leithwood et al., 2008). This claim notes that effective leaders are astute in applying these basic leadership practices to meet the specific needs of their school context. Scholars have not, however, concentrated in-depth on or described how leaders apply these practices in a particular type of school context or environment. Specifically, scholars have not considered how leaders apply these essential leadership behaviors to support multicultural school communities. Based on the above-mentioned research it is likely that this core set of leadership practices is important to maintain effective culturally responsive practice in schools. Thus, identifying leadership practices within the specific context of culturally responsive school communities provides valuable insight to explain how leaders sustain culturally responsive practice as the standard teaching practice of a school community.
Conceptual Framework

Through this review of the literature I introduced the main components that help frame this study on culturally responsive leadership. I identified the purpose, effects, and characteristics of effective culturally responsive teaching practice. I referenced a group of scholars who recommend that leaders focus on practices that foster socially just and equitable school environments for diverse students, suggesting that socially just leadership may be relevant within culturally responsive communities. Considering the main unit of analysis is school leadership, I reviewed a variety of leadership orientations that leaders may rely on to achieve their goals or those of the schools they serve. I then highlighted a set of reputable leadership practices that scholars indicate positively impact learning environments. I also noted a claim that leaders are most effective when they are astute at balancing and applying this set of leadership behaviors to meet the needs and context of the particular environment they serve. Each of these components is important in understanding the conceptual framework, *Culturally Responsive Leadership in the Schoolhouse* that I used to guide this inquiry. See Figure 1.
Figure 1, *Culturally Responsive Leadership in the Schoolhouse*, portrays how leaders act to sustain a culturally responsive school community. The foundation of the schoolhouse anchors a leader’s beliefs, ideas, and values. It is presumed that leaders have deep-rooted beliefs and ideas that serve to guide their visions. In effectively carrying out their vision, leaders support the school mission, another foundational component that serves to communicate the ideals of the school. Thus the values, beliefs,
and ideas represent what leaders espouse, communicate, and presumably act upon through their vision to support the school’s mission.

The roof of the schoolhouse serves to protect and keep intact what is fundamental and important to a community. Communities where culturally responsive practice is the standard teaching practice incorporate five essential components, which are visible in the practices, resources, community interactions, and daily life within the schoolhouse, and thus serve as over-arching concepts and reminders of what is vital to the school culture. Specifically, the background knowledge generated from the varied ethnicities, races, and cultures of community members is vital to the environment. Acknowledging these perspectives and using this background knowledge to enhance cross-cultural communication and interaction throughout the school is essential to creating the caring learning environment needed in a culturally responsive community. Incorporating curricular content that honors and builds upon the population’s knowledge base, through methodologies that support the learning styles and needs of that population, is necessary for effective culturally responsive practice. The attention teachers and leaders put on integrating these elements into their practice determines the vitality of the culturally responsive community.

It is hypothesized that a commitment to social justice may influence leaders’ work and reveal what they value and thus also serve as supporting structures of the schoolhouse. The foundation, represented by the leaders’ espoused values, vision, and school’s mission, and the roof, represented by the essential components of culturally responsive practice provide a stable structure for successful culturally responsive
practice. The leaders’ values and vision and the school’s mission across culturally responsive communities may differ, but it is presumed that they will help support the overarching components of culturally responsive practice.

As leaders walk through the door and interact within the rooms of the schoolhouse they exhibit behaviors that set direction, develop people, and develop or redesign the organization in an attempt to carry out their vision, support the school’s mission, and reinforce each of the vital components of culturally responsive practice. Leaders within each culturally responsive schoolhouse determine the most effective combination of core leadership behaviors to rely on to maintain culturally responsive practice according to the context of their school community. By focusing on these specific leadership behaviors it is possible to identify how and when leaders impact the enactment of culturally responsive practice in their schools. Moreover, identifying these behaviors in practice may reveal if a particular leadership perspective is used to maintain culturally responsive practice. In essence, varied leadership frames serve as windows through which to view and explain how leaders’ behaviors support culturally responsive school communities.

This conceptual framework, *Culturally Responsive Leadership in the Schoolhouse*, helped orient this study and served as an organizational tool to aid in identifying and explaining how the actions of leaders support culturally responsive practice. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology used to carry out this study.
Chapter 3

Methods

The growing diversity in our nation has led to a rapid increase of students of color and international students in our classrooms. Research indicates that culturally responsive practice meets the needs of these students and helps them to succeed academically (Bartolome, 1994; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Novick, 1996). Research also indicates that effective school leadership helps yield positive results in school communities (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). This research fills an empirical knowledge gap by bringing these two areas of inquiry together to determine how leaders support culturally responsive practice, and how specific leadership behaviors contribute toward sustaining a culturally responsive environment. This research study explored the following research questions:

How do the actions of leaders support culturally responsive practice?

1. What are values and beliefs that leaders identify as essential in supporting a culturally responsive school community?
2. How do leaders act to support the values and beliefs of culturally responsive practice in their school?

This chapter explains the research design chosen to best answer these research questions, the important components of the research process, as well as steps taken to safeguard the trustworthiness of this study.

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Research Design

To answer the research questions, I used an interpretive qualitative methodology; specifically, my research followed a case study approach. Case studies are designed to describe and explain in-depth a “contemporary phenomenon in a real life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 1). In this study, the phenomenon is leadership within the context of culturally responsive school settings. In order to yield findings that addressed my research questions, I needed to fully describe this particular phenomenon in terms of the communities’ values, attitudes, and norms within a culturally responsive setting. This in-depth description supports the use of the case study approach (Merriam, 1998). Case study design is appropriate when, “the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2003, p. 13). This study of leadership behavior is grounded within the context of culturally responsive school communities. Describing how leaders act within this context is essential in understanding how culturally responsive practice is sustained in the community.

Moreover, to allow for greater exploration of the phenomenon, this case study employs a multi-case design. I chose each site considering its literal replication, which according to Yin (2003) includes cases where similar results are predicted based on a specific theoretical framework. As described in Chapter 2, the conceptual framework of this study considers a set of essential leadership behaviors that leaders rely on to carry out their work (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) within the context of a school where five components of culturally responsive practice (Gay, 2000) are evident
throughout the community. Applying this conceptual framework across case-sites and conducting cross case analysis led to convergence of evidence to support the findings.

I used multiple sources of evidence as is customary in case study research (Maxwell, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Through interviews, my primary source of data, I gained the perspective of school leaders in schools reported to support culturally responsive practice. Additionally, I conducted document analysis of school marketing materials, policy handbooks, historical documents, and meeting agendas. I completed field observations in each research site and conducted a focus group of teacher leaders at each site. Detailed information on methodological strategies of this study follows this brief introduction.

**Site Selection**

I purposefully selected the sites for this study, based in large part on the recommendations of an expert informant, Gene Batiste, Vice President, School Consultancy Services & Equity and Justice Initiatives, from the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) (see Appendix A), who identified seven possible sites for the study. From these, three independent schools in the Mid-Atlantic area were included, considering the following three criteria for their selection:

1. Existence of the key characteristics of the culturally responsive framework as reported by Mr. Batiste;
2. Recognized strong school leadership conveyed by Mr. Batiste;
3. A mission that includes international, multicultural, or global understanding.
I then explored each school’s web site and reviewed various documents I had gathered through my own participation in multiple diversity-related conferences (in which participants often included members of these schools) to verify that the missions, programs, and student/teacher composition of these schools incorporated the principles of culturally responsive practice.

These sites were highly recommended by the informant and each serves a different age group, thus providing an element of uniqueness and diversity. I telephoned the heads of school to invite them to participate in the study. One accepted immediately by telephone and provided a long list of contacts and information during that initial conversation. One indicated that she would need to speak with her leadership team and would get back to me; the third asked me to come in to discuss the possibility of being included in the study. All three appreciated and took pride from the recommendation made by a known member of NAIS. After a verbal acceptance, each head of school confirmed their interest in writing. I considered this affirmative acceptance from my top-three choices as a positive start to this research journey.

I gave pseudonyms to each of the schools:

1. The Gibson School is noted for a strong pre-school program, serves pre-kindergarten through sixth grade and is located right in the middle of a residential neighborhood, almost blending in with its surroundings. I had heard a former head of school speak at a conference prior to this selection and was intrigued by her reflections on the school's journey toward diversity.
2. The Livelton School, in contrast, is located in a metropolitan area and equally blends in with its surroundings. It serves middle school, grades 6 through 8, and high school grades 9 through 12.

3. The Alliance School is a large pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school, is religiously affiliated as a Quaker school, and has been in existence for almost two hundred years.

Each of these schools was recommended for similar reasons, but their distinct qualities intrigued me, and I felt they would bring a unique perspective to my research. More details about the schools and their communities are presented in Chapter 4.

**Participant Selection**

School leadership of independent schools is the unit of analysis for this case study. To understand participant selection, it is helpful to consider the somewhat unique organizational and leadership structure of independent schools. Although structures vary from school to school, the following structure is typical for an independent school.

Independent schools may be pre-school through twelfth grade; pre-school through eighth grade; seventh through twelfth grade, or ninth through twelfth grade. Schools that follow a pre-school through twelfth grade model are called unit schools. Typically these schools have a head of school, closely compared to an on-site superintendent. Each school section (primary or lower, middle, and upper) has a section director, closely compared to a principal. In larger schools, there may be an assistant director (assistant principal) in each section. Another important administrator of independent schools is the director of studies who oversees the curriculum of the school. Many times there is a
diversity director or coordinator on either a part-time or full-time basis. There are department heads and often team leaders for grade levels. Considering that independent schools select their students and receive tuition to cover expenses, top administrators lead the admissions office, business office, and office of institutional advancement. At some schools assistant heads of school cover these positions. These key administrative positions constitute a leadership team. Governing the entire school organization is a board of trustees.

The head of school, as the formal leader, was my first contact for each school. Each head of school recommended a person to contact to introduce me to the school, to provide a tour as well as some background information on the school’s culture and programs. Once I had spoken to the head of school and received verbal interest in participating in the study, I sent the letter of invitation approved for this study (Appendix B) to formally set up my interviews. Letters of interest were then sent to recommended school leaders (Appendix C).

During my initial interview with either the head of school or the leader recommended by the head of school, key informants on leadership for culturally responsive practice emerged and helped to establish the roster of important interviews at each site. Over a five-month period from early June 2008 through late October 2008, I conducted a total of thirteen interviews with key administrators of each school. Positions included: the head(s) of school, assistant head of school, the division director(s), academic dean(s), dean of students, and diversity coordinators. Four of these interviewees also taught a class, adding an interesting perspective to the inquiry. I
provide specific information on these participants in Chapter 4 where I present the case findings.

I also conducted a focus group of teacher leaders at each school, which added sixteen additional perspectives to my data. To give myself the time to initiate data analysis and thus develop an appropriate interview protocol to help fill in some of the blanks from inquiries in these communities, and considering the possible changes in attitudes and practices that typically occur over a school year, I chose to conduct the focus group interviews toward the end of the school year, in March, May, and June of 2009. Realizing the challenge of uniting a group of teachers at the same time, during the school day, and respecting the needed planning time of teachers, I accepted the recommendations of the administrators to help me coordinate the meetings. At Alliance the focus group included three diversity coordinators representing each division of the school; at Livelton the chair of each academic department, for a total of ten; and at Gibson, where coordination was more difficult, the focus group was opened to anyone interested in a “free lunch your first week out of school” which led to two faculty members representing the third and fourth grades, and the curriculum coordinator. Appendices D and E include the semi-structured interview protocols approved by the George Mason University Human Subjects Review Board, for the leader and teacher leader interviews. Specific information on these focus group sessions is presented as part of the case description in Chapter 4.
Research Relationships

The eagerness the heads of school showed in collaborating with me on this project during my first visit or telephone conversation set the stage for the development of positive research relationships. During my initial visits, my guides were enthusiastic and open to answer all of my questions and elaborated on and added to each of my inquiries. Through my interactions with the guide and with those I met throughout the tour, I realized people wanted to help so I felt comfortable and at ease asking for additional information or soliciting materials. Working in an independent school myself and referring to my strong passion for diversity may have supported what I sensed from the outset as comfort with me on the part of those I met at each school. There was a quick turnaround to any request or inquiry I made through the head of school, his/her assistant or my indicated contact for the remainder of my interviews. Moreover, I was well received during each of my field visits and allowed to roam freely at each school. I was always welcomed in each class, meeting, and school event or was left alone as I reflected in one of the common areas at each school. My presence was accepted and did not seem to stand out as unusual.

Data Collection

Considering that this inquiry is context specific and relied on detailed explanations from multiple people and perspectives, I used a variety of qualitative methods to collect data. Interviews of school leaders provided the majority of data. Focus group interviews, document and artifact review, and field observations were my secondary data collection strategies, and helped to triangulate findings. Data collection
began in March of 2008 and continued through June of 2009. The extended period of
time allowed me to experience the schools at varied times of the year, providing nuances
which helped me to better understand each school’s context and culture.

In phase 1 of my data collection, I reviewed public documents and toured the
campus to acquaint myself with the community, its mission, beliefs, and identity. This
initial overview helped me to identify certain beliefs, values, and traditions espoused in
the community as well as to identify possible events and people to help seek further
information. My initial visit to each school launched the study as I was given a thorough
tour, which served as a field experience, a walking interview, and document collection
opportunity. I left this initial visit with admissions brochures, school newspapers, and
alumni magazines. My initial contacts at each school were the director of admission and
diversity (Gibson); the academic dean (Livelton); and the director of diversity/upper
school English teacher (Alliance). I was also given the freedom to roam the grounds.
This experience gave me the opportunity to identify important artifacts, which I described
in my field notebook. On or near each campus I found a quiet spot to decompress,
reflect, and journal. I left each school either with a follow-up appointment for an
interview with my initial guide, or a list of administrators to contact, based on a
conversation on leaders’ contributions and roles in the community.

Phase 2 consisted of interviews with school administrators combined with field
observations. The interviews of school leaders were the primary instrument for data
collection. I set up interviews at the convenience of the school leaders. A total of
thirteen interviews of school leaders was completed from June 2008 to October 2008. I
audiotaped each interview to ensure precise and accurate data. Each participant signed the approved consent form for school leaders participating in this study (Appendix F). Concurrent interviews followed by reflections enabled me to adapt my semi-structured interview protocol to guide data collection. Little by little the leaders also equipped me with essential documents. These enabled me to begin phase 3, the review of key documents and continued field visits. These field observations included attending faculty meetings, key school programs and rituals, a parent education program, and a community service event. I observed a total of seven classes and part of a summer camp day; I also observed general daily life in the halls to get a sense of each school’s pulse. The school structure, design, layout, and décor provided useful data. The school artifacts, together with documents available to the school community (school handbook, historical account of the school, yearbooks, school magazines and newspapers) as well as documents given to me directly from school leaders (faculty meeting agendas, PowerPoint presentations, students’ written reflections) enabled me to align data received through interviews with data that surfaced through document and artifact analysis which provided key information to answer my research questions. I recorded each of the documents on a Document and Artifact Gathering Matrix. I conducted focus groups of teacher leaders for phase 4; Appendix G is a copy of the George Mason Human Subjects Review Board, Informed Consent Form for Teacher Leaders.

As I collected data the following organizational and reflective strategies were used to prepare for data analysis. I used a color-coded case study database for each of my school case sites. Each database was divided into sections for documents (including a
document summary form), memos, field notes, and interview transcriptions. Field notes
and observations were color coded to ensure quick and proper match up with cases. This
database organizational system ensured quality control throughout the data collection
process and set the stage for construct validity and reliability (Yin, 2003). Moreover, I
kept a reflective journal and a data collection/task log.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis process included both within case and cross case analysis. I
collected data concurrently across research sites using diverse methods as indicated
above. Similarly, I conducted data analysis of each of the three cases simultaneously.
Although I treated each case separately, I did not complete data analysis, outline possible
findings, and write a case report one by one. Instead I used the data as a whole to explore
the phenomenon or case, leadership. Approaching the study of the phenomenon while
collecting and analyzing data across cases set the stage for the convergence of evidence
(Yin, 2003) needed to solidify the findings. After I completed the case reports for each of
my three case sites, I began cross case analysis.

**Within case analysis.** In order to fully understand, describe, and explain each
school as a case unit, as well as to effectively interpret the data, I organized the analysis
into three overlapping phases: coding, data display, and making sense of the data (Miles
& Huberman, 1994). Analysis of the primary data gained through 13 interviews across
sites occurred simultaneously. I initiated coding as soon as I completed each
transcription and continued coding throughout the analysis. The purpose of coding was
to fracture the data into thick descriptive chunks to facilitate categorizing for further
understanding (Maxwell, 2005). I read through the interviews, highlighted chunks relevant to thinking about leadership behavior as well as chunks that described the ethos of the school. For each highlighted code, I wrote a reflection in the wide margin I set for each transcript. After this initial coding process, I reread the transcripts and codes, and wrote memos about significant leadership actions, examples of culturally responsive practice, or other observations from the data. It was through this process I determined it beneficial to organize my codes utilizing the constructs of my conceptual framework. These codes included organizational values and leadership behaviors (set direction, develop people, and develop/redesign the organization). Additionally, I aligned these conceptual codes with my secondary research questions. Coding, using my research questions and conceptual framework controlled data overload, and provided a point of reference during reflection and further analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

After assigning these conceptual codes to the initial data chunks, I reviewed all transcriptions and memos and expanded my coding strategy, adding both etic and emic codes (Maxwell, 2005, Miles & Huberman, 1994). Etic codes derived from literature related to details of leadership behavior, for example, shared meanings, vision, and managing the environment; those derived by the researcher included bold statements, school culture, modeling, and reflection. Emic codes derived from participants included “caught not taught,” “don’t leave yourself at the doorstep,” and “comfort zone.” These substantive codes provided further insight into the data, facilitated data reduction, and initiated my thinking around possible research claims.
With the vast majority of my primary data coded, I began phase 2, creating a data matrix to display the data in an organized, functional manner that would help the initial process of making sense of the data, interpreting it, and setting the stage for conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I developed a computerized data matrix for each case site, which included code categories, color coordinated conceptual and substantive codes, references to research questions, source, and comments. Appendix H, Data Analysis Matrix, provides an example of this type of matrix. I also used a large board with color-coded data chunks to create a visual, enabling me to interact with the data. To both data displays I added codes from field notes.

With data matrixes completed, I launched into the final stage of within case analysis, making sense of the data, gathering all of the information with the intent of analyzing and interpreting the phenomena (Yin, 2003). Through continual review of the matrixes I noted patterns and themes, and counted reoccurrences of organizational and substantive codes. This process led to data reduction as well as expansion of initial thoughts of findings. Through the constant comparison method (Miles & Huberman 1994; Yin, 2003), I sifted through the data, thus allowing myself to interpret their meaning and yield a set of findings. Subsequent drafts of each case study report also facilitated data reduction and served to clarify findings. This process enabled me to address my research questions in each case site. Specifically, I described through supportive evidence what leaders valued, and how leaders set direction, developed people, and developed/redesigned the organization in a manner that sustained culturally responsive practice at their schools.
Cross case synthesis. I continued to use the constant comparison method (Miles & Huberman 1994; Yin, 2003), to determine patterns, themes, and findings that concurred across cases. I incorporated tools and strategies from Stake (1995) to facilitate the cross case analysis. I reviewed each single case report, developed assertions, and continued to synthesize those assertions. I read all three case reports in one sitting and recorded the synopsis, case findings, and noted themes on an analyst’s worksheet, Single Case Study Synopsis, adapted from Stake (1995) (Appendix I). This process led to additional readings, memo writing, and sustained comparisons. After this extensive process I used Stake’s Cross Case Assertions Worksheet (Appendix J) to document findings and examples that concurred across cases. From the assertions worksheet I began to synthesize the information, outlining and journaling to include interpretations and logical persuasion of the corresponding findings. Through synthesis I landed on a set of four findings representing how leaders sustained culturally responsive practice across these three school communities.

My Past Experience as a Leader and Scholar in a Cultural Context

Considering that this study seeks to understand how leaders’ behaviors influence culturally responsive practice, it is important to acknowledge my own background as a leader, teacher, and scholar in a multicultural context. What began for me as a passion for language and culture, turned into a career and a way of life. In my formal education I concentrated on Latin American studies, multicultural education, international education, and educational leadership. My informal education consists of varied travel experiences, living in South America for ten years, and raising a bi-cultural family. My diverse
professional experience both in South America and in the United States includes serving as department chair, principal, and assistant principal, as well as work developing curricula in bilingual, immersion, multicultural, and foreign language programs. As a Ph.D. student I added scholarly work to my repertoire, reading literature on culturally responsive practice and leadership, as well as conducting primary research on leaders of schools in Ecuador, South America and on immigrant teacher experiences in the United States.

Common to all of these experiences is the lens I use to approach my work and guide my practice. Understanding the culture I am living in and the cultural influences that surround me guides how I establish relationships, make decisions, and approach a particular task. Thus, I value cross-cultural understanding, and I have experienced it in both my personal and professional life. At the same time, I am aware that leaders enter educational communities with their own unique experiences, perspectives, and values. They may be immersed in a multicultural setting, having entered it from a very different angle than I, due to their own life experiences. Although my cultural lens may lead me to focus on certain behaviors and attitudes that support culturally responsive practice, I have tried to consider carefully this lens from the point of view of each leader in his or her own context when making decisions about the data.

Validity

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, validity threats were considered at each phase of the research process, design, collection, and analysis. As
noted above, I paid special attention to my own researcher bias, as well as participant subjectivity, while ensuring diversity of data to yield insightful and reliable conclusions.

I purposefully chose to employ a multi-case design due to my interest in exploring the phenomenon, leadership, across similar contexts, multicultural school environments. I predicted that leadership would make a difference in supporting culturally responsive practice and focused on describing what leaders do in these environments. Thus, designing this study to ensure “literal replication” (Yin, 2003, p. 47), was important from the onset. To help ensure this literal replication, in the design phase of this study I piloted my semi-structured interview protocol, developed a case study protocol, and relied upon my conceptual framework to orient my study. Through these early design decisions I ensured that similar procedures were used across cases.

Considering that the leadership interviews were my primary data source, I spent ample time developing and piloting the semi-structured interview protocol for school leaders. I asked for feedback from others who work in the field of multicultural education and educational leadership. When I felt confident with the final product, I piloted the protocol with a peer educational leader. Next, I developed a case study protocol (Yin, 2003). The protocol enabled me to maintain focus and follow a clear path as I collected and reviewed data and considered my research questions. Part of the case study protocol included stretching out the interview process over the period of one year to ensure diversity of individual perspectives over a period of time, as well as conducting field observations at the beginning, mid-point, and end of data collection. Also important to the protocol was keeping my conceptual framework visual and my research questions
front and center to help maintain my focus on the essential components of the study and ensure a similar research approach across sites. Although necessary detours provided unpredicted exploration common to qualitative research, the case study protocol served as a road map to guide me as I moved toward my research destination, ultimately ensuring consistency of procedures across cases and supporting the reliability of my results.

I relied upon the following validity precautions during data collection: the creation of three case study databases and triangulation of sources. Considering the abundance of data collected from multiple sources, it was key to effectively organize the data to avoid data or researcher overload that would lead to analysis difficulties. From the start I put into place a computer generated database as well as a color-coded, case site database binder for each research site. This case study database (Yin, 2003) strengthened reliability by keeping all data in an orderly and efficient fashion, allowing me, as the researcher, to continually revisit needed sources as I reflected upon my data and began to outline findings.

Triangulation of sources strengthened the validity of this study by providing diversity of data gathered through multiple processes to accurately portray the variety of perspectives (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Leadership interviews included a variety of leadership roles generating data from multiple points of view. Focus group interviews from teacher leaders, observations of daily life and key events, and document and artifact analysis were secondary sources. Data generated through these secondary sources served to triangulate findings. Also important throughout the data collection phase was the attention I gave to record thick, descriptive data. Such data
are needed to ensure reliability (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). The carefully developed, semi-structured protocol helped to capture this rich data. Moreover, word-for-word interview transcripts provided rich data and were used and revisited frequently.

Important to case study research is acknowledging the multiple perspectives that surface through the many interviews and observations within the context, and recognizing the variability of interpretations and conclusions that stem from those perspectives. Merriam (1998) notes, “Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality” (p. 201), or “people’s constructions of reality” (p. 203). To safeguard internal validity of a case study it is important to provide a holistic interpretation of the data (Merriam, 1998), which I did by triangulation of sources, long-term observation, conducting member checks, and by recognizing my assumptions as the researcher. After I interpreted the data and established findings, I conducted member checks of the case study report with two interviewees at each case site. This checking allowed participants to note any misinterpretations of data. Through memos I captured quick interpretations and tried to consciously separate my interpretations based on my own beliefs from interpretations based on the uncovered perspective of the participants. Through this process I controlled self-reporting and strived to effectively uncover the reality of the participants.

All of the above mentioned strategies in each of the research phases supported a clear chain of evidence (Yin, 2003) or audit trail (Merriam, 1998), providing ample
documentation to connect data to findings supporting reliability and safeguarding the trustworthiness of this study.

Through Chapter 3, I explained my methodology. In Chapter 4, I present each of the case findings. In Chapter 5, I address the cross case findings, followed by Chapter 6, where I discuss the lessons learned from this study on culturally responsive leadership.
Chapter 4

Case Findings

Through a qualitative case-study design, I explored leadership in culturally responsive school settings. Interviews of leaders, teacher focus groups, and multiple school site observations yielded descriptive data, which I used to answer my primary research question: How do the actions of leaders support culturally responsive practice in schools? An initial exploratory data analysis phase enabled me to fracture the data (Maxwell, 2005) and identify codes and categories unique to the particular school context. For example, in Case 2, after highlighting and reviewing specific quotes, I determined that a sense of community through engagement among constituents, professional reflection, and consistent communication were themes that rendered further analysis. With these substantive categories in mind, as well as other characteristics particular to each school setting, I returned to my conceptual framework, *Culturally Responsive Leadership in the Schoolhouse*, to approach my findings in a systematic manner, similar to what Yin (2003) terms providing a “chain of evidence.” I placed each descriptive chunk of evidence into the categories used in my conceptual framework. Doing so enabled me to visualize each leader’s journey through the school community, connecting the leader’s ideas, values, and beliefs with the specific actions that reinforce culturally responsive practice in their schools.
This chapter presents the initial analysis of evidence, focusing in separate sections on each school—the Gibson School, the Livelton School, and the Alliance School—as separate cases. For each case, I give a brief introduction of the school, the characteristics of the school population, and a list of key members of the leadership team. Within each case, findings are reported in four sections: The first deals with specific values that provide insight into leadership practice in these culturally responsive communities. The next three sections deal with leadership behavior required for effective leadership practice: setting direction, developing people, and developing and redesigning the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004, Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Looking at these practices embedded within a particular school setting facilitated my ability to uncover, interpret, and outline how leaders lead or what leadership behaviors they employ within a culturally responsive community. Chapter 5 presents a cross case analysis. Finally in Chapter 6, I answer my research questions and discuss these findings and their implications in the broader educational community.

**Case 1: Gibson School**

**Case overview.** Gibson School sits in the middle of residential homes and tree-lined streets in a Mid-Atlantic city. Founded in 1965, Gibson School serves 300 pre-school and elementary school children. In front and adjacent to its two large stucco buildings lie an inviting field and playground next to a small stream and flower garden. Gibson’s swimming pool is open to the public; neighborhood families picnic and play on the grounds, and its facilities can be rented for significant family celebrations by anyone in the surrounding community. The neighborhood’s annual picnic is on Gibson’s
grounds. The director of admissions described this unusual aspect of openness for an independent school as an example of the importance school leaders give to connecting the school with its surrounding community.

Roaming the halls while touring and viewing the facilities confirmed the openness and welcoming feeling of Gibson. Most offices and many classrooms have large windows. As a visitor, I observed active students and teachers. While conversing with the assistant head in his office, I watched the junior kindergarten youngsters interact with their teacher. Posted on the walls was an abundant display of colorful art, tapestries from different countries, and quotes about peace. Multihued woven artifacts from Guatemala and Central America lined the walls of a common area between classrooms. Wings and floors divided the two-story building. Pre-school and kindergarten had their own wing, while first through third grades and fourth through sixth grades each occupied a floor.

The Gibson student population mirrors that of the surrounding community. Forty percent of the student body identifies with one of the diverse categories recorded at Gibson. The categories extend beyond the traditional ones of race and ethnicity, but also include single parent families, families formed by same gender parents, and families formed through adoption. The administration and faculty is similarly diverse, and is described as a “powerful gestalt” and “role model and resource” for the families at Gibson (retrieved June 25, 2009, from Gibson School web site). Forty-five percent of the faculty and staff identifies with one of the diverse categories recorded at Gibson. Faculty and staff joining the Gibson community are introduced each year in the community/alumni newsletter. Through my review of excerpts from “New Faces at
Gibson,” I confirmed that for three consecutive years fifty percent of new hires represented a minority group, represented a balance of both genders, and varied in age. Excerpts also noted each teacher’s diverse international teaching and travel experience.

The admissions office asks each family exactly how they want to be known as a family within the Gibson community. This information, together with background information on the faculty and staff, is summarized in a chart the school web site. During my visits to school, I absorbed the sights, sounds, and interactions in the community. In particular, I noted the varied racial and ethnic backgrounds of its members and the distinct languages and dialects.

**The leaders.** I chose participants at the Gibson School based in part on recommendations from the Gene Batiste, Vice President, School Consultancy Services & Equity and Justice Initiatives, from the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). My own knowledge as an independent school administrator also enabled me to recognize which leadership positions most directly influence instructional practice. At Gibson School the leadership team includes the head of school, the assistant head of school (serving as the primary division director), the pre-primary division director, and the director of admission and diversity. The leadership team meets weekly and is the primary decision-making body.

At Gibson, I interviewed the assistant head of school, the pre-primary division director, and the director of admission and diversity all on the same day in early July 2008. Summer camp was in full session; the faculty was on summer break. This group of administrators, when I arrived, was working as a team preparing the summer mailing
packets that were going to all enrolled families at the end of the day. Ensuring distance from my initial interviews, I interviewed the present and past heads of school, each on a different day toward the end of July 2008. The teacher leader focus group took place one year later. The following chart outlines characteristics of the leaders I interviewed at Gibson School as part of my quest to understand the leaders’ perceptions of the beliefs and actions that influence this culturally responsive community. I interviewed a total of eight administrators and teacher leaders over a period of one year. In order to include an historical and contemporary perspective that would strengthen the interpretations of my findings, I included the past and present heads of school, as well as community members with between two and nineteen years of service at Gibson. See Table 1.
Table 1

Leader Interviews at the Gibson School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years at Gibson</th>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Assistant Head</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dona</td>
<td>Head of School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenda</td>
<td>Prior Head of School</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>Director of Admission/Diversity</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>Director of Pre-primary</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Curriculum Coordinator, Third and Fourth Grade Teachers</td>
<td>Varied</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>June 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Values. According to my conceptual framework, the foundation, or basis for leaders’ engagement stems from an alignment of a school’s mission and leaders’ visions. I purposely selected Gibson School as a culturally responsive school, and as part of the site selection process I determined that the school’s mission complements culturally responsive practice. The Gibson mission includes terms like “inclusive,” “community,” “value and respect the individual,” and “ensure equity.” Through culturally responsive practice—by forming a caring community, getting to know the backgrounds of the students, and providing instruction that respects and meets the needs
of individuals—the Gibson community, I believe, works to fulfill its mission. Leaders’ visions, however, are harder to discern; to understand how and why leaders act in certain ways, it is helpful to understand the values that guide leaders’ practice. Sergiovanni asserts, “Authentic leaders anchor their practice in ideas, values and commitments, exhibit distinct qualities of style and substance, and can be trusted to be morally diligent in advancing the enterprises they lead” (1999, p. 17). Values serve as lenses that help leaders focus as they carry out their vision; the vision of Gibson’s leaders includes maintaining and further developing the paths leading to the progress of this culturally responsive community.

The most prominent values emerging from the data analysis were a deep respect for the individual and an appreciation of multiple perspectives. At Gibson, these values serve as anchors that guide leaders’ decisions on practice and policy. The importance of values for leaders, as revealed in interview excerpts, immediately surfaced during the admissions process and continued throughout students’ journeys at Gibson. Interview data provided examples of how Gibson leaders and teachers made a concerted effort to gather information on families and individuals and use this information to make decisions on program, or to make decisions that meet the social and learning needs of individuals. Moreover, each of these individuals adds to the multiple perspectives that form this diverse community. The words of Gibson leaders led me to understand how the values of respect for the individual and the appreciation of multiple perspectives enhance a Gibson education.
From their first encounter with children and their families, Gibson leaders emphasize getting to know the child as an individual. The goal is not solely to determine if the child meets the admission criteria, but to understand the child and the family in order to ease entry into the community, determine the child’s future class grouping, or to plan for any needed support. Megan, director of admission, provided details of her observations in pre-primary to explain how she believes individuality continues to be respected and valued when the student is a full community member:

It is really acknowledging where a child is, “I am noticing that you really want to paint today?” and engaging that child in conversations. It is not only giving an answer but helping that child to wonder themselves. [Or.] “we notice that Jan takes her time when she enters the play yard; we know she really needs to take her time, maybe about five minutes before her friends come over.” So what they [the teachers] did was help her communicate that to her friends so that they did not feel that she was slighting them, and the friends began to learn that this is how Jan works in the morning and that that is OK.

As noted by Megan, teachers keenly observe students to understand them as individuals, to help cater to their needs.

Glenda, past head of school, extended this concept of individuality to the importance of supporting, recognizing, and valuing one’s identity, and the notion that once a child is comfortable with his or her identity, the child becomes a more engaged learner. Part of
helping students develop strong identities, according to Glenda, is to ensure that they can find other community members with commonalities whom they can relate to and who can provide support and comfort:

Without allies in this world, we are never going to get anywhere. There are not nearly enough adopted kids than there are other children; there are not nearly as many African-American kids in independent schools than there are other children. You absolutely have to have these allies; to me it is a school’s business making a child feel comfortable and empowered for learning.

A sixth grade student reinforces the belief that being around others from similar backgrounds provides comfort and a sense of belonging. In her sixth grade graduation speech, provided to me from the head of school, she notes, “One of my best memories, one that I will never forget, is of making my closest friends. I met Laura, Lula and Mia in pre-school. All girls, all Chinese, all adopted. We clicked immediately.” Glenda believes having commonalities with others builds self-confidence in students, which helps them succeed in the community. Thus, the effort to recruit and maintain a diverse student body and staff is ongoing.

The diverse composition of the student body, together with the interactions of community members, Dona, present head of school, suggested is an element that “helps the community to understand who WE are and how we function together in a diverse community.” Andrew, the assistant head of school, expresses it this way: “Allow students
to articulate who I am, who we are together, and how we are going to take care of one another.” In addition, “First and foremost we are about being a community. You need to bring your whole self into the community.” In essence these Gibson leaders value and respect individuality and consider how each unique member contributes a different perspective to the learning environment. This respect for individuality, individuals creating a diverse community, and the desire to engage in a manner that highlights the multiple perspectives present in the community, is where Dona indicates “the real work of helping kids, to actually develop the ability to see the bigger picture, to develop perspective and understand what impacts diversity and human relationships” begins.

With the Gibson leaders’ values identified, namely respecting individuality and understanding multiple perspectives, I move to the second research question: How do leaders act to support the values and beliefs of culturally responsive practice in their school? By using the three leadership behaviors necessary to being an effective leader (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) as organizing categories, I identify specific practices at Gibson School that facilitate an understanding of how the leaders’ values transfer into their practice.

**Setting direction: stages of development.** Setting direction deals with the leadership acts of forging a vision and mobilizing resources to meet well-established priorities. In part, the leader’s ability to accomplish this task is dependent on the history of the organization and past goals and priorities. For example, in the case of Gibson, Glenda recognized the need to increase the diversity of the school community and stimulate growth in understanding diverse perspectives and needs. Dona, her successor,
acknowledged this diversity and the diverse perspectives that were nurtured during Glenda’s tenure and used this knowledge base as a foundation to initiate clear systems and develop a curricular framework that supports a culturally responsive community.

Each leader appreciated the hard work involved and the long process needed to develop a culturally responsive community. Recognizing the different stages of this process and acknowledging the accomplishments thus far, each leader set a clear direction toward improving and maintaining a responsive community. Dona described Gibson’s journey toward becoming a culturally responsive community through different developmental stages:

I think there was a point in time you would get where they were having long hard conversations. They were putting things out there, leaning into discomfort, big conversations, bringing in a lot of speakers and paying a lot of attention. I think that put the school on the map as far as trying very hard, and the population, the kids of color population went up, and there was an effort to hire administrators and teachers of color. I think that is all good stuff, but where I think where we are now, you know schools grow up like people, there are developmental stages and I think that is a teenager. You know, out of control sometimes, throwing it out there and putting in energy and all the wonderful things that come with youth. Where we are now I would say is grown up, but not all the way; so we need to get more systematic so it is not all haphazard.
Putting Gibson on the map may be seen as the primary stage, where community members reacted to diverse issues by expressing themselves openly and emotionally. Getting these emotions out in the open, together with unloading a variety of sensitive topics that forced community members to come to terms with their educational beliefs in the area of diversity, created a knowledge base that led Gibson through its primary stage into adolescence. When Dona became the leader, she was ready to build upon this foundation and lead the school into adulthood by using this culturally responsive foundation to further develop programs and practices that reinforce in-depth learning and prepare students for the next stage of their education.

**Primary stage: Glenda as head of school.** Analysis of interview data led me to interpret how Glenda carried out specific leadership practices. Glenda set direction at Gibson by communicating her beliefs openly and consistently to all of the school constituencies; her goal was to help others understand and engage in a diverse belief system to foster an inclusive school community. During her first years at Gibson, interactions and dialog with community members helped her to explore her own beliefs around diversity. She shared with the board of trustees some of her experiences and the process that led her to adapt a more inclusive set of beliefs. The board of trustees supported the head’s vision of creating a diverse knowledge base and establishing mechanisms to move toward becoming a culturally responsive community:

I went to the board. I want the school, to have the discrimination clause, but I don’t want it to be a defensive clause. I want it to be a proactive clause. Gibson
actively seeks children of color. The board really understood and believed in that, so that was really the beginning.

Fourteen years after the endorsement, the board continued to validate, communicate and carry out the diversity initiatives. A member of the board of trustees, and chair of the board diversity committee, reinforced this through an article he wrote for the community/alumni newsletter, where he stated the board’s diversity purpose as to:

Support the director of diversity initiatives and the school administration and faculty in the promotion and celebration of diversity throughout the community; facilitate the board’s engagement in short and long-term strategic planning related to diversity initiatives; and coordinate education of the board on diversity-related issues.

The board chair in this article announced the year’s goal of working toward improving the economic diversity at the school by expanding its financial aid program, “all families returning to Gibson will receive information on long-term tuition financing programs. Moreover, the committee is working on a study of the role of socio-economic status at Gibson.”

Following the board endorsement, Glenda began to take on the work of setting direction by building shared meaning around issues of diversity within the community. She intentionally initiated conversations with faculty and parents around
different diversity identifiers. In Glenda’s words, you need to “open doors,” “get to the bones of things,” “be comfortable with discomfort,” “put things in people’s way to stumble over,” “plant the seed, even if it takes time to germinate.” Glenda set direction by initiating these bold conversations with each of the school’s constituencies in what she felt was a successful attempt to create shared meaning for the community with regard to recognizing and appreciating diverse perspectives.

**Bringing Gibson into adulthood: Dona, present head of school.** The inclusive knowledge base and the increase in diverse representation across constituents that Glenda established during the early stage of Gibson’s development, and acknowledging what Dona calls “strong integrative teaching,” led me to conclude that Dona sets direction by initiating her vision of developing a mature system at Gibson. Her vision includes “tightening up” and “shaping” the curriculum in a manner that weaves diverse viewpoints into teachers’ everyday practice and develops the skills students will need in life. As Dona initiated her curricular vision, she began to outline the additional practices needed to support the system. She always kept in mind the final outcome, to prepare students through school experiences to be change agents in greater society:

This is a mature system that you have to have in place. So if one of your goals is to support diversity as one of your standards, then it has to be reflected when you are sitting down, in your check list going through with your teacher. I guess what I am trying to say is that all those things effect your ability to get beyond just being diverse, it is how you make sure, and if the kids are not getting a great
education, then they only have some of the skills they need to be effective. You might be comfortable with diversity, but who cares if you don’t see yourself as a mover and a groover in the world.

Dona set direction by developing a time line for curricular revision, and by providing economic, human, and material support to achieve this goal. She carved time out of the pre-planning schedule for teachers and administrators to work collaboratively on the new curricular initiative. The summer prior to her official start teachers received an honorarium to map their grade level conceptual theme. “You want them to be heavily invested in their design; you do not want to design it and give it to them, that is not the point, which is why the conceptual themes are liberating.” Teachers returned in August with a mapped-out curriculum using grade level conceptual themes, themes that open many avenues to explore multiple perspectives and diverse systems.

To ensure in-depth understanding of the conceptual themes, upon their return, teachers were charged with transforming their maps into creative three-dimensional Joseph Cornell boxes. These boxes serve as a permanent exhibit in the main hall of the school. They visually represent Dona’s ability to set direction through curricular refinement, collaboration, and creativity. By working together, and modeling the project-based learning expected to take place in the classroom, this professional community is beginning to understand “Who are WE? And how do WE function as a diverse group of educators?” This process demonstrates how Dona helped to expand Gibson as a culturally responsive community by introducing teachers and students to diverse perspectives through a curricular framework. Dona also communicated this curricular vision through
modeling and active engagement. Teachers described her as a hands-on leader who got right to work, to help them plan, visualize, and develop a conceptual curricular framework.

**Developing people.** Strategies leaders employ to develop people flow directly from their efforts to set direction around a compelling vision and strategic goals. Interpreting the data from multiple interviews led me to conclude that Gibson leaders recognize the rich tapestry of perspectives within the community as the foundation for a successful education. Using this tapestry of perspectives, leaders develop people by consistently encouraging community members to explore their own beliefs and experiences in a manner that facilitates understanding the students and families they serve. Through professional engagement and effective modeling, leaders prepare teachers to employ their diverse knowledge base to effectively communicate and problem solve with their students and the students’ families. In this manner leaders work with teachers, using the context of their own classroom, to solidify their culturally responsive practice. In essence, the Gibson leaders are facilitators of teaching practice and effective communication among constituencies, always taking into account the diverse needs and varied backgrounds of community members.

Specifically, leaders develop people by listening to their faculty and providing strategies that help them problem solve and meet the needs of students and families. Gibson leaders develop people by modeling effective dialog as well as by providing hands-on support. Learning how to listen for key information and using that information appropriately takes skill and practice. Through problem-solving strategies
teachers are exposed to different communication approaches and are encouraged to reflect upon the cultural backgrounds of the students under their care to provide them with the support that meets their specific needs. In this way, they are integrating many aspects of culturally responsive practice: getting to know their students; understanding different communication styles; and ultimately using this information to meet the specific needs of the student, through culturally congruent instruction (Gay, 2000).

Data from the focus groups supported data from the interviews of the administrators and led me to conclude that both the past and present heads of school were accessible and available to teachers and other administrators. This availability led to different types of support for teachers. Glenda provided support first by listening to teachers’ needs, and then by guiding them through a reflective process that would enable them to leave the head’s office ready to tackle a situation. Dona has a more hands-on approach. She works through a situation directly with the teacher or administrator, modeling a practice or approach, which then enables the community member to leave the office and carry out a similar task with other teachers or in the classroom. As one teacher put it, Dona likes “to get her hands in there and help solve problems.” As needs surfaced, teachers and administrators implemented problem-solving techniques modeled by the heads of school. Glenda expected hard conversations to take place, but also reaffirmed and cared for her staff:

You have to model that risk taking, frustration and scrutinizing, getting up, starting again. If you can feel excited about that modeling, even if it is going to
cost you, all good things cost, so, get a good night’s sleep, eat a good breakfast, and hang in there; everything is going to be OK.

Dona works collaboratively with the curriculum coordinator; this one-on-one approach serves as a model for the curriculum coordinator’s own one-on-one work with all new classroom teachers, resource teachers, and other teachers on an as-needed basis:

We have a curriculum coordinator who does understand the need that we have to get these things into the classroom, and I work very closely with her. And I think if you want curriculum to evolve in a school, in a clear direction, you have to keep your finger in it as a head. Many heads remove themselves from that necessity. I just do not take my fingers out, so the coordinator knows that if she needs to see me, she know she gets to see me. She was in here yesterday.

Division directors develop people by directly guiding teachers through strategies that enable them to work with diverse constituents. Andrew, assistant head of school overseeing the kindergarten through sixth grade program, emphasized the need to create a caring classroom community. When challenges arose, he asked the teachers to return to an essential question, “Is the environment working for this child?” He encouraged teachers to reflect upon patterns within the classroom community that hinder effective learning:
Identify patterns and trying to work to solve things when a pattern arises. For example, [Jim] was not “doing what he was told.” Look for data. Ask questions. Is he the only boy? Is he the only Black boy? . . . When you figure out what area it could be, work from that. Another student had an altercation; I went through the same process. You need to change the situation in order to create an environment where the child can be available for learning. What mechanisms or tools can we put into place to help students be available for learning?

Similarly Peggy, director of pre-primary, used a questioning technique to model and guide her teachers. She encouraged teachers to look at the big picture, to consider the cultural backgrounds of the students and the approaches families may take to support their children. Peggy believes that in a culturally responsive community teachers must consider all of these layers to plan a problem-solving strategy:

You can take any piece within our own culture, consider how we operate, and go “well, I am not sure I understand that;” or “I don’t know how to tell a parent that your child isn’t bringing in homework,” and the child is going to say “Boy, am I going to get a beating,” because culturally, I disagree with spanking children, but this family doesn’t. So how do you talk about that in a comfortable way? As a teacher it is your profession to support this learner. When do you make that decision to have conversations that are difficult? What is your level of comfort? If you are going to talk with parents, they must have the confidence that you are
going to take care of it, so having an opportunity to have dialog with administrators and other teachers helps support you.

These divisional leaders develop people by guiding teachers through the process of problem solving both with the students under their care as well as with parents. In a culturally responsive community, teachers work with students in the classroom acknowledging student and group needs, and then problem solving to address those needs. At Gibson, administrators develop their teachers by modeling, providing examples of how to problem solve in order to facilitate implementation of the process in the classroom. They work with teachers to help them explore and identify concerns that could arise depending on specific cultural issues, and provide suggestions on how to address them. This continual guidance and consistent support enables teachers to learn how to problem solve and address the needs of their classrooms in a caring, compassionate way.

In a culturally responsive community full of diverse perspectives and different manners of doing, behaving, and communicating, it is important for leaders and teachers to be open to new ideas and flexible in their problem-solving approaches. The leaders at the Gibson School develop teachers using this flexible approach. As a teacher indicated in the focus group, while two teachers nodded, “We feel comfortable and safe; people are open to ideas; people are nice and supportive; and if it doesn’t work, nobody is overly sensitive.” First, administrators listen openly to the needs of their teachers; they then guide them through a reflective dialog and model conversations and tasks that may lead
them in a positive direction. Prepared teachers, understanding and following a clear vision, provide the building blocks to develop a successful culturally responsive organization.

**Developing/redesigning the organization.** Gibson leaders’ ability to develop people through dialog and engagement helps teachers to understand and use the core values that support the leaders’ visions. This active process also creates a strong school culture, which facilitates leaders’ abilities to make decisions, carry out strategies, and implement programs that develop and redesign the organization.

The primary organizational tool Gibson leaders use to support culturally responsive practice is the promotion of a solid curricular program that meets both the social and academic needs of its diverse student body, which in turn fosters a culture that supports the school’s mission and the leaders’ vision. Gibson leaders develop the organization by effectively weaving together both the social and academic curricular components of the school program and by creating communication tools that highlight this integrative program approach, providing constituents with the needed information to be effective community members. Through these strategies, each head of school developed and redesigned the organization incorporating values into each initiative thereby enhancing the culture; using the communication tools to manage the environment through their influence; and modifying the organizational structure by integrating the academic and social program as well as restructuring the focus of the curricular program. Examples follow.
To this end, Glenda introduced the Responsive Classroom approach (RCA) (Northeast Foundation for Children) that intentionally interweaves the social and academic domains into the daily program. Many of the components of the Responsive Classroom approach are parallel to culturally responsive practice, thus I believe that by adopting this approach Glenda developed the organization with the intention of supporting a culturally responsive community. Gibson leaders and teachers use responsive classroom strategies to take full advantage of the wealth of knowledge generated from a diverse population. For example, through morning meetings, sharing time, and exposure to varied resources, teachers and students get to know each other’s backgrounds. Getting to know the students backgrounds enables teachers to plan strategies to meet the needs of their students, as well as to help students learn how to get along and relate to the different backgrounds and personalities that form the classroom community. The Responsive Classroom approach provides tools and techniques that facilitate understanding, learning, and cooperation between diverse groups of students. Peggy, director of pre-primary, provides a concrete connection between culturally responsive practice and this program:

Using Responsive Classroom certainly is a huge anchor because it puts a lot of the emphasis on building community. We often refer to community of learners. What does that look like from a parent’s perspective? That the teacher understands a little bit about the culture and the dynamics of her group and that the teacher makes an effort to do partner work, small group work, give reflective
time, sensitivity. When questions and comments come up about differences and sameness of who we are, the teachers are expected to respond to them in a way that is not off putting to children and uncomfortable to them.

Dona inherited a rich community, diverse in people and ideas, with “strong integrative teaching.” Her development of the organization involved redesigning the curriculum by introducing conceptual themes that help teachers connect students’ learning to, and prepare them with the skills to interact in the growing complexity of a global world:

Those are all things that you have to weave into your curriculum. And you do that by having an in-depth conceptual curriculum, with a strong social element, and the kinds of projects you do are pointed toward service, or finding your voice, or taking a stand. Instead of taking a history theme, the Indians, you take a conceptual [one]. Each grade level has a theme like kindergarten is relationships, first, interdependence; second, adaptation/movement; third, change; fourth, systems; fifth, structure; and sixth, culture. What is culture, what are the elements of culture, how does one culture impact another?

Focusing instruction around essential questions, Dona believes, opens up in-depth, meaningful exploration of topics that naturally explore diversity. This approach is a key component of this culturally responsive community. Dona considers how the
integration of the social aspects of the program surface naturally alongside these conceptual themes, giving teachers ample opportunities to make real-life connections. For example, an exploration of relationships and interdependence can lead to resolving conflicts on the playground. Dona’s explanation of classroom themes and social situations helps make this point:

[The conceptual themes] clearly resonated with what we were trying to accomplish in terms of the social curriculum, and thinking, and abstraction. You need kids to become social analysts and all those types of things, and they were on their way there. You are bringing the social and academic curriculum together at all times. What did they do on the playground? The willingness to stop and analyze, so when something happens on the playground, we have these little rules, so when somebody falls down, the person who is closest to the person deals with it; that takes away, “Who did it?” That is not the point. If you are having a conflict with what is happening, you both leave the area, solve it, and come back, by mutual agreement, so that is empowering the kids. But for them to solve it on their own, they have to be used to speaking up for themselves, seeing both sides, but you are practicing that, because you are always saying there must be another point of view. There is the rest of the world out there, and there is an obligation to the community.
Glenda’s introduction of the Responsive Classroom approach together with Dona’s refining the curriculum through the lens of conceptual themes provided opportunities to naturally integrate content and practice skills that help students succeed inside and outside of the immediate community. To support these programs both Glenda and Dona developed the organization by making strategic hiring decisions that met two key objectives: to provide an additional voice or messenger of the leader’s vision and to serve as faculty trainers working directly with faculty to facilitate implementation of key program components and practices.

Glenda’s commitment to the Responsive Classroom approach and her belief in providing teachers with needed support to meet the social needs of a diverse student body, led her to hire a social coordinator trained by the designers of Responsive Classroom. Similarly, Dona added positions to support the delivery and development of the curriculum. Within her first year, she hired a K-6 curriculum coordinator. By the end of her second year, she added an upper grades resource teacher and a second science coordinator. She reduced the class size in first grade from 18 to 13 and added first grade teaching assistants. She created two new positions, enabling her to hire the school’s first director of learning services and school counselor. I interpret the additions of these support positions and reducing the teacher-to-student ratio as Dona’s support of culturally responsive practice. These changes also reinforce the school’s values by increasing the opportunities for students to get individualized attention based on their varied needs. One teacher commented on these hiring moves while two others nodded in agreement:
In terms of how she plows forward, she was looking at making some structural changes so that people did have support [in the classroom.] So that is how Dona responds to listening, listening and making structural changes, and pretty quick. Those were new positions, advertised, and hired. When it comes to the big picture, she made it happen.

Both leaders implemented structures to back up the school’s mission, which supported culturally responsive practice. Glenda’s tenure included creating timelines and policies and procedures for all work-related gatherings from board meetings; to parent committees; to the board, parent, and faculty diversity committees. This change helped community members to understand and keep up-to-date on key school information. As part of an updated school handbook, Glenda developed the “Gibson Way Glossary.” The contents of this glossary help parents understand the school’s philosophy and programs and provide them with language to use at home that is consistent with the school’s norms. Glenda also developed a community/alumni newsletter, published three times a year. Perusal of the newsletter shows that the community is well informed about issues surrounding diversity; events occur frequently to bring people of different backgrounds together, and curricular themes and school projects and presentations represent diverse perspectives. Titles of articles from Gibson faculty presenters at the annual NAIS People of Color diversity conference are highlighted in this newsletter. Articles on diversity concepts as well as school activities that bring community members together to share perspectives, dominate the community newsletter, and include articles by parents on
white privilege, and by an alumna on addressing the needs of families formed through adoption. Glenda in her tenure developed the organization planting the seeds of diversity and watching them germinate and grow.

During the transitional year from one head of school to the next, Dona spent time refining and updating the school web site. She published on-line the “Gibson Way Glossary,” as well as all major informational school publications. Dona also expanded the parent portal section of the web site to include a copy of all her school presentations and other pertinent school information. Interwoven throughout all of these publications are clear signs of Gibson’s commitment toward diversity. Developing the organization by providing the community with clear, consistent information about their leadership and the school’s success and plans in maintaining a culturally vibrant community was clearly important to both leaders.

**Conclusion: Gibson School**

A diverse population, clear values articulated by leaders, and solid programs and practices that support its mission as well as the leaders’ visions, defines the Gibson School as a culturally responsive community. Glenda’s vision was to communicate the importance of, to form, and to support a diverse community. Dona recognized the strengths of this diverse community, including its diverse population as well as the solid teaching practices of its faculty, and set forth with her vision to support culturally responsive practice by refining and uniting the academic and social curricular programs. Both leaders recognized the values, respect the individual and appreciate multiple perspectives, and thus worked to maintain and support a diverse population. It is
the practices of leaders, however, that support and maintain the Gibson School as a culturally responsive community. The following table highlights the leadership behaviors that support culturally responsive practice at Gibson.

**Table 2**

*Leadership Practices at the Gibson School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Glenda</th>
<th>Dona</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Direction</td>
<td>Communicates the importance of increasing the diversity of all constituencies and sets forth a path to accomplish this goal</td>
<td>Communicates her curricular vision of incorporating conceptual themes to enhance the curriculum and develops a plan to achieve this curricular goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing People</td>
<td>Inspires open dialog and self-reflection of diverse perspectives</td>
<td>Models and encourages professional collaboration around conceptual themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing/ Redesigning the Organization</td>
<td>Introduces key programs (RCA) and practices that provide the foundation of a culturally responsive community</td>
<td>Carries out a strategic hiring plan; refines school communication and publications to keep constituents informed on all aspects of school life including areas that surround diversity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through deliberate actions that incorporate clear values, Gibson leaders successfully develop and maintain a culturally responsive community. Glenda set direction by reaching out to all constituencies of the school community and the surrounding neighborhood, seeking assistance in increasing the diversity of the school’s
faculty, staff, and student body. The varied points of view of this diverse population provided opportunities to celebrate differences, and stimulated conflicts that led to a better understanding of differing points of view. Glenda’s ability to develop people by providing safe places to engage in open dialog and reflect upon situations through varied lenses eased Gibson’s conversion toward a culturally responsive environment. With a diverse population comfortable with multiple perspectives, Glenda successfully developed and redesigned the organization by introducing specific programs and practices that explored topics that facilitate students’ success within a diverse community.

Dona encountered this rich community full of eager students and dedicated faculty; she acknowledged a strong cultural foundation and recognized key components of a solid curricular program. From Dona’s perspective, however, there was a disconnect between the curricular content, skills taught, and methodologies applied. She moved forward by setting direction at Gibson through communicating her curricular vision and creating a time line for effective implementation of a program organized around conceptual themes. Dona developed people by exposing her curricular expertise and working one-on-one collaborating with faculty, by modeling how to effectively develop and deliver the curriculum. Dona used well thought out plans and strategic hiring decisions to ensure the development of a program that compliments her curricular vision. Through well-organized presentations, she brought attention to curricular and extra-curricular programs as well as key decisions that affect the community, resulting in
a buy-in to her vision and recognition of the progress toward enhancing this culturally responsive community.

Case 1, the Gibson School, illustrated how key leaders developed and maintained a culturally responsive community. Two characteristics of this case provide a unique perspective in understanding how leaders maintain a culturally responsive community. As a pre-school through elementary school, this case helps explain the work leaders do with young children and their families to foster the importance of diversity within a community. Moreover, the historical perspective provided by two heads of school demonstrated a sustained commitment to honor a mission centered on key elements of culturally responsive practice. Case 2, the Livelton School adds the perspective of leaders of a middle and high school community.

Case 2: Livelton School

Case overview: A loving environment. Two blocks from a major city subway stop, one block from the public city university, adjacent to a music conservatory, on the corner of a busy city street, sits the Livelton School, founded in the late 190s as a progressive independent school. In two connected, large, square buildings, one modern and one more traditional, 300 students grades 6 through 12, 32% of them students of color, together with 53 faculty members, spend their days learning and interacting together in a loving environment.

It was a Wednesday around 10 a.m. I sat in the common area, which connects the new building to the old. It is a spacious area, with a few couches and some tables shoved to the side. I looked and I listened. One teacher was sitting on top of the table; he was in
a t-shirt, jeans, and canvas sneakers. Almost everyone stopped to talk with him. He fist bumped a couple of students, gave a thumbs up to others. I ran into him many times during my visits; he was the chair of the performing arts department. “Don’t you want to work here? This is just the best place in the world to work.” Laughter and smiles were abundant. Next to me, I heard an exchange between an English teacher and a student; he gave her a quick hug. She asked if she could set up a writing conference to go over her essay.

A couple of hours later, after an interview and a history class, I sat in the library. As I reflected on the history class I recorded my thoughts:

This young African-American woman teacher moved back and forth with ease and confidence from the historical to the modern perceptions of race. She first introduced the Manifest Destiny, which led to sharing a personal story of an African-American family member unable to catch a cab. She referred to how race continues to ‘cloud our eyes.’ She spoke with graceful authority, recognizing the country’s progress while acknowledging the work to be done. Students listened and participated. After explaining homework, she announced, ‘Tomorrow we will be talking about lynching.’

This time most exchanges were between students who were active, diligently working, usually in pairs, or at least close enough to someone to ask for advice. I heard drills for a Spanish test, and a debate on sexist advertising that stemmed from a PowerPoint
The students and adults in the library that afternoon appeared to feel comfortable discussing issues with each other. “Do you think this looks and sounds sexist?” I heard. The magazines and book displays included *Teaching Tolerance* magazine (Southern Poverty Law Center), and “*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*” *And Other Conversations About Race*, (Tatum, 1997). The displays were strategically placed in front of the most comfortable chairs, inviting students to explore these concepts in a relaxing atmosphere. When I think about the people at Livelton, after six visits talking with teachers, administrators, and students, I think of lively, intellectual engagement and diverse thinkers who enjoy each other’s company and feel comfortable around people from different walks of life.

**The leaders.** I first met with the head of school on a spring afternoon in April 2008. He preferred to hear about my study in person instead of by email or phone. The academic dean joined us for a brief 17-minute meeting. I explained the objective of my study and they wanted to know what I would need to do; they approved my plan and I left. At first I was concerned about the brevity of the encounter during this initial visit, but I realized after three additional visits, that office meetings were straightforward, to the point, and productive. This allowed for more time outside of the offices, in the classrooms, common areas, and library, the areas where Livelton came alive with action and engagement among administrators, faculty, and students.

I next visited Livelton in the summer of 2008. I briefly met with the academic dean who reviewed the job descriptions and explained the responsibilities of each
administrator. This information helped me to select the four Livelton leaders I chose to interview. The leadership team at Livelton includes the head of school, head of middle school, academic dean, director of community service, dean of students, and members of the business, development, and admissions offices. It became clear to me that the first three leaders in this list work together closely, as well as with a wide range of teachers and departments.

Table 3

Leader Interviews at the Livelton School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years at Livelton</th>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Head of School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidi</td>
<td>Dean of Students</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>October 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meredith</td>
<td>Head of Middle School</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>October 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>Academic Dean</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Nine Department Chairs</td>
<td>Varied</td>
<td>1 African-American; 8 Caucasian</td>
<td>April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I interviewed a total of 13 administrators and teacher leaders over a period of 10 months. See Table 3. With the exception of two department chairs who had become
members of the community since the year 2002, all leaders had been at Livelton for over 10 years. My interviewees represented each of the curricular and administrative areas of the school, as well as the different grade levels taught, sixth through twelfth grade, leading to a wide-ranging amount of data to strengthen my findings.

**Values.** Values guide leaders as they plan initiatives that help them carry out their vision, meet their goals, and support the school’s mission. Language that leaders, teachers, and students used over and over during interviews and in documents enabled me to identify through data analysis the values that guide community members at Livelton. These school-wide values are: kindness, being known, and power with responsibility.

During site visits this language of kindness, power with responsibility and being know was confirmed through action. The greetings, hugs, thumbs up and fist bumps made kindness visible. I observed power with responsibility directly and subtly, through students’ commitment at assembly to work toward helping the homeless, to two interactions between advisor and advisee, where conversations took place on how to take ownership of a growing homework load, and how to communicate ones needs when assistance is sought.

These values complement the components of culturally responsive practice as described by Gay (2000). Gay’s framework expects school members to understand the backgrounds of their students, in other words, “being known” as Livelton leaders reference this value. The culturally responsive environment is a caring environment where “kindness” is an essential ingredient and taking ownership of one’s actions, in
other words having “power with responsibility,” is expected. These values are integral parts of the school culture, and influence leaders as they set direction, develop people, and develop/redesign the organization in this culturally responsive community.

Dan, the head of school, identifies the school’s values as well as his commitment to incorporate them into practice:

A school should be respectful and affectionate. If kids feel that, “they [all community members] know me, they really like me, they love me for who I am,” not only in talking but in action and in program, that the kids feel powerful, and they feel known, and you are giving them the tools that help them feel powerful and known, then you are giving them the tools to do tremendous things; and they are going to interact within the school, and outside of the school, in compelling, positive constructive ways, and that is what I see at Livelton.

Kindness surfaced as an essential ingredient toward creating this respectful environment, where kids are known, loved, and expected to act responsibly. Dan points out, for instance, that the idea of teasing, much less the practice, is not tolerated. Meredith, head of middle school, states:

Anytime a child, as middle school kids do, as you know, blurts out and says something that was not respectful, teachers would expect one another to stop. Working with the kids in a loving but firm way so that everybody knows
that it is not cool to even think you are teasing a friend, to make fun of a kid. Kindness helps kids be respectful.

The clear understanding of the values throughout the administrative team leads to a unified approach of incorporating them into school practices. The head of middle school, Meredith, re-states the importance of being respected and loved. “Individual kids want to be respected and loved as individuals, and that means by one another.” The Academic Dean, Nick, reinforces the concept of power with responsibility: “There are significant freedoms that are given to students and there are significant responsibilities that are also given to them.”

In preparation for a school open house, Meredith asked a group of students to write on an index card the answer to: “What do you really like about Livelton?” In the answers, Livelton’s core values surfaced in the voices of the student body. The following quotes illustrate the core values from the point of view of the student as interpreted by the researcher.

• “Being known”—A seventh grade student states, “The teachers are very smart and personable and they pay attention to you as an individual.” A twelfth says it this way: “There isn’t a defined norm which people have to conform to. This really is the place where I found myself.”

• “Kindness”—“Everyone is nice and the school makes learning fun,” notes a seventh grader. A ninth grader adds, “People at Livelton are always kind and open to ideas. Livelton has a variety of people that come from near and far and are easy friends to make.”
• “Power with responsibility”—In the eyes of a ninth grader, “When I am here, I feel that I can choose. I have freedom, and throughout my Livelton career, I have learned how to use it. I have learned how to be responsible.” A senior indicates, “Livelton, more than any other school promotes independence. Students are able to select their own paths, manage their own time, and build their own reputations. Faculty are helpful and accessible, and students are given every opportunity to succeed.”

These students’ clear articulation of Livelton’s values suggests that leaders and faculty consistently nurture these values and embed them into the school culture. These values become the foundation of this culturally responsive community where students are respected for their differences, encouraged to develop their strengths and take responsibility, and are supported by faculty as they make choices that enhance their learning and living at Livelton.

In the following sections, using the words and actions of the Livelton teachers and leaders, I provide examples to illustrate how these values emerge into practices that set direction, develop people, and develop/redesign the organization. This information builds the basis to explain how these practices support a culturally responsive community.

**Setting direction.** Analysis of data from Dan’s interview together with supporting examples from administrative and teacher leaders enabled me to uncover Dan’s vision as well as the practices that help him to carry out that vision. Dan’s vision
as head of school is to ensure that the school’s mission is understood, communicated, and lived. He sets direction by consistently communicating the school mission to all Livelton constituents. By modeling the school’s values through his daily actions and strategically presenting mission-driven concepts at school gatherings as well as through individual meetings, Dan successfully sets direction by embedding the mission into the school culture. To further live the mission, Dan sets direction by establishing high expectations for community involvement of both faculty and students.

A school’s mission can be a nebulous cloud floating over a community. Dan took the mission and broke it down into comprehensible chunks, which are used to communicate and guide community members as they work to fulfill it and incorporate it into practice. The performing arts department chair commented about Dan’s arrival and his commitment to learning and living the mission:

It is not him [Dan] so much as his commitment to the mission. When he first came in, he made a big point of getting input and really crafting the mission of the school. It did not change; there was just a greater emphasis. He would pull out different things. When he made me department chair, he said, take the mission statement of the school and create a mission statement for the department. I just felt like, it was not about him, it was about the school. He was going to make every effort to figure it out, and come as true as he can to it; that is as ideal as you can get.
The dean of students posted her personal mission above her desk, and referred to the times she would check in with Dan on her progress in fulfilling her mission. Similarly, Meredith mentioned her use of Dan’s simplified mission, “Be kind; work hard; have fun; help out,” as a mechanism to reinforce the mission to students as well as faculty. Dan sets direction by keeping others focused on the school mission as well as helping the leaders around him establish mechanisms that lead to its fulfillment.

Embedded within the Livelton School mission are concepts and characteristics of culturally responsive practice, thus when Dan is communicating and modeling mission-driven practice, he is supporting a culturally responsive community. Specifically, the essence of Livelton’s mission, as noted in its school profile and admissions view book, is to purposely bring together community members from different walks of life and give them the tools to become change agents within their communities and beyond.

Both the director of community service and the head of middle school told me Dan uses a door as a metaphor to communicate that community members’ differences are respected and valued: “You don’t have to check any part of yourself at the door.” Differences are communicated as strengths, a message that is transferred from leaders to faculty to students.

The quotes above illustrate how administrators and teacher leaders receive the mission-driven messages from the head of school. The quotes also illustrate the transfer of this information to other community members.

Dan further sets direction by communicating high expectations of both students and faculty. Dan expects teachers, leaders, and students to be active decision makers and
agents of change. By setting high expectations, he is simultaneously reinforcing the value of giving power with responsibility. Dan gives faculty the power and responsibility to lead their areas of the school, develop programs, and make decisions about their own classroom policies and practices:

The faculty have a lot of say of what goes on. They have decision-making authority including juries of selection who would make recommendations to me, whose recommendations to me it would be very difficult to say “no” to. So they have that very important authority; there is a lot of shared administration. Responsibility, so a lot of the faculty are in charge of something that is important to the school and important to them. And by practice, teachers who are in charge are really in charge, to speak crudely.

Equally important are the expectations Dan sets for students. By reiterating the importance of power and responsibility over one’s learning, Livelton’s mission embodies concepts of culturally responsive practice. The cornerstone of Livelton’s mission is to guide students to take ownership of their education and become involved inside and outside of the classroom. During their journeys at Livelton students are expected to lead programs and activities, as well as contribute to important school-wide decisions. They are encouraged to design their own learning and extracurricular experiences, and are expected to take an active role in solving their problems when difficulties arise. Dan provides an overview of these expectations:
One of the things we are doing all the time is teaching kids how to advocate for themselves, and then giving them opportunities to control things. So first, they get to learn the skills, some learn and practice; anyone can play the piano well. Then they are understanding that they are meant to speak their minds in class, not only about the material but about how the class is being run, and what is going on. They are on all selection committees [to hire new teachers]; they run the assembly program; they are involved in something as narrow but important as the furniture in the new building, that was a committee. They were on it, with a very strong student voice. You often reach consensus, almost always reach consensus, but on the way, there are moments when the kids are saying, “No, this is what we want.” They learn that in order to do that they have to say, “These are the reasons.” This is the process.

An article in the student newspaper, “Ethnicities on the web portal,” provides an example of a student who spoke his mind and questioned a new school procedure. “How and why can student ethnicities now be seen by teachers on the web portal?” “I could care less. The teacher walks into class each day and sees that I am white anyway.” An African-American student notes, “First and foremost, I am Black…. And I could be judged without ever even meeting the teacher.” The article continues to explain the process the questioning student followed, which included two visits to the head of school, one to the admissions office, and conversations throughout the halls where “the issue made a lot of
buzz.” Although the posting of ethnicities turned out to be a mistake, the process led to students talking about race among one another as well as with adults. Students “questioned and spoke their minds.” The student ends his article noting, “With so many views of students...in such and open place like Livelton, Livelton would not have knowingly made a decision about race without informing the student body.”

For a well-rounded student preparing to interact within and outside of the classroom, the high expectations Dan sets, as indicated above, enter into the academic, social and community oriented realms.

Dan’s strength in setting direction throughout the community is his ability to communicate the mission, weave its components into the school culture, connect it to culturally responsive practice, and empower others by setting high expectations of community involvement. Creating this environment of professional engagement facilitates the process of developing people. Developing people in ways that honor and reinforce culturally responsive practice facilitates its effective implementation.

**Developing people.** I view Livelton as a professional environment where teachers are driven to live the mission. This environment is created and nurtured by Livelton leaders’ ability to develop people. Specifically, data from interviews, supported by field visits, led me to conclude that Livelton leaders empower and trust their teachers, model good practice and effective communication, and provide numerous opportunities for professional and personal reflection.

Data analysis revealed two areas important to Dan, head of school, in developing people in a manner that supports culturally responsive practice: considering all
community members as equal participants in school life, and expecting members to take ownership of their school responsibilities as active participants and leaders in the community. Dan accomplishes these goals primarily through modeling, through consistent interaction and engagement with school leaders, and through support of essential programs.

Dan, as well as other Livelton leaders, models practices that reinforce the concepts of equity and equality. Dan also sends the message that equity in a school community is important. Culturally responsive practice incorporates equity into all of its components. To model equity and set an example of effective practice, he serves a dual role as head of school and a ninth grade advisor. Through his commitment to his advisory role, he demonstrates its importance, his position as an equal to all staff members, and his direct dedication to the school’s most important clients, the students. Dan reflects on his time commitment and approach to his advisory:

I am a ninth grade advisor. Every adult is an advisor. I have ninth graders as a standard, five or six kids each year. I meet with the kids as a group every other day for a half hour, and then I meet with each one for about 15 or 20 minutes each cycle. For some you chat for 15 or 20 minutes and for others, you meet for an hour. They come to understand that we are a team. You get to be very close. So now kids will come to me and say I am having problems with my English teacher; he is nuts. Then first the kid feels very at liberty to say that to an advisor and my job, as an advisor is not to say, “Oh well, he is the teacher and you have to learn.”
I will say, “Well what are you going to do about it?” This is how they are learning their skills.

The amount of time Dan spends with the students and the encouragement he gives them to outline their own path in solving their difficulties demonstrates for me his focus on developing even the youngest members of the community to take ownership of their responsibilities. As the chair of fine arts indicates, students are simply “younger humans” and should be treated as young adults, not children.

By attending an assembly in October of 2008, I observed another practice of Livelton leaders that reinforces this concept of people as equals within the community. Through the head of school’s and the head of middle school’s modeling at an assembly, all community members, adults and students observe equality firsthand. To make announcements at assembly, all school members must wait in line. Dan and Meredith each stood in line, made their announcement, and then went right over and sat down on the floor with a group of students:

If you put everything together it is a big deal. So the fact that I am standing on line, and no one says isn’t that fabulous that he is standing on line, except if it is a visitor who has never been to Livelton before, for us it is just the way you do things, so it does send a message.
Leaders develop people by being an example, sending a message to both faculty and students to “do as I do.”

I interpret this sense of equality as creating a collaborative environment where professionals feel supported and are willing to take risks and refine practice. Continual and supportive interactions among adults at Livelton lead to informal and formal opportunities to reflect upon teaching and professional practice. Considering the informal, caring, and trustworthy environment, it is no surprise to conclude that teachers and leaders at Livelton take part in many professional discussions that enable them to reflect on their educational practice. Dan describes this environment:

Teachers who are delighted about talking about school stuff. There is a remarkable lack of the kind of crazed, heated, water cooler kind of stuff, everyone has a sense of humor, but most people without getting on their high horse know that they are part of something that is bigger than themselves, so it is a lot of fun to talk about formative assessment, so this combination of a real connection to the material you are teaching, a desire to talk about kids in a productive and constructive way, the time to talk about business with each other, a terrific collegiality.

Each of the department chairs indicated that leaders outline for them clear expectations, and that “a lot of trust is placed in the teachers to get the job done; the school hires good people, gives them a sense of the mission, and lets them do their job.”
To do their job, they mentioned talking continuously with their department about best practices; adapting practice and assessment to meet the needs of their students; and “continual ongoing communication,” instead of formal department meetings. The math chair described the leadership of the head of school, the academic dean, and the head of middle school as “laissez faire” but all emphasized that they understood what was expected and how to accomplish it. For this reason I can conclude that the leaders of Livelton develop people most successfully through modeling and by communicating and engaging with the faculty.

In many interviews leaders mentioned Dan’s daily presence, open door policy, and individual informal support to the adults in the community. The head of school talks about his presence in very simple terms: “I am pretty informed; I am bumping into it.” Dan is a head that leads by example. His supportive interactions with adults and students in the community, his willingness to delegate school leadership to others, and his ability to model equality, set the stage to develop leaders at Livelton.

Dan’s development of people leads to a collaborative professional environment. This established professional culture also facilitates acceptance and participation in the more structured Livelton programs that serve to develop people as well as develop/redesign the organization while at the same time supporting a culturally responsive environment.

**Developing/redesigning the organization.** Leaders at Livelton set direction by effectively communicating the mission and modeling practices that support it. By entrusting the faculty and staff with the power and responsibility to carry out mission
driven programs and practices, leaders at Livelton develop people. Through this process of setting direction and developing people, shared meanings form within the community, creating a strong school culture. This strong school culture provides the foundation to successfully implement programs, outline procedures, and incorporate structures that develop and redesign the organization to support culturally responsive practice.

I interpret Livelton leaders’ intentional interactions within the community and strategic involvement in school programs as a mechanism that helps to create this strong school culture that simultaneously complements culturally responsive practice. The programs that I determined through interview, document analysis, and field observations as integral to building this purposeful community are: the advisory program, the teacher mentoring program, the values curriculum, the assembly program, the extra-curricular opportunities including clubs and affinity groups, and the diverse curricular electives and core course selections. Throughout all of these programs there are common threads that weave these components together to support a school culture that embodies strong relationships, collegiality, and collaborative decision making.

Each leader oversees one or two of the above-mentioned programs. At the same time, the collaborative effort among the leaders toward the success of this multi-faceted educational experience, I believe, leads to the overall success of the school program. I highlight certain program components and leaders’ involvement in them to demonstrate ways Livelton leaders develop/redesign the organization and support culturally responsive practice.


**Sense of time and place.** Livelton leaders develop/redesign their organization first by designing a comfortable environment and creating a purposeful schedule that supports a socially dynamic and academically challenging school culture. Evidence from field observations and interview data enables me to describe the school culture as informal and non-threatening. For example, adults and students address one another on a first name basis; there is no dress code for adults or students; relationships throughout the community are based on trust, respect, and responsibility, and not on a student/teacher hierarchy. Livelton leaders ensure that there is both appropriate physical space, and ample opportunity to facilitate bonds among all constituencies. A socially dynamic culture, essential for a culturally responsive community, is created by intentionally bringing together people from different perspectives. A structured schedule and an efficiently run organization allows for effective implementation of the initiatives and specific programs that support culturally responsive practice.

The organization of a cyclical schedule, which includes incorporating extracurricular and academic programs, as well as committee and faculty meetings into the school day, I interpret as supporting collegiality, collaborative decision making, and allowing time for relationship building. Livelton’s schedule follows an eight-day cycle with six daily class periods. Built into the cycle is a daily flex period, which depending on the day, is used as a student break, an assembly period, a club period, or an advisory meeting time. Meetings also take place during this forty-minute time block. Leaders indicated that meetings are structured to provide all community members with a voice to express themselves on any given subject, as well as to ensure that needed business is
conducted. My attendance in a full faculty meeting confirmed this efficient and open process. The open microphone segment gave anyone the opportunity to “speak one’s mind.” On this particular day the technology director expressed concern about teachers leaving the laptop carts unlocked. During the agenda item section, the head of middle school gave a thorough presentation on student led family conferences. This reaffirmed for me Livelton’s commitment to students’ ownership of their learning. The cyclical schedule works for the Livelton community and influences leaders’ ability to achieve school goals.

A large common area located in the center of each of the academic buildings provides an open, comfortable space for faculty and students to gather. Comfortable furniture chosen by the students, student artwork, and eye-catching posters create an appealing space for adolescents. Connected to one of the common areas is the school library; its large windows, adjacent to the common area, are an invitation to enter. During all of my visits to Livelton these common areas were alive with activity. At all times students and faculty engaged in conversations. Moreover, by creating social and academic spaces that naturally attract faculty and students, Livelton is promoting opportunities for discourse and interaction among community members, an essential communication method for effective culturally responsive practice. A deliberately designed space creates a caring environment and facilitates relationship building. Both are important to building a culturally responsive community.

**The advisory and new faculty mentoring program.** For culturally responsive practice to be effective, adults must facilitate student learning (Gay, 2000). Livelton
leaders develop the organization by establishing programs that prepare teachers as facilitators of student learning. The academic dean, dean of students, and head of middle school oversee the advisory and new faculty mentoring program, key programs that guide teacher leaders to play an active support role in students’ lives.

Each interviewee spoke extensively about the advisory program indicating how the advisory program at Livelton provides students and advisors with the time and structure to establish trusting, caring, dynamic relationships. Through these relationships advisors guide advisees to follow their interests and support them by providing information and strategies that positively impact their learning. These outcomes, achieved from strong relationships between adult and advisee, are important within a culturally responsive community to help students succeed. All full-time administrators and faculty are advisors. Their contracts require that they dedicate 20% of their time to the advisory role and ample time during each cycle is set aside for this role.

During every interview and throughout the focus group many examples pointed to the powerful relationships between advisors and advisees and their positive impact on student learning. Dan, head of school, mentioned that in his yearly parent survey, the advisory program consistently receives the highest marks.

The performing arts chair reinforces the concept of advisors and advisees as equals:

I think the key thing for me is, we really know the students, and we don’t think of them as students and us as the adults. They are young humans and we are older
humans. To me when I kind of make that leap to, these are real people, not just teenager empty vessels, once you get to know them and you know how to interact with them, then it is so much more rewarding, and the relationships are every bit as real as any other ones in their own way, and the kids feel that way as well then they are much more apt to respect you.

Developing these relationships, stripped of any hierarchal component, between adult and student allows the advisor to play more of a facilitator role in the advisee’s life. From problem solving about everyday occurrences, to guiding students through course and club selections and serving as a bridge toward resolving difficulties with family, friends, or teachers, the advisor is available to help the student overcome challenges.

The theme of an advisor providing social support is not limited to teacher-student relationships. As part of the new faculty-mentoring program, a new teacher is paired with an experienced teacher. The mentoring program supports the advisory program by guiding new teachers as they adapt to the school culture, providing opportunities to observe and practice interacting with students and adults in a supportive role. Meredith, the head of middle school, explains her strategic approach to pairing faculty members:

I partner the homeroom teachers with an eye toward the new teacher getting mentored by a more experienced homeroom teacher. Some of the advising happens in homeroom. The homeroom teachers are the advisors [in the middle school], so . . . Jan [who] is not new to Livelton this year but . . . is new to
middle school advising, so I paired her with . . . Hank who has been here for a while and is particularly gifted in interpersonal and introspective types of thinking, so he is the leader of that home room; but of course they collaborate and actually the learning specialist, who has a small group, joins that group as well. So Jan watches in homeroom and, Hank helps her interact with the kids.

Meredith serves as the first point of contact for new teachers in the middle school and provides them with insight into the advisory role. Being partnered with experienced advisors while immersed directly in the classroom context, gives teachers the opportunity, through observation and trial and error, to learn this essential Livelton faculty role.

A critical part of the induction of new faculty is an official introduction to the school's commitment to culturally responsive practice through a formal program developed by the academic dean that emphasizes the school’s approach to culturally responsive practice. This program covers three years. During year 1 teachers are observed and receive feedback; during year 2 teachers participate in diversity training following the SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) Inclusive Curriculum co-developed by Dr. Peggy McIntosh (1987) from Wellesley College (retrieved July 28, 2009, from http://www.wcwonline.org/seed); in the third year they receive a formal observation and evaluation. In a more indirect manner, during year 2 and through the SEED curriculum, second year teachers learn strategies, develop materials, and adopt resources that help them refine their culturally responsive teaching practice.
Throughout the year the SEED group discusses social justice issues, experiments with multiple methodologies, and uses diverse resources. The program integrates many of the components of culturally responsive practice. By sharing background knowledge teachers develop a culturally diverse knowledge base. By working together as a professional learning community, teachers demonstrate cultural caring and build a learning community. By experimenting with different methodologies, teachers develop cultural congruity in instruction (Gay, 2000). The SEED experience guides teachers to prepare similar learning situations in their classrooms. Other supportive, collegial opportunities at Livelton offer all faculty and staff an avenue to learn about and support Livelton’s multicultural commitment. These include: part 2 of the SEED program, a White-on-White (WOW) discussion group, and a Faculty of Color discussion group.

**Extracurricular activities.** Extracurricular activities, such as clubs, affinity groups, the High School Leadership Council, and the Student Activities Group provide venues for students to use the power and responsibility that are instilled in them, as well as to positively engage with others through planning, sharing, and problem solving. The magnitude of possibilities supports engagement within a culturally responsive community. Some clubs that complement the components of culturally responsive practice are: Imani (multicultural peer group), Gay Straight Alliance, White-on-White, Grassroots Activism Club, Woman of Color, Men of Color, Model UN, and the Iranian Tea Club. The High School Leadership Council and Student Activities Group plan presentations, events, and programs such as the once-a-cycle assembly program. These student-run extracurricular opportunities support the school’s mission by providing
diverse avenues for students to openly express themselves, explore interests, develop talents, and take on leadership roles. The school librarian notes how the combination of building strong relationships and having many opportunities to connect creates this comfortable environment and responsive community:

It is a real community, and you see if you are around here at 3:30 when school ends, kids don’t want to go home. I mean it...I mean that starts in middle school; I think the comfort level here, of being here and the relationships with all of us, is what rebuilds this over and over again. I think the kids learn more, because of these relationships, and I think it goes back and forth and I think that environment is difficult to set up, but it is here. It comes from all of the things we are talking about, having things like leadership, having choice for kids to go to a gazillion clubs, having lots of things for kids to do that interest them, and then helping them follow through with those things, and I think that is what makes it work.

One of the responsibilities of the Student Activities Group is to plan the once-a-cycle all-school assembly. Many of the cornerstones of the Livelton community come alive at this gathering. Students use their given power, plan responsibly, and develop presentations that highlight the interests and concerns of the community. I observed an assembly first-hand during an October visit. The assembly presentation, titled “debunking the myths of homelessness in the metro area,” explored issues of race, ethnicity, and poverty in the areas surrounding school; it also reviewed possible solutions,
which included an invitation for students to participate in a “walk for the homeless” event. The structure, predictability, and content of the assembly period enhance the school’s ability to form a strong school culture including giving the students the responsibility to make a difference within and outside of their immediate community. Observing both faculty and student engagement throughout the assembly period, as well as experiencing the feel of the room as a member of this respectful audience, it was clear to me that this school ritual supports the school culture. Interviews with leaders also helped me to conclude that the assembly period is both an indicator of, and a support to the school's commitment to culturally responsive practice. The head of school describes it this way:

It is a big deal, the kids do a lot of planning; it is a nice mix of kids standing up and saying “the grassroots activism club is meeting today.” “Yesterday’s volleyball game, it was a close game but we lost. Agnes made the most fantastic spike,” and everyone applauds. The band plays and kids get up and sing. So there are those picture postcard Livelton moments, where everyone gets up, a sixth grade student gets up, begins, stops and gets flustered and says, “I can’t do this,” and an eleventh grader gets up and says, “Oh yes you can”, and knows her name. “Oh yes you can Maggie.” The whole room stuffed with 300 students is absolutely silent and this eleventh grader, “You can start again, you can do it,” and she does, now she is red with pride; we applaud after every announcement. She sits down and thinks, “I go to school here.” It is very cool.
By exposing students to different interests within the community, by enabling students to share their concerns, and by using different presentational styles, the assembly program supports each of the five concepts of Gay’s (2000) culturally responsive framework.

Extracurricular components of the Livelton program give students opportunities to explore interests and practice leadership skills. The diverse club selections and varied topics covered at assembly support the Livelton commitment toward social justice and equity.

**The academic program and values curriculum.** In tandem, the academic program and the values curriculum help ground the diverse educational experience of the Livelton student. Whereas the extracurricular components of the program enable students to explore interests and engage in new opportunities, the academic course requirements and selections enable teachers to incorporate specific content as well as the multiple points of view needed for effective culturally responsive practice. Supporting this academic program is the values curriculum that serves to guide students to become respectful, responsible, and caring community members.

A core academic program including English, history, language, mathematics, and science is the foundation of the curriculum. The variety of electives is extensive and represents an array of different societal and world perspectives that provide a basis for teachers and students to engage in meaningful conversations. Noted electives from the curriculum guide include: the African American Freedom Struggle, Racism and the Media, the Aftermath of Katrina, Multicultural Art, and Conflict Resolution. As an
observer of six different classes in the English, history, math and Spanish departments, I noted firsthand the attention giving to taking responsibility for one’s learning, the focus on the learning process as opposed to solely the content, and the importance of the student/teacher relationship. In math class students corrected a test and reported their scores; if no corrections were required, they were responsible for completing bonus problems. If applicable, they then updated their scores by verbally reporting them to the teacher for input into the grade book. In all classes talking about process, be it the process of reaching a conclusion in an essay, of solving a math problem, of analyzing an historical event, surfaced as key to the students’ class participation. In each of these classes, through the rapport, conversations, and interactions between teachers and students, as well as among students, I sensed that teachers had high expectations and firmly believed in their students’ abilities and commitment to learning. By observing many student/teacher interactions I also recognized how well the students received suggestions from their teachers.

The values curriculum is described by one leader as “the cornerstone of the Livelton experience.” In the middle school a values class meets once per academic rotation (eight days) and is taught by the head of middle school and the school counselor. Topics taken from the curriculum guide include: gender bias, stereotypes, sexual orientation, integrity, self-identity, social justice, and community service. The values curriculum provides students with the tools necessary to use their social skills and academic knowledge to solve problems and confront challenges related to diversity, exposing students to multiple perspectives, and helping them to become inclusive,
tolerant, and compassionate community members. Apart from the structured aspect of the program, school leaders work collaboratively with the values teacher to address issues and concerns that naturally surface in a community of many diverse perspectives. For example, Meredith shared how a collaborative endeavor of the middle school head, the values teacher, the grade level dean, and the director of learning services helped to work through an incident around adolescent teasing. By working collaboratively, they identified the problem as a need for students to better understand learning differences at Livelton. From there, they developed two values’ lesson plans in an attempt to facilitate for each seventh grade student an understanding of their learning style and learning profile, and to help connect learning differences to the school mission. This approach to problem solving, bringing together human resources to offer expertise in a needed area, and using the previously introduced skills and content to approach resolving conflicts develops the organization by using the expertise of the teachers, together with set structures, in a collaborative manner. This strategy is particularly useful in a community where multiple perspectives are brought together and guidance is needed to navigate the varied social and academic needs that arise in a culturally responsive community.

Conclusion: a Loving, Culturally Responsive Environment

By providing an intentionally caring environment for students from varied perspectives to interact and engage together in academic and social learning experiences, supported by faculty members who facilitate, monitor and encourage these experiences, Livelton school leaders maintain a culturally responsive community. The following table highlights the leadership practices that enable leaders to maintain this environment.
Table 4

Leadership Practices at the Livelton School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Direction</th>
<th>Leaders set direction by communicating and modeling the importance of the school values in fulfilling the mission.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing People</td>
<td>Leaders develop people by providing opportunities for all to lead and by modeling equity and equal participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing/Redesigning the Organization</td>
<td>Leaders develop and redesign the organization by creating an intentional, open, and caring environment along with programs that encourage human interaction and empower members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dan’s quote from the beginning of this case study helps me summarize how Livelton leaders set direction, develop people, and develop/redesign the organization to support a culturally responsive community. Livelton leaders set direction by communicating how being known, being loved, and feeling powerful are needed to carry out the school’s mission. Livelton leaders develop people by modeling practice and giving community members, as Dan indicates, “the tools to do tremendous things.” They develop the organization by establishing an environment and providing programs that ensure avenues for community members to “interact within the school and outside in
compelling, positive, constructive ways.” As the Livelton mission indicates, diverse perspectives are intentionally brought together in a caring, powerful environment. The programs, practices, and structures within this diverse environment emulate those of culturally responsive practice enabling Livelton to fulfill its mission of preparing students to be change agents in a diverse society.

Case 2 provided a unique perspective on how leaders sustain culturally responsive practice in a middle and high school environment where student empowerment is an essential component of the school culture. Whereas leaders at the Gibson School worked to incorporate the whole family into the community, Livelton leaders concentrated on enhancing student empowerment. Case 3, as a unit school (pre-kindergarten through grade 12) with a specific religious orientation brings an additional perspective to this research on culturally responsive leadership.

Case 3: Alliance School

Case overview: peaceful contrasts. The Alliance School is a pre-kindergarten through 12th grade school located in an urban neighborhood in a Mid-Atlantic city. As a Friends school, Alliance emphasizes Quaker values and practices, and is grounded in many traditions due to its century-old history. There are just over 1,000 students at Alliance School; forty percent of them are students of color. The campus is a mixture of modern and traditional architecture, with plenty of green space for community members to gather and relax. Upon entering the campus, for instance, one first encounters a large stoic manor house representing the Quaker foundation; behind it are gardens, pathways, and both modern and traditional buildings that blend into the surroundings. Although the
school has been expanded to ensure its members have the needed resources and environment to enhance their education, the new buildings honor the Quaker tradition. Moreover, the school’s newest buildings and layout support the Quaker commitment to a sustainable environment, reinforcing the belief of changing according to the present needs. Likewise, within the buildings, Quaker values are apparent in quotes about peace by scholars from early history to modern times. As I walked through the main entrance these two quotes caught my eye: “Peace is our gift to each other,” by Elie Wiesel, and “The way is not peace, but peace is the way.” The importance of peace in a community is also reflected in the messages of peace conveyed in the contemporary quilts and artwork created by Alliance students.

The leaders. Eleven members form the Leadership Team (LT) at Alliance School. Two members of the LT are faculty of color. Three out of the four leaders interviewed specifically noted the importance of faculty of color membership on the LT. Three leaders interviewed, head of school, associate head of school, and diversity director are members of the LT. I also interviewed the academic dean who is not a member of the LT. See Table 5.

Table 5

Leader Interviews at the Alliance School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years at Alliance</th>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Head of school</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
</tr>
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Values. It comes as no surprise that Quaker values serve as an anchor to orient school leaders’ leadership practice at Alliance. The bedrock of this belief system is the Quaker value: “There is that of God in everyone,” which grounds the school's commitment to a culturally responsive environment. Leaders interpreted this value as recognizing the unique personalities and gifts of each individual community member. Within the community lies the home, a place for all of these individuals to reside. The importance of feeling at home surfaced as the second Alliance value. I interpret the Quaker values of peace, equity, service to others, and accepting differences as the pillars of social justice and equity that support the foundation of this home. Finally, the flowers in the campus garden change with the season or with the needs and creativity of the landscapers, emblematic of Alliance’s last value that, “truth is constantly changing.”
**There is that of God in everyone.** At Alliance every community member is considered unique, has something to offer, and should be cherished for his/her individual qualities. Ben, head of school, reflects on how teachers approach this value of individuality and acceptance:

Many teachers here tell me, “A moment before I step into the classroom I remind myself that I am teaching in a Friends school and one of the core Quaker beliefs is that ‘there is that of God in everyone.’” Now if I walk into a classroom and look at 15 people in front of me and I think that there is a spark of the divine in all of them, how do I behave? How do I treat those people? What kind of sanctity do they automatically have simply because they are human? You have inherent value in worth and dignity, and so that gets communicated and transmitted in some way.

The lower school diversity co-coordinator uses the same concept, stating its importance as a starting point to understand Alliance students:

The spirit of the school is to respect and to recognize the God in others. So essentially, we build from that. It is not a top-down type of teaching. Everyone knows the sense of what the school is all about and we as teachers instill it as young as pre-kindergarten.
Clearly the Quaker concept, “There is that of God in everyone” translated into the value, respect the individuality of others and cherish and understand each student, permeates the leadership and is communicated to others at Alliance.

**Feeling at home.** Each of these unique individuals is a member of the school community. In the eyes of the head of school, a community member should aspire to be a family member and must be treated as a complete member, not as a visitor:

I would like it to be like for me when I grew up next to the Tucker household. I felt free to open the refrigerator. They did the same when they came to my house. Mrs. T. would discipline me; we were of a family and I would rather have a family climate in school, particularly if it is a Friends school, where you are a full participant.

Ben acknowledges that it took time at Alliance for all members to truly feel like family, that while the “foundation” of the home has not changed, its “furniture and decorations” have. For example, Alliance was not an integrated school until the mid-1950s. In these earlier years of integration, Ben refers to a time when non-Caucasian students would have felt like guests in a white-dominated world. Over time, and through deliberate leadership, all students are now considered to be full participants.

**Social justice and equity.** The values of social justice and equity are the pillars that hold up and sustain the Alliance School as a culturally responsive environment. Specifically, values that I interpret as helping to form a socially just community were:
ensuring that all members have a voice, ensuring that multiple perspectives are included, and encouraging reflective listening and promoting dialog as a means to promote an understanding of differences and a peaceful resolution of conflicts. A thorough exploration of leadership practice as well as the programs that support Alliance as a culturally responsive community in succeeding sections of this case will illustrate where these socially just practices and values surfaced in the community.

**Openness toward change.** Interviews reveal that Alliance leaders openly acknowledge education as non-static and evolving. Leaders believe that the institution must adapt its programs and practices to meet the physical, historical, societal, and environmental changes that surround the school and the world at large. Kimberly, the diversity director, puts it this way: “Quakers believe in continued revelation and I think that our teachers feel very committed to looking at what they are doing and how they are doing it.”

Throughout Ben’s tenure at the Alliance School, he has reinforced the Quaker belief that truth can change and used that belief to help the community accept change, acknowledge new approaches to learning, and appreciate what the world has to offer. Ben proudly reflected on the national recognition of the school’s environmentally friendly architecture. During a field visit students took me on a tour of a green building, pointing out how the lighting, heating, and water systems meet certain environmental standards, and noted the use of local plants and recycled materials in and around the buildings.
The metaphor that we use in Quaker thinking and Quaker schools is my obligation to seek to move toward the truth, ever moving toward the truth, and the understanding of truth changes over time, the truth is constantly in flux, constantly changing, the natural world is changing, the level of our knowledge and insight is changing as we mature and grow and experience things. What you will see here is a willingness to look at things, to see things, to discontinue certain practices and add certain practices by living it; by being in the culture and with the people.

As I reviewed my field notes, analyzed each transcript, and contemplated each document, these words of change surfaced and helped me to understand how a system based on tradition equally values and understands change. From openly apologizing for prior discriminatory admission policies, to recognizing the current need to protect our natural environment, to acknowledging the need for new leadership for a new generation of learners, as Ben noted: “I think the school will be even stronger going forward. I think whoever succeeds me will have, I hope a usefulness, an energy, coming from another generation.”

Alliance leaders foster each of these values and strive to incorporate them into their practice, helping to maintain an inclusive home for all of their members. Through the following reflection, Ben, head of school helped to summarize how all the Alliance values germinated and grew in the many areas throughout the school which will help to
recognize when these values surface in the leadership practices that set direction, develop people and develop or redesign the organization:

If this was a corporation and it was the annual 4th of July picnic and we gave out t-shirts, there would be four things on the t-shirt: (1) commend academic and personal excellence, a value system; (2) the prizing of diversity, . . . we are not talking about tolerance here, we prize diversity. We seek it out. We want it, because I don’t believe you can have number 1 if you don’t have number 2. You can’t have the kind of excellence I am seeking for this institution if you don’t have every face at the table. (3) Friends’ values and testimonies: there is no faith that doesn’t believe in justice, integrity of brotherhood, equity, sisterhood. (4) Environmental stewardship.

**Setting direction.** At Alliance, the primary theme articulated by leaders had to do with “prizing diversity.” All leaders shared the goal of obtaining a diverse “critical mass” of students, faculty, and staff at the Alliance School. Ben not only acknowledges a commitment for diversity, but also seeks out information to keep informed both of the composition of the population as well as how members feel as part of the community:

We know what we stand for, and we have benchmarks; we need to monitor that data through surveys, conversations, dialogs. I am looking for feedback constantly. We have a goal of having no less than 25% of our kids here on aid,
averaging two-thirds of the cost of attending school, economic diversity, as well as racial as well as religious, we also have to pay attention to political diversity. We like those voices to be present because it takes that type of discourse in an institution to show balance, so we try to look at those kinds of things so we are juggling those types of variables, the prizing of diversity; that is what we are looking for. Consciously, two years ago we took a student from the Rawala Friends school as an exchange student because the Middle East is such a complicated part of the future of this country, and it was very valuable last year to have someone live here amongst our students, and suddenly people are paying a lot more attention because they are friends, they are classmates.

Ben sets direction by communicating clearly his goal of maintaining a critical mass of diverse constituents. He supports his goal both by holding others accountable to provide him with specific data on the population, as well as by annually analyzing the information for trends and needs relating to the internal student and faculty population within the community. Based on this vision, leaders at Alliance seek to ensure that the school student population represents a range of racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds; that the school works toward obtaining a percentage of faculty of color that mirrors the percentage of students of color; that through this diverse representation many voices will be present in the classrooms, and throughout the community; and that
academic and extracurricular units, programs, practices and activities, are put in place to enhance and compliment the school’s mission.

Being an institution founded before schools were integrated posed challenges for the Alliance School leaders as they strived to meet their goal of diversifying the student and faculty population. Both the head of school’s and the associate head of school’s determination to confront those issues and stand by the mission demonstrates the power and influence they have in improving and maintaining a culturally responsive community. Ron, associate head of school, sponsored round table discussions, visited community centers and churches and invited African-American professionals as guest speakers, all in a quest to increase the student of color population and educate others on the benefits of a diverse population. According to Ron, some parents considered this a threat, fearing that increasing the minority population would mean taking fewer siblings, fewer alumni children, and accepting less qualified students. Racial assumptions existed in the community but Ron firmly believed that the school could work through the difficult times:

We kept going back to the mission of the school. This is what Quaker schools are about, in the mission of the school, written down. I think people at that time, I think there is still some issue that we are taking less kids, less qualified, you know I think racial assumptions, and you work through those.
By the time Ben took over as head, there was a solid core of diversity represented in both student body and the faculty. Nevertheless, it was important to Ben to acknowledge the less inclusive practices of earlier history. During his tenure, he apologized publically for past discriminations:

It discriminated against Blacks and it discriminated against Jews. One of the things I did as part of my administration, I have said in three or four occasions, chosen somewhat carefully, that I apologize on behalf of this institution. That was part of our legacy.

Ben and Ron acknowledged the challenges and were open to addressing the issues diversity brings to a community. Similarly, the academic dean, Gordon, and the all-school director of diversity, Kimberly, set high goals specifically in the area they can influence the most—hiring faculty of color. Gordon explained it this way, “if students of color never see a teacher who looks like them, the school has done something wrong.”

As the all-school director of diversity, Kimberly played a direct role in meeting the school’s goal of increasing faculty of color representation. She interviewed all finalists for any position and clerks many of the search committees:

The school really is committed to increasing the amount of faculty of color school wide. I think 24% are teachers of color and 40% of our students. So we don’t have parity there. I think that we want especially in the upper school, only 15%
of our teachers are teachers of color, so hiring, recruiting particularly African-Americans is a high priority. They want us to approach every hiring process with that lens, not just to find a candidate who is a person of color, but also to make sure all candidates are sensitive to issues of diversity.

As indicated in these bold statements, Alliance school leaders work hard to meet their goal to provide role models for the diverse constituencies in the school. The leaders believe that it is an institutional responsibility to provide adult role models who can develop relationships with students with similar backgrounds; this is yet another way to create the caring community necessary in culturally responsive practice.

Alliance leaders set direction by consistently communicating the mission, which includes “prizing diversity.” Going beyond simply promoting this mission, their vision includes setting goals and establishing mechanisms to evaluate their progress in achieving those goals. Leaders set direction by striving to maintain a “critical mass” of diverse representation at Alliance. It is with this critical mass that leaders can then develop people and develop/redesign the organization in a way that promotes a culturally responsive community.

**Developing people.** Alliance leaders develop people by influencing, through dialog and engagement, community members’ perspectives on diverse issues. My analysis of the data led me to outline specific steps that leaders follow to develop people. First, leaders develop strong relationships with co-workers; next, they engage in reflective conversations with their colleagues that help them to examine assumptions and
accept different perspectives. Leaders then participate in professional and academic events and activities where they model inclusive, collaborative behavior. Others can then replicate this behavior and, ultimately, interact more effectively in a culturally responsive community.

Alliance leaders develop people by securing strong relationships with members of each school constituency, relationships that then allow them to influence people in a manner that helps them to achieve their goals. Relationship building is necessary in order to create a caring, trusting environment. Typical of a Quaker school, teachers have a lot of position power. For example, they are the clerks of all committees and organize and run faculty meetings. Therefore, for Alliance leaders to carry out their vision and support the school’s mission they must find ways to influence decisions. Through relationships they have built, leaders can influence teacher leaders’ decisions. A similar dynamic occurs among grade level teaching teams and at the department level where teachers collaborate, plan, and reflect on their practice supporting a strong classroom and professional community.

The open door policy and consistent presence of the head and associate head of school were mentioned frequently in each interview as a means toward developing strong, influential relationships. The diversity director and academic dean each commented on their strategic approach to developing relationships, which helps support their diversity initiatives. Kimberly, diversity director indicates:
I think that leadership is defined differently in a Quaker community; it is because we work with consensus. We don’t have that top down approach. My approach has been subtle. I spend a lot of time getting to know people in the community, having one-on-one conversations, in the hallway, in the lounge, cafeteria, and allowing them to get to know me, on a very personal level, and establishing that personal connection allowed for greater trust.

By building relationships and developing a caring, trusting environment, leaders suggested that they create an atmosphere ripe for dialog. Alliance leaders indicated that dialog is necessary for community members to reflect and examine personal and professional assumptions. Reflective dialogs occur in planned professional development programs as well as during spontaneous opportunities to share perspectives.

The academic dean positions himself in strategic areas so others can hear his conversations, which many times lead faculty members to reflect upon their own cultural assumptions:

I discuss these things because I am this type of person who can be open and not afraid to discuss issues about race. I think this helps. Faculty who will never discuss this, can hear two people of color discuss it. This brings professional growth for them. It is not official, but it is going on and that is why it is so important for independent schools to have faculty of color; even if they don’t
have any official role, they are helping teachers. We would just sit in the faculty lounge and have animated discussions.

The academic dean believes the prior trust he has built with faculty during his tenure facilitates these discussions. The conversations expose community members to different perspectives, and also pull faculty into conversations that help teachers rethink cultural assumptions. For example, Gordon has clarified the meaning of the “third world,” broken stereotypes, and helped faculty follow through with and better understand the importance of correctly pronouncing foreign names of faculty or students.

Throughout my interviews, Alliance leaders and teacher leaders referred to these reflective conversations. They occurred in the hallways, the classrooms, offices, and at meetings. It is through these conversations that leaders develop people by expanding the community’s knowledge base and facilitating the process of understanding diverse perspectives. This active knowledge building incorporates three of the five essential ingredients of Gay’s (2000) framework of culturally responsive practice: (a) By developing relationships, Alliance leaders demonstrate cultural caring and build a learning community. (b) Through this constant exchange of information, community members develop a culturally diverse knowledge base. (c) By having multiple cultures involved in these dialogs, the community develops effective cross-cultural communication.

Alliance leaders develop people by modeling effective practice in other ways as well. There are two important Quaker sayings—both pointing to the same behavior—that surfaced throughout my interviews and serve to guide leaders as they set an example
for the community: “Let your lives speak,” and Quakerism is “caught not taught.” Leaders “let their lives speak” by openly confronting situations and encouraging community members to be direct and open. Whether through a subtle constant presence as equal participants, at school-wide functions, or through bold statements such as posting anti-war signs, or apologizing for past discriminatory school actions, Alliance leaders give community members ample opportunity to “catch” Quakerism.

Alliance leaders strive to model socially just, equitable behavior. They are inclusive in their leadership approach, reaching out and striving to include many voices in the discussions at meetings and other gatherings. Each of the leaders promotes reflective dialog, dialog that leads to problem solving and consensus building. This approach became clear to me as leaders described the many conversations they have had with parents, teachers, and students. While I was in the classrooms, I also observed active dialog and questioning prompts that led to exploration and critical thinking. In a third grade classroom, students prepared to participate in a silent trade exchange as members of an early African civilization; they participated in a pair-share activity and used authentic African baskets and products to plan and carry out a simulated exchange.

Ben develops people by demonstrating and communicating how community members should make themselves available to other community members. To model this important school value each year he invites Chinese exchange students to spend the first weeks of their arrival at his home. “If they need something, if they feel home sick, if they hear something that offends them, I want them to feel comfortable coming to me.”
As an equal member at Meeting for Worship, Ben models the importance of reflective silence, as well as the understanding that during this period everyone is an equal:

Meeting for Worship is the only system I know of that you come together in silence. There is no expert. There is no one more important than anyone else in that room; there is no priest; there is no minister, no symbols. You just sit there in silence and you rise and speak from that silence if you have a point of view or perspective that you want to share. On Thursday mornings at 10 a.m. I am no more important than anyone else in that room; we are all equal.

The associate head of school also develops people by consistent modeling, building relationships with his constituencies, as well as by creating a caring, inclusive, collaborative, working environment. Frequent references, during a half-day visit as well as from the focus group, led me to conclude that in the lower school in particular, the relationships that exist between colleagues allow opportunities to develop people in a manner that promotes culturally responsive practice. The associate head of school brings together different voices in each of the classrooms by intentionally creating diverse teaching teams. Among the 32 full-time lower school faculty, fourteen are faculty of color representing eight different racial or ethnic groups. Ron mentioned how bringing together diverse professionals (all classes are team taught) creates an opportunity for adults to learn from varied perspectives, supporting professional growth, while at the same time modeling for the children different approaches to teaching and relationship
Conflicts arise, situations are negotiated, and knowledge is shared in front of the classroom community, providing adult modeling of negotiating differences for the students.

Ron believes that these classroom pairings allow for effective modeling of interactions and behaviors that expose the students as well as the teachers to multiple and diverse perspectives, leading to an authentic learning experience. These dynamic teaching teams cultivate positive relationships and strong collegiality throughout the division, creating a collaborative, caring environment where members feel well respected and are treated as equals. This collaborative environment enables Ron to bring others on board to help spread his views on diversity. Ron states, “early on I hired a number of teachers who were very, very committed to this, White and Black [teachers], and getting them involved and spreading it, so it was not just me.”

Many teachers commented on Ron’s supportive, inclusive approach where they feel treated as equals as well as cared for and trusted. Nadia, the lower school diversity co-coordinator reflects on her initial visit to the school:

I liked what I saw. I liked that there were two teachers in the classroom. The fact that all were really hands-on with the kids; there was not a hierarchy. I could tell that there was an equal playing field. And the way Ron was talking to me I really felt that this was a place that really supported teachers; I felt really nurtured, the creativity of teachers, the ingenuity, something that I had not seen in a long time. Basically I saw a lot of teachers that were happy.
Alliance leaders develop people in a manner that supports and maintains a culturally responsive community. Forming caring, trusting relationships is key to leaders’ ability to meet their goals, carry out their vision, and support the school’s mission. Once leaders develop trust and demonstrate care for community members, they are then able to influence their constituencies to supporting diversity initiatives. Furthermore, Alliance leaders are consistently present at both structured and non-structured school-wide events. They are frequently seen in the classrooms, hallways, garden areas, and faculty lounges. Their presence is that of an equal participator in an event or collegial conversation. This presence enables the community to benefit from the leaders modeling equitable and just behavior. An image of the head of school crammed into a small faculty gathering area, in line for a cup of coffee and casual conversation after the Meeting for Worship I attended, stands out in my mind as an example of his desire to be present with his faculty and staff. Finally, Alliance leaders believe that the presence of multiple perspectives and voices at all occasions brings personal and intellectual growth, increases one’s knowledge base, and gives individuals opportunities to reflect upon underlying cultural assumptions. In summary, Alliance leaders prioritize developing relationships as essential for the school’s success. These trusting relationships, together with diverse voices, combine to create a caring environment that ultimately encourages all community members to engage and interact.

**Developing/redesigning the organization.** Alliance is a school built on tradition; however, the needs of a complex and ever changing society require its leaders
to seek opportunities to adapt practice and programs appropriately. There are numerous, deeply ingrained programs and practices that support Alliance as a culturally responsive community. I divide the programs and practices that specifically help support and maintain culturally responsive practice into four categories:

1. Programs that set the stage and introduce constituencies to beliefs and initiatives around diversity and Quakerism;
2. Structures and processes that directly support diversity initiatives;
3. Curricular and extra-curricular programs and practices;
4. Meeting for Worship, a weekly meeting held in each division that addresses different perspectives in a safe, reflective, and respectful environment.

By promoting and supporting these programs, Alliance leaders develop the organization in a manner that maintains culturally responsive practice.

*Programs that set the stage: prizing diversity and Quakerism.* Diversity 101, one of the first activities during student and faculty orientation, is a one-day program that introduces participants to Alliance’s foundational values. Quakerism and culturally responsive practice are introduced simultaneously, a powerful symbol of how deeply the school commits to promoting culturally responsive practice. As indicated in the document, “Diversity 101,” a script prepared for student facilitators of the new-student orientation day, the day is introduced as a time to, “allow us to get to know one another a little better. But more importantly, to provide activities that will allow us to share with you some of the central values that the Alliance School holds dear,” followed by:
Today, we’re going to be thinking and talking about social justice, respect and community. These are Quaker testimonies. What do justice, respect and community mean in the context of our school? When we seek ‘That of God in everyone,’ we are seeking the good in everyone. If we see the goodness in each other, then we will be good to one another and treat one another as we would like to be treated.

Student leaders explore ideas centering on Quaker testimonies using hands-on activities, team-building processes, and visuals in PowerPoint presentations. Time for active listening and reflection are built into all segments of the day. This initial introduction helps to explain how intertwined the concepts and practices of Quakerism and diversity are, as well as how important it is to bring all school voices together and allow all school constituencies to work on this school wide priority. Student leaders organize and implement Diversity 101 under the leadership of the all-school diversity director.

An additional opportunity for teachers to explore Quaker values and processes is through “Teachers New to Quakerism,” offered off-campus, by Friends organizations as a half-day workshop or full weekend retreat. These opportunities enable faculty to experience, and not simply learn about Quaker process. Explained by a teacher leader:

It made it easier to implement it [Quaker process] with my co-teacher. It is not hard to learn and it is not hard to practice. Common sense practices, good for
children. It gives them a sense of calm and understanding; let me think before I react, they are very helpful in teaching.

Teachers incorporate Quaker process into their instruction using techniques that simultaneously support culturally responsive practice.

**Diversity Leadership Council.** The Diversity Leadership Council (DLC) is the nucleus of a complex committee structure that supports diversity initiatives at the Alliance School. This structure supports culturally responsive practice by providing a forum and mechanism for the all-school diversity director to communicate and guide implementation of culturally responsive practice throughout all areas of the school. DLC is clerked by the all-school diversity director, who is a member of the Leadership Team and reports directly to the head of school. The all-school diversity director works with the clerks of the Trustee Diversity Committee as well of the Parent Diversity Committee and the Faculty Diversity Committee. The Faculty Diversity Committee is further divided into divisional committees, each with a coordinator. Under the umbrella of the Parent Diversity Committee is an African-American Parent Committee. Under the umbrella of the Upper School Committee are many student affinity groups including: Hispanic Student Group, Black Student Union, Gay-Straight Alliance, and a multicultural student group. These groups have developed solid traditions and programs that are part of the Alliance culture. For example, each year a school-wide student-planned Martin Luther King assembly, a Go-Go Dance, and a dance for same-sex couples take place. Policies and programs approved and implemented under Kimberly’s leadership of
the DLC include the Diversity 101 pre-planning workshops; SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) programs offered once each academic quarter; and a formal policy approved by the Leadership Team requiring each division to offer a yearly diversity-related professional development workshop, as well a full faculty diversity program every third year.

Ben, head of school, comments on the success of DLC:

We are ripe with them [committees]. There are probably nine different diversity committees here. Lower school, middle school, upper school, trustees, all school, parents. I could go to meeting here from sun up to sun down and sometimes I do. It is a tremendous burden, because that is part of the process. It is much more cumbersome than the process in many school communities, but our view is what you get out of it. It sounds like it [is cumbersome] upfront, but over time, you have less fractiousness and more buy in, and when people feel ownership in the implementation of it [the DLC], and the lastingness of decisions here is probably longer than other places. And people are content with it [the committees]. Even when people don’t agree they feel that they have been heard.

Curricular and extra-curricular programs. The content and delivery of many curricular and extra-curricular programs at the Alliance School help support and maintain a culturally responsive environment by providing opportunities through varied approaches and multiple perspectives to gain and share information. Programs vary from
all school to divisional, but are connected through direct and indirect paths to the values underlying Quakerism and diversity.

The programs that extend throughout the whole school community include: the Chinese studies program, the modern language program, a peace speaker series, and the community service program. An exploration of China begins in the fourth grade; Chinese language instruction begins in the middle school. Each year two high school students from China spend the year at Alliance, and Alliance students have the opportunity to study in China. The history and language departments offer extensive course work on China, including a history of China taught in Mandarin. An annual peace speaker helps expose the community to the Quaker’s belief of peaceful resolution to conflicts. A recent speaker included Gregg Mortenson, author of *Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Mission to Promote Peace*. Each division has a community service program, which brings different constituencies together to work on a service-oriented project. In the lower school I observed a monthly event where first grade students paired up with fourth grade students and parent volunteers in the cafeteria to cut up a colorful and abundant collection of vegetables used to make soup for a local shelter. These four solid programs enable leaders and teachers to plant the seeds of peace, service, and diversity early on in the Alliance experience, which are then revisited throughout a student’s stay at Alliance.

The lower school program, under the leadership of the associate head of school, integrates each of the components of culturally responsive practice. Analysis of the data led me to conclude that Ron effectively uses human resources; creates a schedule that
supports active, individualized learning; and maintains a program that weaves academic content with social skills. During my observation day at the lower school campus, Ron gave me open access to the school. I sat through a Meeting for Worship, observed a service project, participated in a kindergarten class, and observed a third grade social studies/language arts project. I witnessed all components of culturally responsive practice. Morning and closing gathering gave students a voice to express their concerns or share experiences; the language used during these gathering was reflective and caring: “Come into the circle. Don’t come too fast, you will exclude someone.” Practices I observed included a pair-share activity, story-retelling, family portrait design with natural materials, and a collaborative project preparing to simulate an African market; teaching resources included authentic cultural artifacts, maps, and abundant children’s books representing varied cultures, ethnicities, and topics. It was apparent that teachers had the necessary knowledge, resources, and desire to effectively incorporate culturally responsive practice.

As students move into the middle and then upper school, they are exposed to more thought-provoking topics, which challenge them to view situations from multiple perspectives. Guest speakers have included, for example, leaders who have served in Iraq as well as those who oppose the war. Students choose from a wide range of electives and courses that represent varied cultural, religious, and political points of view. Emphasis is placed on language instruction, and a School Year Abroad program, together with multiple summer immersion experiences give students opportunities to use their language and cultural knowledge in authentic situations. Informal and formal dialog
among students, with exchange students, in class through animated discussion, and open
conversations with administrators keeps students actively learning about and
experiencing differences both inside and outside of the classroom.

Meeting for Worship. Meeting for Worship is a period of time that naturally
combines Alliance School’s commitment to exposing diverse points of view with Quaker
process. In the lower school classes take turns and prepare to lead Meeting for Worship
by writing specific queries that help the community to reflect upon key values. Once
again, this process demonstrates the integration of academic and social skills. Students
use the writing process to brainstorm and develop inquiries, which then are shared at
Meeting for Worship and applied in the community. The Upper School Meeting for
Worship sometimes leads to eye-opening reflections that require carefully thought out
and quickly implemented mechanisms to process the experience and feelings that
surface.

As a participant in two Meetings for Worship, I realized that this Quaker process
supports culturally responsive practice by exposing students to multiple perspectives and
by encouraging students to reflect upon their own position in the community and in the
world in a respectful, safe venue. I recall two opportunities I had to view participants in
Meeting for Worship. Both in the lower and upper school the brief statements centered
on compassion and inclusivity. A lower school student shared, “I think people need to
respect one another on the playground. Children play different kinds of games and we
need to learn different kinds of games.” In the upper school, one student asked the
community to remember the second anniversary of the death of a cherished employee.
After 7 more minutes of silence, another student announced, “Let us remember national coming out day this Saturday. Let’s lift the light; two years ago a Larry King, a high school student was killed in class for being gay.”

Two particular Meetings for Worship recounted by the head of school and the all-school director of diversity provide examples of the topics and learning experiences created as a result of this exposure. One powerful account included a Sudanese exchange student remembering his sister on her birthday. He had witnessed her beheading and that of his mother; in this account he told the community how fortunate he felt to be a member of the Alliance community. Ben considers that this example will help others to appreciate their own experiences and to realize there are tougher situations than “not making the varsity team” or “not getting into Princeton.” A second example is used to explain how the DLC committee structure serves as a mechanism to process emotions and thoughts that surface at Meeting for Worship. Kimberly described a meeting that occurred just after the Jena Six demonstrations (2006 court case in Jena, LA where six black students were accused of a vicious assault on a white student). The Black Student Union sent a school-wide email to the community asking everyone to show up at school wearing a black t-shirt to show support for the demonstrations that were occurring around the nation. Due to the timing of the email, many did not receive it and were unable to participate:

Those of us who did not read the email, felt bad. It was very painful. One student rose and opened the meeting to say how profound it was for him, that his
community had supported the Jena Six. Very positive, but then a few statements later a student rose and said, “what troubles me is to look around the room and see orange, pink”…and so the kids in the room were sitting there, and felt on the spot, and “now everyone thinks I am a racist.” But there were other responses that said, “It was not about the color of your shirt. MLK told us we are not supposed to judge a person by the color of his skin, we can’t judge a person by the color of the shirt he wore.” It was an incredible meeting; following that emotions were running high. Most people were really upset. There was a lot of tension in our community, but there was also a lot of positive energy.

Immediately after the Meeting for Worship, Kimberly organized a meeting to help process the feelings of community members. The multicultural club, with help from the parent chairs of the Parent Diversity Committee and the Black Student Union, led a lunch discussion the following day. Student and parent leaders, representing four different diversity committees facilitated the meeting in a “packed” room. A very complex situation with a positive outcome helped me to understand and even visualize the interactions, and emotions of a large group of people from varied cultures and races, talking out their opinions around a nationally publicized recent racial incident, in an efficient, safe environment under the guidance of adults. With its multiple perspectives, varied communication styles, and open respectful forum, Meeting for Worship incorporates all elements of culturally responsive practice.
Longstanding structures and programs exist at the Alliance School that support the school’s diversity work. Alliance leaders develop the organization by sustaining these foundational programs and ensuring that they remain as key pillars to enhance this culturally responsive community. Part of sustaining these programs includes Alliance leaders constantly monitoring the programs and practices, recognizing that “the ever changing truth,” requires adapting practices to fit a changing society and world.

**Conclusion: Alliance—an Extended Multicultural Family**

Table 6 summarizes the key leadership practices that support this multicultural family and home, the Alliance School.
Table 6

Leadership Practices at the Alliance School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Direction</th>
<th>Leaders “prize diversity” by communicating and working to meet expectations that enhance culturally responsive practice.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing People</td>
<td>Leaders develop people by forming relationships that lead to open and reflective dialog, creating a caring community, which is needed for interaction and learning in a culturally responsive community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing/Redesigning The Organization</td>
<td>Leaders develop/redesign the organization through their consistent presence and direct commitment to practices, procedures, and programs that support culturally responsive practice.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Alliance leaders consider their community to be a home for all of its members—members that aspire to form a family-like environment. Alliance leaders strive to ensure that all of its members are treated respectfully, that they feel welcomed and heard. Leaders acknowledged that maintaining a home means respecting differences, working with varied viewpoints, and problem solving. To nurture this multicultural environment, Alliance leaders set direction by clearly articulating certain expectations and visibly work to meet mission driven goals. They develop people by cultivating relationships among one another, modeling essential behaviors, and through dialog and
engagement explore varied viewpoints that lead to changes and acceptance within the community. They develop/redesign the organization by supporting essential programs, while simultaneously ensuring that each program is attuned to the changing times. This home is held up by a value system that fosters respect for individual members, insure equal opportunities for members to contribute, and addresses conflict and problem solves through dialog and peaceful resolutions.

**Conclusion**

In Chapter 4, I presented the findings from three school sites: Gibson, Livelton and Alliance Schools. Using my conceptual framework, *Culturally Responsive Leadership in the Schoolhouse*, I provide evidence from each of the cases. I refer to aspects of the school’s mission and the head of school’s vision. I identify the values that orient leadership practice in these schools and illustrate how leaders set direction, develop people, and develop/redesign the organization in a manner that supports culturally responsive practice. In Chapter 5, I compare these three cases to uncover overlapping practices and to identify key attributes to leadership practice that sustain these culturally responsive communities. This comparative work will provide the basis to answer my primary research question: How do the actions of leaders support culturally responsive practice?
Chapter 5

Cross Case Findings

As the researcher of this study I set out to answer the primary question: How do the actions of leaders support culturally responsive practice in schools? I conducted research at three Mid-Atlantic independent schools known to embrace multicultural practice. In each school site I identified leaders’ values, as well as behaviors practiced to set direction, develop people, and develop/redesign the organization in a manner that supports culturally responsive practice. In the previous chapter, findings associated with each of the three sites were presented. In this cross case analysis I return to my conceptual framework to identify similar leadership behaviors at each school that support culturally responsive practice. This investigation led to four main findings on leadership behavior in culturally responsive communities. Findings focus on leaders’ behaviors that:

- use values to cultivate a strong school culture,
- reinforce those values through deliberate leadership practices,
- distribute leadership to key leaders to reinforce the school culture, and
- apply different leadership frames to support leaders’ work.

First, I note the values that surfaced across school sites. I then explain how the heads of school incorporate these values into their leadership behavior, as well as how they distribute leadership to help reinforce the school culture. Finally, I conclude that heads of
school rely on many leadership frames to sustain culturally responsive practice in schools, but their dependence on the symbolic frame surfaced as most significant toward sustaining culturally responsive practice.

**Finding 1: Heads of School Reinforce Values to Cultivate a Strong Culture in Support of Culturally Responsive Practice**

The heads of school as the primary leaders at these three school sites are purposeful in cultivating a strong culture that supports culturally responsive practice. Leaders promote this culture by effectively communicating, reinforcing, and transferring—through deliberate action—school values that support culturally responsive practices and programs.

The leaders’ values permeate the foundation of these three school communities and form the basis of strong school cultures. Two values are evident in all three school sites: acknowledge each individual and respect and embrace multiple perspectives. The manner in which the heads of school articulate, transfer, model, and incorporate values into practice differs across each community. Later in this chapter I identify how these espoused values surface in the specific leadership practices that set direction, develop people, and develop/redesign the organization to demonstrate the impact values have in supporting the cultures of these culturally responsive communities.

It is also important to identify the strong connection between the values uncovered across these three school sites with an essential component of culturally responsive practice: creating a caring community. In essence, at these three school sites, acknowledging the individual and understanding multiple perspectives cultivates a sense of respect and compassion that fosters a caring community. Leaders within a caring
community explicitly model values deemed necessary for successful learning. “These include respect for self and others, persistence, responsibility, as well as self-confidence and taking ownership of one’s actions” (Gay, 2000, p. 48).

A caring community is the foundation needed for learning to take place. At the Gibson, Livelton, and Alliance Schools, leaders value the individual characteristics each member brings to the community, as well as the multiple perspectives resulting from diverse individuals forming the community. How the leaders incorporate the values into practice demonstrates that members are cared for, individually and as a whole. In this way leaders help form strong school cultures and support culturally responsive practice. Through Finding 2 I illustrate how the heads of school incorporate these values into the manner in which they set direction, develop people, and develop/redesign the organization, demonstrating the importance values play in supporting culturally responsive practice at these three school sites.

Finding 2: Heads Rely on All Three Essential Leadership Behaviors to Reinforce Values That Create a Strong Culture

Values. Values reflect the underlying organizational culture of each school, cultures that help sustain a commitment to culturally responsive practice. To reinforce this strong culture the heads of school do not rely solely on a particular leadership behavior, but balance and integrate into their practice each of the leadership behaviors deemed necessary for effective school leadership. Through these leadership behaviors they incorporate school values into all practices, thereby reinforcing and developing shared norms that create this strong school culture. The heads of school are strategic in balancing these practices to carry out their visions and support the school’s mission. In
short, the alignment and consistency between school values and leader behaviors that support these values are critical to maintaining cultures that both teach and reinforce culturally responsive practices.

**Setting direction.** Leaders set direction in their schools by communicating and carrying out the visions they have for their communities. In these three school sites each leader’s vision includes embracing and fulfilling the school mission. In all three school communities, each head of school set clear professional and instructional goals meant to support his/her vision. Goals were measurable and incorporated each school’s values.

Glenda, head of Gibson, initiated her vision of creating a diverse learning community by setting out to increase the diverse representation of the student body, faculty, and staff. She sought out and received from the board of trustees a written commitment to support her diversity initiative. Glenda introduced a chart, published on the school’s web site to keep the community informed on the progress of this initiative, a chart that is updated and remains on the web site four years after Glenda’s departure.

Similarly, Ben, who encountered a diverse faculty and student body when he began his tenure at Alliance, required the personnel, admissions, and academic departments to provide him with annual data points that indicated representation of certain racial and ethnic groups. This reporting also included noting girls’ representation in high-level math and science classes. Armed with data, Ben worked with school and teacher leaders to coordinate action plans to remedy any deficits. Through clear goals and concrete measures, Glenda and Ben both incorporate their value of securing multiple perspectives to enrich the learning community.
Dan, head of Livelton, communicated the importance of the school mission by asking each school leader to develop and post a professional and/or departmental mission. Through informal check-in meetings, Livelton’s leaders monitored the progress of supporting that mission. Dan’s goal for all to establish and follow through with a personal mission is one example of the high expectations he puts upon the faculty and staff. High expectations of students are equally important. “Students are able to select their own paths, manage their own time, and build their own reputation. Faculty are helpful, accessible, and students are given every opportunity to succeed,” indicates one 12th-grade student. This level of personal and institutional commitment to the mission reinforces and illustrates how the institutional values, in this Livelton example giving “power with responsibility,” are transferred to concrete actions.

The heads of school each set direction by revealing a commitment to social justice and equity in their communities and beyond. Through what I term as bold communication, each head vocally addressed constituents to achieve a greater understanding of equity issues throughout the community. Glenda dove into tough conversations with parents and faculty. Privately in her office with parents or publicly at faculty meetings Glenda “put things in people’s way to stumble over so that it will be meaningful for them when they apply it.” She believed that forced engagement over tough conversations led to better understandings of diverse issues. For example, she once asked a parent who she was speaking with about behavioral concerns, “I just need to know if you are worried that there is anything about race that is playing a role in this
misbehavior?” In this way Glenda felt that unconscious beliefs about race would be brought to the surface and discussed.

Similarly, recognizing Alliance’s policies prior to racial integration, Ben apologized at public events for the school’s past discriminatory policies. Understanding how past policies effect present-day decisions Ben reviewed admissions decisions and made recommendations. His belief was that if priority were given to alumni and faculty children, achieving diversity would be a greater challenge. Although Ben did not have a final say in these decisions, he felt that putting the issue on the table helped the community recognize or avoid institutional racism. At Livelton, Human Sexuality is a required semester course as part of the values curriculum. Dan referred to a tough conversation with a family who asked for their son to be exempt from this course due to their family values. Dan’s response was, if you are a member of the Livelton community, this is a required course. The open way in which these leaders address the challenging aspects of diversity helps them meet their objective of obtaining a greater understanding of diverse issues as well as striving to ensure a socially just and equitable environment.

At Gibson, Livelton, and Alliance leaders carry out their vision through concrete, measurable goals. Each head of school incorporated the value, embracing multiple perspectives, by emphasizing a need for and maintaining a diverse population. Leaders also regularly communicate their progress in this area. Setting direction in a manner that supports culturally responsive practice at these three independent schools is not only embracing diversity, but also ensuring diversity.
The purposeful, concrete goals that these heads of school set to carry out their vision are necessary to maintain a culturally responsive community. Goals set to support culturally responsive practice are “deliberate, explicit, systematic and sustained” (Gay, 2000, p. 213). Both Glenda and Ben deliberately and explicitly set goals to maintain and sustain a diverse community. Through board communications, public charts, or data points, information about each school’s diverse population is acknowledged throughout the community. Moreover, Dan’s systematic approach to help leaders’ connect their personal mission to the school’s mission helps to align personal goals with community goals. Dan works with each leader as they reflect and self-monitor their progress. Constant self-reflection and monitoring of personal and professional goals built around a vision form a “pillar of progress” (Gay, 2000, p. 213), which reinforces culturally responsive practice.

**Developing people.** To successfully bring a vision to life, leaders must be able to develop people and to mobilize the adults around them to understand, engage, and support their efforts. The leaders at Gibson, Livelton, and Alliance have a similar approach to developing people: they are consistently present and available for their faculty and staff. They provide support through active engagement and modeling, with the intention to problem solve or foster new understandings that will enhance learning. Through this constant presence and engagement, the leaders build strong working relationships with their faculty and staff, which lead to collaboration and an openness toward change in both attitudes and practices that support culturally responsive
practice. Leaders’ modeling, presence, and consistent engagement with teachers, moreover, socialize community members to understand the culture.

An emphasis on equity and equality is important in the practices leaders carry out to develop people. In particular, leaders model behaviors that establish them as equal to other community members. Their simple presence as participants in the daily life of the school sends this message of equality and diminishes the sense of a hierarchal structure. This is one important step toward building strong working relationships.

Building strong relationships facilitates leaders’ ability to develop people by providing a safe environment for formal and informal professional reflection and dialog. Each of the school leaders from the heads of school to teacher leaders described on many occasions the strategies they used to problem solve a situation or to facilitate a conversation to broaden their perspective. Strategies included for example, the one-on-one Socratic questioning technique the assistant head of school at Gibson used with a teacher to understand the behavior of an African-American child in class. At Alliance the diversity director and the academic dean took an informal approach to stimulating reflective conversations in the hallways and faculty lounges. The fish-bowl experiences at Gibson’s faculty meetings as well as the “open microphone” segment of Livelton meetings, to the sometimes contentious topics brought up at Livelton’s assembly and Alliance’s Meeting for Worship, have each led to personal and professional reflection by community members. Through my direct observation of these occurrences I understood and felt the level of comfort that individuals experience as well as the manner in which exposure to multiple perspectives is integrated into school culture.
The strong school cultures, built on relationships within a collaborative, inclusive environment empower leaders and teachers to develop, implement, and lead school programs. It is not surprising that leaders developed and empowered people in a manner that embraced institutional values and enhanced leader's goals. Recognizing the strengths and interests that all individuals bring to the community is a clear value that surfaced at each school. At Gibson, Dona utilizes her strength and focus on curricular development to collaboratively lead teachers to explore, extend, and develop conceptual themes that became the nucleus for further curricular and pedagogical development. By the end of her first pre-planning day she had worked with her faculty team to develop and plan a curricular road map for each grade based on each team’s essential question. At Livelton, Dan is a constant observer, “bumping into” daily life and maintaining an open door to support faculty and students as needed. He charged the leaders around him with leading their programs, committees, and divisions as well as exploring their interests and using them to initiate new student programs or courses. This cycle of support, from school leadership to faculty, continues among school leaders, faculty, and students. Faculty explore strengths and interests with students, a process which further empowers the students, as highlighted in Chapter 4, to develop their own clubs and affinity groups, introduce a new sport or extracurricular activity, develop an independent study project, provide substantial feedback on faculty teaching practice, or even make recommendations for teacher hiring or resource acquisition. In essence, leaders develop people by empowering them to explore and recognize community members’ individual strengths and interests to develop programs that fortify these dynamic school cultures.
In a culturally responsive community, a dynamic school culture is a caring one. Creating the dynamic school cultures at these three school sites where individuals are recognized and respected; where multiple perspectives are embraced; and where leaders, faculty, and students feel empowered is a challenging process achieved through the above-mentioned strategies. Gay (2000) explains teachers’ and leaders’ roles as cultural organizers, cultural mediators, and orchestrators of social contexts for learning that support culturally responsive practice. More specifically she identifies cultural therapy as a mechanism to help teachers identify their biases, and acknowledge shortcomings in program, practice or, in general, the learning environment. Each of the strategies used by leaders at these three schools falls under the umbrella of the defined roles offered by Gay. As leaders develop people by consistently engaging in personal reflection, whether formally at faculty meetings or informally in faculty lounges, in small group settings, or large venues such as assembly or Meeting for Worship, leaders are serving the role of cultural mediator, helping members to look beyond their own views and consider ways to approach their life at school in a manner that serves and utilizes the diversity of the population.

**Developing/redesigning the organization.** Each of the leaders at these three school sites understands and models the school values. Diversity is valued, multiple perspectives are explored, and individuality is respected. The leaders at all three schools do not stop after recognizing and honoring these values, but they incorporate them into practice and program thereby enabling the school community to fully benefit from their enactment. Whereas leaders set direction to create a culture by developing shared norms,
leaders use these shared norms to develop programs. In all three school sites leaders implement programs and practices that simultaneously incorporate school values and support culturally responsive practice.

Although many factors contribute toward developing/redesigning the organization to support culturally responsive practice, two components stand out across each school community. Each of these schools has a complex organizational or committee structure to help maintain a culturally responsive community, and each school strives to provide an integrated education where students learn both the academic knowledge and the social skill set to interact in a diverse community.

The organizational structure varies from school to school and consists of numerous committees, parent education opportunities, clubs, affinity groups, and extracurricular activities. Similarly, across schools, participation in this structure is inclusive, reaching out to all constituents from board members, to parents, to students, staff and faculty. Leadership within these groups is also inclusive. Structures are set up to enhance sharing and learning. In other words, these structures are established to educate and support community members and not solely to carry out pre-determined diversity goals or initiatives. The structure differs across school sites to meet both the needs of the developmental age group as well as the specific context at each school.

At Gibson, emphasis leans toward parent and faculty education as well as opportunities for family and community interaction. In this way parents are provided with the necessary tools to support their children at home and are given opportunities to learn from and about the diverse families within the community. For example, Director's
Discussions cover topics such as understanding how to set up “play dates” where norms differ across cultural and ethnic groups. Families can mingle at the end-of-summer multicultural potluck, an afternoon social event organized to encourage interaction among the diverse community members. At Livelton, student and faculty empowerment is key. Structures are set up to help faculty support students to recognize and pursue personal and academic interests through leadership of student clubs, affinity groups, or by designing programs for school assemblies, service projects, and other school activities. Students proposed, developed, and maintain each of the more than twenty-five clubs and affinity groups, and a student-activities council organizes and runs all assembly programs as well as extracurricular programs such as the annual diversity leadership retreat.

Alliance, the largest and most complex school with three distinct divisions, must meet the needs of four through eighteen year olds. Moreover, in this Quaker school, I found that faculty believe their involvement and input to be an essential component of the decision-making process. The head of school referred to adults going to meetings from “sunrise to sunset” whereas the academic dean indicated “if the faculty are not behind you, forget it…this is a faculty driven school; they feel empowered.” To provide this opportunity, the committee structure at Alliance is a complex web of different sub-committees across divisions and constituents centered around a nucleus—a central diversity committee that serves to keep the head of school and leadership team informed of school initiatives and concerns.
Many of the structures, both academic and extracurricular supported by the leaders at these three schools, provide the opportunity for the students to practice social skills and be exposed to the academic knowledge that will help them become successful in a diverse community. The values, an embedded component of the varied structures and programs, solidify the culture. The interests and strengths of the adults and students determine the varied activities and programs as well as provide a venue for open expression by all, resulting in opportunities to share and act upon multiple perspectives.

Gay (2000) describes effective culturally responsive practice as an “expressed concern for the psycho-emotional well being and academic success; personal morality and social actions; obligations and celebrations; communality and individuality; and unique cultural connections and universal bonds” (p. 46). The school leaders’ emphasis on, and what I interpret as the successful and deliberate integration of, the academic and social curricula across these three school sites is a strong example of developing the organization in a manner that supports culturally responsive practice.

The social curriculum together with direct instruction provides opportunities to express oneself, develop self-confidence, share, and reflect while simultaneously learning how to respect and interact together in a community. Gaining this ability to function in a community facilitates students’ success in academic and structured extracurricular programs. Although each school studied here varies greatly in size, attends to a distinct age group, and differs in its historical or religious foundation, leaders support and implement similar foundational programs, traditions, and rituals that integrate the schools’ social and academic programs. Providing opportunities for individuals, classes,
or the entire school community to problem solve and to practice expressing and sharing knowledge is important, leading toward understanding multiple points of view within and beyond the community. At Gibson, this is accomplished at morning meeting and Friday sing-a-longs, at Livelton during advisory and assembly, and at Alliance during morning gathering and Meeting for Worship. At each school, the head of school as well as key administrators actively participate in these daily and weekly rituals.

Not only do these events provide exposure to multiple viewpoints through the sharing of varied beliefs, explanations of different customs and celebrations, or reflections on community and societal events, but many times these events are connected to curricular programs and pedagogical techniques. For example the morning message at a Gibson meeting and the written query at Alliance’s classroom gatherings incorporate academic topics and skills, which then serve as launching points into classroom instruction. One such query in an Alliance third grade classroom was, “How can we learn from the opinions of others in the school, on the playground and during this election year?” The lower school community as a whole reflected on the query, as did the third grade class when they gathered for a class meeting. In essence both the organizational structure and the balanced social and academic curricula ensure that all community members have a voice, encourage reflection and sharing of multiple perspectives, allow for the exploration of personal interests and strengths, and provide the bridge toward in-depth curricular exploration.

**Summary.** All three heads of school carried out specific actions that represented each of the three behaviors deemed necessary for effective school leadership and used
these actions to reinforce specific values. By effectively reinforcing these values through concrete actions across the school communities they supported and reinforced a strong school culture. Both the values and practices that grounded this culture are comparable to those needed to develop and maintain a culturally responsive community. Although these leaders do not depend on one specific category of leadership behavior, they successfully integrate each of the behavior types into their practice. For example, all three leaders set direction by communicating and identifying a path to achieve their goals. They carefully developed people through modeling, relationship building, and educational engagement that enabled community members to better understand shared norms. In developing the organization these leaders combined the shared values and norms, using human resources to develop the organizational structures that maintain these culturally responsive communities.

Through identifying, analyzing, and understanding the effective integration of all three leadership practices by the heads of school and their success in supporting a strong organizational culture, I discovered a third finding: the ability of the heads of school to effectively use all school leaders to maintain this school culture. Returning to key examples where the actions of school leaders emulated those of the heads of school, I demonstrate the collaborative manner in which leaders at these schools all support the organizational culture.
Finding 3: Heads Effectively Distribute Leadership to Maintain School Culture

The guidance and support the heads of school provide to all school leaders as well as their outreach to constituents ensure that culturally responsive practices are enacted throughout the community. All school heads depicted in this study collaborated with and relied on school leaders to reinforce, teach, and personally support the school culture. The heads of school cultivated relationships with other leaders and solidified the culture by honoring school values while seeking leadership support. For example, at Livelton, Dan worked to understand the strengths, interests, and goals of his leadership team and then encouraged leaders to use those individual talents and interests to develop program. This is manifested in multiple ways from the director of service learning launching a new trip to provide support in New Orleans (after the ravages of Hurricane Katrina) to the head of middle school initiating student-led family conferences. Ben, on the other hand, sought out particular expertise and delegated certain challenges to be solved to the leaders around him, whether by soliciting precise information from the personnel, admissions, alumni or academic offices, or by communicating a concern to the academic dean on low enrollment in a particular language or mathematics course. Acknowledging individuality and multiple perspectives, as well as accepting the inclusivity of decision making expected at this Quaker institution, he made an effort to communicate his opinions, but understood when decisions did not go his way. Whether recommending that service projects focus on protecting the environment, or setting a limit on the number of faculty children that receive aid, Ben stated his opinions.
Glenda and Dona had a somewhat different approach: they relied on their own professional strengths to bring leaders on board. As explained in Chapter 4, Glenda used her ability to problem solve and engage others in focused dialog; Dona used her expertise in curriculum development to model instructional problem solving and curriculum exploration for leaders and teachers. Through modeling problem-solving techniques both one-on-one and in groups, Glenda prepared leaders and teachers to do so in their departments and classrooms. Dona collaborated with leaders and teachers to solidify the curriculum, integrating into it both the social skills and knowledge necessary to interact in a diverse community.

For all heads of school, being present and available to all constituents, accompanying the community in the day-to-day activities, and being supportive in any needed situation were essential parts of their leadership. These behaviors served to empower leaders throughout the schools, leading them to work in unison to support and reinforce the school culture, which ultimately maintains these culturally responsive environments. Not only did the heads of school rely on other leaders to support culturally responsive practice throughout the community, but they also incorporated different leadership frames to vary their approach as needed and ensure that culturally responsive practice was reinforced through multiple means.

**Finding 4: Although Leaders Relyed on Different Leadership Frames to Carry Out Their Work, the Symbolic Frame was Most Significant in Sustaining Culturally Responsive Practice**

The leaders of each of these schools relied upon all of the leadership frames (Bolman & Deal, 2008) to carry out their goals and sustain culturally responsive
practice. The school population and philosophical orientation played a part in the emphasis leaders put on a particular leadership perspective. Consistent across school sites, however, was the manner in which leaders applied the different leadership frames specifically to strengthen the instructional program. Finally, leaders’ use of the symbolic frame of leadership surfaced as indispensable in maintaining culturally responsive practice throughout the community.

Each leader worked to foster an effective learning climate to support the instructional programs, and in doing so, exhibited elements of the structural and political leader. Leaders’ efforts at redesign show elements of structural leadership, as when Dona, head of Gibson School redesigned or refocused the curriculum by organizing it around conceptual themes and essential questions. As an effective political leader, Dona made sure the chosen themes facilitated the integration of diverse perspectives and emphasized not only content knowledge, but also how to live and interact in a diverse society. Using power as a strategic tool may also be indicative of an awareness of organizational politics, as when Livelton leaders emphasized student involvement in instructional decision making in the course selections, both formal and informal evaluation of teachers, and faculty hiring. In particular, at Alliance, where faculty empowerment, and attention to consensus building are elements of Quaker culture, Ben relied on his ability to influence constituents to support a practice, policy, or program. Whether working to update admission policies, suggest a change in the community service requirements, or closely monitoring the quality of the varied language programs, Ben employed political influence to generate support of his ideas.
Although each leader demonstrated the capacity to use varied leadership orientations to achieve goals, the symbolic aspects of leadership seem to be paramount in sustaining culturally responsive schools. Communicating, modeling, and enacting specific values surfaced consistently in the actions of all leaders, signifying a strong adherence by leaders to the symbolic frame as a means to maintain culturally responsive practice in their communities. Each leader worked to create, maintain, and strengthen an environment supportive of culturally responsive practice through the use of rituals, stories, and formal and informal practices. Each made sure that newcomers were socialized and worked to reinforce and re-teach appropriate ways of conducting oneself in support of their school’s core beliefs.

Culturally responsive practice is inherently value laden. Teachers respect, recognize, and care for the individuals in their classroom community (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). This research described the multiple ways leaders enacted through their actions the two values, respect for the individual and appreciation of multiple perspectives. Thus, the values needed to support a caring classroom community run parallel to those that surfaced as significant for leaders to maintain culturally responsive practice. Leaders consistently worked to reinforce these values through their actions.

Specifically, leaders promoted and participated in rituals such as morning meeting, assembly, and Meeting for Worship, where all individuals are encouraged to express themselves, and each member is considered an equal. Not only was participation important, but leaders at these schools modeled equality by participating alongside
students or faculty as equal members during these key rituals and programs and in daily life. Whether serving as a student advisor or sitting through a faculty meeting or assembly period, leaders at all three schools, whenever possible, modeled the importance of equality within the community. Repetitive sound bites embedded in stories and used by leaders throughout these schools such as “prizing diversity,” “let your lives speak,” “don’t leave any part of yourself at the doorstep,” served to reinforce and remind constituents of how to keep school values present in school life. In summary, it was the school leaders’ emphasis on school rituals, traditions, symbols, and stories that served to enact the communities’ values. Through this enactment, these values were visible in the school’s practices, programs, and structures, serving to reinforce a strong school culture that sustains these culturally responsive school communities.

**Conclusion: Cross Case Findings**

This cross case analysis of leadership practice in culturally responsive communities yielded four main findings that help to answer the question: How do the actions of leaders support culturally responsive practice in schools?

1. Heads of school are critical in reinforcing values that cultivate a strong culture.
2. Heads of school integrate all three categories of leadership behavior to reinforce values and support a culture that maintains culturally responsive practice.
3. Heads of school effectively distribute leadership to maintain school culture.
4. Leaders rely on different leadership frames to carry out their work; however, a reliance on the symbolic frame is most significant in sustaining culturally responsive practice.
Leaders across school sites created a strong culture through the alignment of their values and practices. Moreover, across each site leaders relied on all of the leadership behaviors deemed necessary for effective leadership to reinforce this strong culture. What differed across school sites were the specific practices chosen by the leaders to reinforce the culture of these culturally responsive school communities. Leaders in each school site chose practices based on the school context, their leadership style, and their professional knowledge base.

Pulling these findings together and understanding their combined impact on how leaders’ actions support culturally responsive practice in these schools, I recognize the leaders’ abilities to reinforce a strong organizational culture as the focal point of their success in leading these communities. A strong organizational culture is formed and reinforced when leaders effectively align artifacts (things you can identify, see, feel, and describe), values, and underlying shared assumptions (Schein, 2004). Schein adds that consistently reinforced values through specific actions that are accepted by constituents, leads to shared assumptions throughout the community. What made the leaders of these three communities successful at reinforcing culturally responsive practice was their purposeful and consistent interweaving of values into their practices. Using rituals, stories, symbols, and traditions, leaders ensured that these values were easily identified and understood across the community. Moreover, the values of respecting the individual with his/her interests and strengths, and exposing members to multiple perspectives became the basis for underlying shared assumptions or expected, unquestionable practices. Heads of school consistently model these and other deliberate actions,
reinforcing the values and reinforcing and creating new artifacts, which eventually are reinforced by other leaders, faculty, students, and other constituents. Leaders ultimately support culturally responsive practice by systematically working to integrate values into their behaviors that honor this practice, thereby sustaining a culturally responsive school culture that reaches all areas of the community.
Chapter 6

Discussion

Scholarship focusing on culturally responsive practice provides direction on the most effective teaching practices for meeting the needs of a diverse student body (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Through case studies (Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994) as well as through research that categorizes the effective elements of culturally responsive practice (Gay, 2000), it is clear that classroom teachers have the information needed to create classroom communities that meet the diverse needs of students. This literature base on culturally responsive practice, however, addresses teaching practice within isolated classrooms, and does not consider school communities where this practice is the standard throughout the school building. How school leaders influence or support teachers who implement culturally responsive practice is also absent from this literature base. Looking at schools where culturally responsive practice in classrooms is not isolated, but is a standard for teaching practice in the building, and understanding what the leader does to influence and sustain this practice throughout the community, guided this inquiry. This research, then, both builds a bridge between the literature base on culturally responsive practice and that on effective school leadership and provides insight into how leaders guide diverse school communities.

Initiating this study on the grounds that the student population across the United States continues to rapidly diversify and recognizing the positive impact that school
leaders have toward the success of students in their schools, I set out to examine what
leaders do in schools with diverse populations, where culturally responsive practice is
implemented, to effectively meet the needs of these students. Two research paradigms,
the first centered on culturally responsive practice (Gay, 2000) and the second on
leadership practice and theory (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood
& Riehl, 2003), guided the selection of the three school sites for this cross case study and
then helped to establish a framework for data collection and analysis.

Effective culturally responsive practice leads to successful student outcomes in
schools with diverse populations (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).
Teachers who use culturally responsive practice incorporate five key components into
their practice: background knowledge, creating a caring environment, cross-cultural
communication, cultural content, and cultural congruency. By incorporating these five
components into their pedagogy, teachers strive to reach the emotional, social, and
academic needs of the students under their care, essentially creating a positive learning
community in the classroom.

I asked the vice president of leadership education and diversity at the National
Association of Independent Schools to recommend independent schools in the Mid-
Atlantic region where culturally responsive practice was an established teaching approach
implemented throughout the school. With this recommendation and using my personal
expertise in the area of multicultural education, I identified, contacted, and initiated a
working relationship with three schools (each with a pseudonym for this study): the
Gibson School (PK-6), the Livelton School (6-12) and the Alliance School (PK-12),

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which served as the research sites for this qualitative cross case study on culturally responsive leadership.

I set out to discover what leaders do to maintain the widespread use of culturally responsive practice as an integral part of the school community. Using the set of key leadership behaviors deemed necessary for effective leadership in schools (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), and understanding and recognizing that leaders adapt their practices and rely on certain leadership frames to achieve their goals (Bolman & Deal, 2006, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2008), I identified the specific actions of leaders that helped to maintain culturally responsive practice in their communities.

In the remainder of this chapter I will discuss the lessons learned from this inquiry into culturally responsive leadership. I will then outline this study’s implications for educational practice and scholarship, its limitations, and finally provide suggestions for further research.

**Lessons**

The most important lessons learned through this study on culturally responsive leadership are the following:

- The heads of school as the primary leaders are an essential driving force behind sustaining these culturally responsive communities.
- Heads of school rely on a core set of values to guide and sustain a culture that supports the enactment of culturally responsive practice throughout the school.
• Heads of school skillfully use an effective balance of key leadership behaviors to reinforce those values as well as to ensure culturally responsive practice is dispersed throughout the community.
• Through these practices the heads of school distribute leadership consciously and deliberately, forming a coherent approach toward maintaining culturally responsive practice.

Ultimately leaders as a whole, through a strong adherence to school values combined with the successful ability to reinforce those values through their practices, maintain a strong and visible school culture that reinforces culturally responsive practice.

**Lesson 1: Heads of school are the driving forces that sustain culturally responsive practice.** There is an ever-growing literature extolling the importance of the head or principal to school improvement (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2008), and both the literature in education and in organizational studies affirms the leader’s role in creating and maintaining school culture (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Schein, 2004). Even so, the degree to which the heads of school studied here were the driving forces guiding each of these communities toward sustaining culturally responsive practice is somewhat surprising. Their involvement is both symbolic and tangible; they are active co-creators of the school cultures through direct communication, engagement, and involvement in key programs. These heads of school capitalize on their leadership strengths to craft and enact their vision to meet the particular needs of their school.

At Gibson, Glenda worked with the board of trustees to develop a diversity statement, which was endorsed, communicated, and published. The endorsement served
as a starting place for Glenda to launch many of the diversity initiatives described in Chapters 4 and 5, which have since become accepted parts of the culture. Dona, following Glenda’s tenure, inherited a community visibly committed to diversity in both presence and practice. Dona strengthened programs through a systematic approach, tying together many of its strong components. She revamped the web site and made critical presentations available to highlight her plans to strengthen programs that support culturally responsive practice. Mobilizing her vision from her very first pre-planning period at Gibson, Dona demonstrated her dedication to both collaboration and curriculum development. Through hands-on, collaborative work, Dona worked with school leaders, staff, and faculty to brainstorm, reflect, refine, and finally create eleven art pieces as visible symbols of the overarching curricular theme of each grade level, as well as the three essential components of the mission: community, diversity, and equity.

At Livelton, Dan made a concerted effort to be visible, present, and available for all constituents. His office opens up into the common area where the two main buildings are connected; there is no administrative assistant or any other hurdle to jump to access his office. He wants to be known as available, accessible, and non-threatening. He describes staying informed on a daily basis through “bumping into things.” By standing in line with students to make an announcement at the weekly assembly, Dan demonstrates the importance of his presence as an equal member of the community. Dan’s appointment as an advisor to freshman students accomplishes many objectives; again, it puts him on equal footing with other community members and solidifies his direct support of a program he refers to as a “cornerstone of Livelton.” It also keeps him
in touch through the students, other advisors, and the leaders of the program, of the social
and academic pulse of school. Equality and direct interaction are important to
Dan. Through his consistent presence, modeling, and interacting with others throughout
the community he gives advice, monitors program, and supports students and faculty.

Ben, from Alliance, was similar to Dan in projecting himself as an accessible, available, and equal member of the community. However, Ben navigated through a larger community, grounded in Quaker tradition. Ben planed for opportunities to communicate his beliefs on the role of equality in a Quaker school. For example, he used public occasions to apologize to the community for past discrimination toward African-American and Jewish students during the early history of Alliance School. His presence in other ways balanced his formal and informal interactions. For example, Ben made a concerted effort to attend the weekly Meeting for Worship as a participant, following the lead of the meetings’ clerk, as do all participants. Equally important was his influence in the programs he deems essential in supporting culturally responsive practice. Ben monitored the many language programs at Alliance, keeping informed through the associate head of school and academic dean, of enrollment data and content updates. Ben worked to ensure that these academic programs are reinforced through extracurricular activities and ultimately are seen as part of the school culture. For example, notable Chinese scholars visit campus as guest speakers, and Chinese exchange students spend the year at Alliance. As part of supporting these students and welcoming them for the year, Ben invited them as “family members” to reside in his home during their first week in the United States. The Chinese studies program exemplifies how Ben facilitates
connections between academic and extracurricular programs, enabling many community members to benefit from its implementation throughout the school.

It is evident that these leaders’ vocal and written communications support key elements of culturally responsive practice. Their consistent interaction as equals as part of the daily life of school, and their demonstrated dedication toward and involvement in academic programs effectively promotes and sustains culturally responsive practice throughout the community.

Although the evidence presented confirms the importance of shared leadership, the school culture at each of these sites successfully supports culturally responsive practice because of the clear manner in which these heads of school lead, guide, and champion their communities. The significance of the primary leader influencing the positive direction of the school, as well as these leaders’ direct involvement in the academic program, are claims supported by research on leaders’ impact on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2008). In this case, the direct engagement of the head of school in the daily life of school and involvement in the direction of key programs is supporting culturally responsive practice, a practice deemed successful in supporting diverse students (Bartolome, 1994; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Novick, 1996). Understanding more thoroughly how the central school leader goes about this work in diverse school communities is the subject of the remainder of the chapter.

**Lesson 2: Heads of school demonstrate a commitment to their values through specific actions.** Heads of school use values as the foundation to ensure that their decisions, interactions, and behaviors focus on reinforcing culturally responsive
practice. At these three communities, values center on acknowledging the strengths, backgrounds, and interests of each individual, as well as honoring the multiple perspectives formed by the diverse members of the community. Specifically, these heads of school demonstrate through action that a diverse representation of students is essential to providing a thorough education; that it is not enough to simply achieve diversity, one must work to support diverse members; and that it is important for all members to benefit from the diverse perspectives within the community.

Heads of school monitor admissions and personnel data and communicate clear expectations to reach benchmark enrollments for specific minority populations. At Alliance, when benchmarks are not achieved, the head of school develops an improvement plan. At Gibson, the head of school publically recognizes the diversity in the community by publishing population statistics on the school web site. Heads of school work to create safe and comfortable spaces for community members with diverse perspectives to interact. Each head of school interacts with community members throughout these common areas, modeling the importance of active participation and engagement in the community.

Heads of school also work to create support systems for each of the diverse groups in the community in a variety of ways. Targeted hiring initiatives ensure that more teachers with backgrounds resembling those of their students are in the school. Faculty and staff can interact with students and parents in affinity groups, potluck dinners and seasonal festivals, hosted by the school, which provide informal opportunities for diverse members to interact together in the community.
Key metaphors, phrases, sound bites, serve as symbols used by the heads of school help to reinforce how individuals and multiple perspectives are valued. At Alliance the motto is to “prize diversity.” Ben “prizes diversity” by viewing his community as a home full of family members. He emphasizes how members at Alliance should never feel like visitors. Dan, head of Livelton, refers to his school as a “loving” community, encouraging and allowing every member to bring his or her whole self into the community, “not leaving any part of themselves outside on the doorstep.” Dona, at Gibson, asks members to reflect on identity, diversity and community, referring to the questions, “Who am I, who are YOU, and who are WE?” to emphasize how community members learn to interact within a diverse setting. Throughout my interviews with other school leaders, these references or symbols surfaced frequently, enabling me to conclude that the values embedded in these symbols and understood through the communication of the head of school are effectively transferred to and understood by other members of the community.

The evidence indicates that leaders need to make values explicit and evident through purposeful decisions and actions that reach all areas of the community. Evidence from these three schools also suggests that leaders of diverse schools must do more than acknowledge diversity, they must provide specific support systems within a comfortable and safe environment, creating an atmosphere where all members can benefit from the diversity within.

**Lesson 3: Heads of school skillfully use key leadership behaviors to implement culturally responsive practice throughout the community.** To maintain
culturally responsive practice and ensure that its effects reach each area of the community, the heads of school rely on all three sets of practice deemed necessary for effective school leadership: setting direction, developing people, and developing/redesigning the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Heads of school set direction, as noted in the previous section, by demonstrating a commitment to the schools’ values through purposeful actions and consistent communication. The values, which embrace the individual and acknowledge multiple perspectives, are seen as the building blocks of culturally responsive practice. Thus, a necessary first step for heads of school is to communicate the importance of values that reinforce culturally responsive practice.

All heads of school considered critical professional and personal reflection that concentrated on understanding multiple points of view as crucial to supporting a culturally responsive community. A similar focus across school sites by these heads of school was developing people through exposure to and engagement with multiple points of view. To facilitate this exposure, heads of school created comfortable and safe spaces for dialog and engagement, and they worked to develop trusting, caring relationships between students and the adults that surrounded them. With trusting relationships and a comfortable environment in place, they established multiple opportunities, both formal and informal, for members to interact and share perspectives. From the structured new faculty induction programs at Alliance and Livelton, to the fish bowl and forums at Gibson faculty meetings, heads of school used specific rituals and procedures to
demonstrate for the whole community the respectful interaction and compassion that are essential in a culturally responsive community. Given the critical nature of these interactions, the heads of school provided multiple opportunities for community members to develop by experiencing them first hand.

Culturally responsive practice focuses on learning together in a diverse community. At these three schools leaders emphasized that students should be able to use knowledge gained in authentic situations. To accomplish this, leaders instituted programs that integrate both social and academic skills. Specific support by heads of school to develop these programs included providing human and material resources as well as curricular expertise, and monitoring both content and outcomes of foundational programs that support culturally responsive practice. The following programs, reviewed in Chapters 4 and 5, are examples of programs that meet the desired outcome: at Gibson, the Responsive Classroom approach; at Livelton the values curriculum and the advisory program; at Alliance, the language, peace education, and community service programs that extend from pre-school through high school. School leaders’ direct leadership and management of parts of the academic program is essential in producing positive school outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2008); at these three schools, this academic guidance by the heads of school helps sustain culturally responsive practice.

The evidence suggests that heads who seek to incorporate culturally responsive practice to meet the needs of diverse students should consider multiple avenues to integrate and disperse its effects across the community. By strategically choosing different practices that set direction, develop people, and develop/redesign the
organization, heads of school are able to effectively use the human, material, and curricular resources that facilitate achieving their goals. Moreover, shared values, as integral parts of these three communities, as well as essential components of culturally responsive practice, should be kept front and center when heads of school determine which practices best achieve their goals.

At these particular schools, the heads of school also incorporate specific practices that lead them to delegate leadership in a manner that facilitates a unified approach toward maintaining culturally responsive practice throughout the community.

**Lesson 4: Heads of school purposefully distribute leadership, resulting in a Unified Approach to Maintain Culturally Responsive Practice throughout the Community.** When leadership is distributed throughout the school community, its impact on student learning increases (Leithwood et al., 2008). Through distributed leadership, multiple leaders rely on similar practices to influence the organization in a particular way (Leithwood et al., 2004). Moreover, when leaders use their expertise and work in tandem to carry out organizational goals, the organization itself benefits from the individual strengths of those members (Leithwood et al., 2004). At these three school sites, heads of school modeled practices, which led other leaders to repeat or adapt those practices in their areas of the school. Equally important was the manner in which all leaders consistently reinforced the values that supported the school culture. Each head of school relied on the expertise and interests of all leaders to guide programs that supported culturally responsive practice. In essence, the multiple ways the heads of school...
distributed leadership facilitated a thorough implementation of culturally responsive practice throughout their schools.

Through modeling of effective practices, and providing acknowledgement and feedback to leaders, these heads of school supported leaders as they led their areas of the school. For example, through my participation in a full faculty meeting at Livelton, analysis of a middle school faculty meeting agendas, and an interview with the dean of students, I identified similar approaches and stories that I interpreted as intentionally brought into play to unify faculty members and reinforce aspects of school culture. Additionally, each head of school distributed leadership to members of the leadership team to ensure a comprehensive approach to culturally responsive practice. For example, each head established a diversity director position for added support to ensure that the varied programs, activities, and daily occurrences worked in unison to achieve the desired outcome of sustaining culturally responsive practice. Similarly, the heads of school emphasized the role of the academic leaders, curriculum coordinator, academic deans, and division heads, to monitor, enhance and sustain culturally responsive practice. Although the roles varied depending on the context and age groups served, each head of school employed leaders to direct the extracurricular and social programs, leading to a collaborative effort and the balanced education these heads deemed necessary to meet the needs of students in a diverse community. Heads of school distributed leadership to implement, strengthen, and oversee the many academic and social programs that help sustain these culturally responsive communities. However, it is the combined effort of all
leaders, as well as the direct encouragement of the heads of school, that led to a unified approach toward maintaining culturally responsive practice throughout the community.

Clearly, school leaders who want culturally responsive practice to permeate the school should strive to share leadership responsibility, while simultaneously providing the guidance and acknowledgment that keeps all leaders moving down a similar path of reinforcing culturally responsive practice.

**Conclusion: Maintaining an Organizational Culture Centered on Culturally Responsive Practice.** Through deliberate actions that include rituals, traditions, and purposeful interactions with community members, as well as through direct support of academic and social programs, the leaders of these three schools maintain culturally responsive practice. Moreover, these leaders share two core values: acknowledging the individual and embracing multiple perspectives, which enable them to guide and coordinate an effective balance of practices supportive of a culturally responsive community. These practices and values in isolation, however, do not fully explain the depth, breadth, and intensity of the culturally responsive practice present in these schools. Scholars who have studied organizational leadership conclude that the primary role of leaders is to craft and maintain the organization’s culture (Schein, 2004; Bolman & Deal, 2008). At each of these three schools, their particular culture both supports and reinforces culturally responsive practice.

Considering leadership behavior as a way to maintain the overall culture of schools can lead to an understanding of how each of the important elements discussed are integrated and work in tandem to sustain culturally responsive communities. The
empirical evidence examined in this study suggests that leaders who want to create and sustain strong cultures that support culturally responsive practice first should embrace a set of relevant values and then deliberately enact those values throughout the community through formal programs, rituals, traditions, and purposeful communication. By consistently reinforcing certain beliefs and values through concrete, visible actions, leaders enable community members to reach a better understanding of the school culture, ultimately providing those members with the necessary knowledge to effectively interact in the community (Schein, 2004).

In the communities described here, it is the head of school that sets the tone through deliberate actions that remind the community of the school’s commitment toward culturally responsive practice. By consistent communication and engagement throughout the community, the heads of school establish a shared purpose of maintaining culturally responsive practice. Leadership practice is aligned with this shared purpose, and the two become the united force that supports the school’s culture. Heads of school strategically distribute leadership by delegating the implementation and evaluation of key programs that incorporate culturally responsive practice to leaders throughout the school community. While leaders oversee key programs, the heads of school are consistently present throughout the community, providing leaders with feedback and acknowledgment, while simultaneously modeling effective interaction and engagement in a culturally responsive community.

This consistent and focused presence of the heads of school throughout the community serves to reinforce a strong culture. The heads of school and other school
leaders strategically use a diverse repertoire of leadership practices, adapting those practices to meet the context of the school as well as the needs of each school department or division. Multiple leaders, using numerous practices, all working toward a shared purpose, enable culturally responsive practice to permeate the community and reinforce a stable culture in the school.

Leaders who consider culturally responsive practice an effective means toward supporting a diverse community of learners may consider the following: Key leaders maintain culturally responsive practice by clearly and consistently reinforcing values that honor the diversity within their communities, enabling those values to become integral parts of the school culture. To further strengthen the culture, the central school leader relies on a range of leadership behaviors that support culturally responsive practice in a balanced and integrated manner. These actions ensure that culturally responsive practice reaches the whole school community. By delegating leadership throughout the school, while providing constant support, the central leaders ensure that culturally responsive practice is continually reinforced creating a stable culture that supports this practice throughout the community.

Implications

This study indicates that leaders use a holistic approach to maintain culturally responsive practice throughout their school communities. Many factors contribute to a leader’s ability to integrate culturally responsive practice into the ethos of the school community. Understanding this holistic approach, specifically how leaders sustain a school culture that supports culturally responsive practice, has implications for
educational practitioners, and scholars. Practitioners, mainly school leaders, must prepare to lead our increasingly diverse national and international schools. Scholars who understand the impact of school leaders in reinforcing a strong school culture, may strengthen or extend research on culturally responsive leadership by providing additional studies that demonstrate how school leaders both form and sustain such a culture.

**Implications for Practice.** The findings of this research on culturally responsive leadership revealed that at these three research sites, which are school communities noted for their ability to meet the needs of a diverse student body, leaders make a significant difference in supporting culturally responsive practice throughout their school community. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized, the significant lessons learned provide insight for leaders of diverse schools. First and foremost, a holistic approach is needed to maintain culturally responsive practice throughout school communities. Second, the primary school leaders, in these cases the heads of school, are essential in providing the direction and guidance that enable culturally responsive practice to remain an integral component of the schools’ culture. Heads of school who choose to incorporate culturally responsive practice as a means to enrich the learning environment for diverse students may consider the following:

1. It is important to consider the school context and attributes of the community to determine strategies that best facilitate the implementation of culturally responsive practice throughout the school.

2. In a culturally responsive community, values surfaced as key factors that shaped and reinforced the school culture. Heads of school reinforce the values in
multiple ways, enabling them to become recognized and understood throughout the community.

3. The heads of schools’ daily presence in both the formal and informal activities that enhanced culturally responsive practice supported its holistic integration throughout the community.

4. Each of the heads of school aided in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the academic programs that supported and incorporated culturally responsive practice, suggesting that instructional leadership is an important component in maintaining culturally responsive practice in schools.

5. Each head of school’s consistent reinforcement of the school’s culture helps other community members understand the ethos of the school. This shared understanding then facilitates their ability to distribute leadership in a manner that further reinforces the culture and maintains culturally responsive practice throughout the whole community.

Implications for Theory and Research. Understanding leadership in the context of diverse school settings provides scholars with important information to build upon through educational scholarship that combines leadership, diversity, and social justice. School leader’s reliance on three specific leadership behaviors (setting direction, developing people, and developing/redesigning the organization) to effectively lead the educational settings described in this study is consistent with prior research findings on school leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). The leaders described in this study also adapted these practices to meet the context of their schools
and were directly involved in the management of the school’s academic programs. Each of these findings is supported by research claims of effective school leadership (Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Clearly, the findings of this study not only confirm the importance of these leadership behaviors as necessary to leading schools effectively, but also help scholars and practitioners understand these practices in the context of school environments known to use culturally responsive practice to meet the needs of diverse student populations. Considering that our student population will continue to diversify, understanding how leaders lead in these settings is essential. By explaining what leaders do to reinforce culturally responsive practice, this study connects two important literature bases, culturally responsive practice and school leadership, providing empirical evidence of how leaders effectively lead schools with a diverse student population.

The increasing literature base on social justice leadership supports this study’s findings and conclusions. Specifically, scholars affirm that leaders should incorporate three basic practices to create a socially just environment: using critical reflection, building relationships, and acknowledging and validating the multiple ways community members experience their world (Bogotch, 2000; Furman & Shields 2005; Riehl, 2000; Shields, 2004). Incorporating these practices into the formal and informal practices of school leaders is consistent with findings presented here. Furman and Shields also assert that socially just pedagogy and practice must be integrated into the curriculum for social justice to effectively impact a school community (2005).
These socially just leadership practices are similar to those used by leaders in this study to reinforce culturally responsive practice. Moreover, the way leaders for social justice frame their practice around a moral foundation (Bogotch, 2000; Furman & Shields, 2005; Riehl, 2000; Shields, 2004) is similar to how the leaders discussed in this study integrate two core values into all actions that support culturally responsive practice: respecting each individual and acknowledging the multiple perspectives in the community.

The political, global, and economic challenges of our time have led to a renewed interest in social justice as a prominent topic of discussion among educational scholars and practitioners. The success of culturally responsive practice in meeting the needs of diverse students and the understanding, explored here, of how leaders reinforce this practice in their schools suggests that the framework developed in this study may assist researchers in further investigating leaders’ implementation of culturally responsive practice to foster social justice in their schools.

**Limitations**

This study revealed how leaders sustain culturally responsive practice in their schools. Although the results of this study are relevant to many educational environments, it is important to note three limitations when considering their application in other school communities: strong, reputable, culturally responsive cultures were present in all of these schools before the leaders studied here took the helm; the study’s primary focus and majority of data were derived from school leaders; and the study was conducted in private, independent schools.
The purposeful selection of schools that incorporate culturally responsive practice into the program guided this inquiry of culturally responsive leadership. Beyond incorporating this practice, the chosen schools were known in the Mid-Atlantic region to be very effective at sustaining culturally responsive practice. As reported in Chapter 1 and 3, an expert in the field confirmed this reputation. Outliers or discerning information did not surface during the investigation; however, it is important to note that I did not directly probe for contradictory information. As the researcher my primary objective was to learn how leaders support this practice in a school where this practice was confirmed to be effective. Scholars and practitioners interested in how leaders create a culturally responsive school may benefit from this research, but any generalization from these findings may be problematic given that the central focus here was leaders involved in sustaining (rather than creating) culturally responsive schools.

As is the case of most qualitative studies, to produce valid results, a vast amount of data was collected, the school leader interviews being the primary source. Secondary data collection strategies included observations, document analysis, and interviews of teacher leaders and served to help identify and support findings. In sifting through the data and maintaining a focus on the primary research question posed, I gave the data gathered from leaders top priority. Including other constituents (parents, students, and individual teachers) may have provided a unique perspective into understanding how others view the work of the leaders; however, certain constraints in time and access guided the decisions I made when designing this study. Thus, both the quantity of data

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analyzed and its origination with leaders may have masked other important factors that contributed toward sustaining cultural responsive practice at these schools.

As an educator, administrator, and scholar with experience mainly in private institutions, my desire to contribute to the leadership literature that probes flourishing multicultural educational environments led me to select independent schools as sites for this case study. It is important to note that the three schools chosen range in size, school philosophy, and religious affiliation and represent both suburban and urban locations. However, generalizing results to other types of schools, in other settings, may be problematic.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

The results of this study provide a solid foundation on how leaders support culturally responsive practice in their schools. The following recommendations for further study would facilitate applying these results to a larger variety of educational institutions. Additional results from studies on culturally responsive leadership would ultimately help meet the needs of more students, a necessary step toward generalizing the implementation of social justice and equity in schools.

I recommend replicating this study in public schools, extending this study to include a more in-depth perspective of teachers, and developing a study to explore how leaders form strong school cultures that thrive on culturally responsive practice. We learned through this study that leaders adapt their practices to meet the particular context of their schools. If this study were replicated in public schools noted for meeting the needs of diverse students through a culturally responsive approach, I hypothesize that
similar practices would be identified; however, additional student needs—due to the unique student population and organizational context—may surface, leading to a different application of leadership practices that support culturally responsive practice. Using this research framework to identify how leaders in public schools support culturally responsive practice would strengthen the results of this study and provide information relevant to more of our national student body.

Furthermore, the results of this study could be strengthened by exploring in-depth the voices and actions of classroom teachers to discover, from their point of view, the support they receive from their school leaders. School leaders provided the primary data for this study. I conducted in-depth interviews with between four and six leaders at each school site. I followed these interviews with school observations and conducted focus groups with teacher leaders at each school. These additional data collection strategies enabled me to triangulate and solidify my findings. However, they did not lead to a thorough understanding of the teachers’ perspectives on the leadership support provided to sustain culturally responsive practice in their classrooms. Adding this perspective could lead to additional findings that would further guide leadership in culturally responsive communities.

Finally, the results of this study indicate the presence of a strong school culture where beliefs and values are reinforced through the actions of heads of school and school wide leaders. This strong culture, in each of the schools considered here, preexisted this study. Considering the growing need for new schools in many areas of the country, the increasing focus on charter and magnet schools, and the upswing in student diversity in
the United States, a study focusing on how strong cultures are created in culturally responsive communities would be very timely.
Appendices
Appendix A

Bio of Informant

GENE BATISTE
Vice President, School Field Services & Equity and Justice Initiatives
National Association of Independent Schools
Washington, D.C.

As Vice President for School Field Services & Equity and Justice Initiatives, Gene Batiste serves on the senior leadership team of NAIS. He is responsible for providing thought leadership and business solutions in the creation and implementation of products and services that support and expand NAIS’s commitment to developing independent school leaders and to building and sustaining inclusive independent school communities. He is the editor of the 2011 NAIS Handbook Independent School Headship.

Gene holds a B.S. degree in the social sciences, summa cum laude, from Wiley College, (a historically Black College/University) and a M.Ed. degree, Phi Delta Kappa, in urban education and public school administration from North Texas State University. He will graduate in May 2012 with an Ed.D. in Educational and Organization Leadership from the University of Pennsylvania. Gene’s completed and defended dissertation study is on how new heads of independent schools build relational trust in their first year of headship.

Gene Batiste came to NAIS the summer of 2000 after serving as Assistant Head of School and Upper School Director at Crossroads School (MO), where he also taught psychology, directed the Faculty/Student choir, and coached the Mock Trial Team (State Finalists). As the first African American appointed to the faculty of St. Mark’s School of Texas, Gene taught psychology, sociology, and Modern World, served as sophomore, junior, and senior dean, directed the Robert E. Donnell Visiting Scholars Program, and directed the school’s diversity efforts as Director of Intercultural Affairs from 1990 through 1996.

From 1985-1990 Gene was the Chair of the Department of Social Sciences at Hillcrest High School in Dallas, where he also taught AP European History, Psychology, and Sociology while directing the school’s Pupil Assistance Support System (PASS) for students returning to school following inpatient or outpatient drug and alcohol abuse treatment. In May of 1990 Gene received the Excellence in Teaching Award from the Dallas Independent School District. For seven summers he served as Headmaster of the Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.) program at the University of North Texas—a dropout prevention program for at-risk youth.

For 19 years Gene was a principal artist and chorister with The Dallas Opera while serving on the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of the Board for ten years. Gene is a founding member of the board of trustees for the School for Ethics and Global Leadership (SEG), a semester program for upper school juniors located in Washington, D.C., currently serving as the vice chair of the board. He serves on the advisory board of the Arts Incubator of Richardson, an organization for nurturing artists and innovative thinkers in Richardson, Texas. Gene served on the vestry of St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church (DC) and his community service includes volunteering at Charlie’s Place, a St. Margaret’s soup kitchen and service agency for the homeless and unemployed. His advocacy also included service on the Board of Education for St. Anthony School (Dallas), and the local Boards of GLSEN-Dallas and GLSEN-St. Louis.


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Appendix B

Letter of Interest for School Sites

Margo Isabel
43694 Scarlet Sq.
South Riding,
VA 20152

Name of Head of School
Title
School Address

Dear (name of Head of School):

My name is Margo Isabel. I am a Ph.D. student in Educational Leadership and International Education at George Mason University. I have completed my doctoral course work and am initiating research for my dissertation on Leaders’ Influence on Culturally Responsive Practice in Schools. Mr. Gene Batiste, Vice President, Leadership Education and Diversity at NAIS, recommended that I contact you. After explaining my research interest on leaders’ abilities to support and sustain a culturally responsive community, Mr. Batiste referenced (School’s name) commitment and success in this area.

I am very interested in learning more about (School’s name) commitment in this area and would be very grateful and respectful of your time if you were to consider my interest in including (School’s name) as part of my study. As a qualitative study looking at leaders, I would like to interview leaders of the school; this would include the head of school, division directors, diversity coordinators and/or other leaders depending upon the school’s leadership structure. I would also like to observe daily events, or traditions that reflect the respect and compassion of the community so clearly described throughout your school web page.

I am aware of the time constraints and work ethic of leaders at independent schools and will be mindful of your needs. If you are interested in collaborating in this research, I assure confidentiality. The school as well as its personnel will not be named without your permission. All research documentation will be approved by the Human Subjects Review Board at George Mason University and will be shared with you prior to initiating this study.
As an area independent school administrator myself, my hope through this study is to highlight the guidance leaders offer in their community if they want to meet the needs of a diverse population. I will follow this letter up with a phone call next week, to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Margo Isabel
Ph.D. Candidate
George Mason University
Appendix C

Letter of Interest for Leaders

Margo Isabel
43694 Scarlet Sq.
South Riding,
VA. 20152

Name of Leader
Title
School Address

Dear (name leader of school):

My name is Margo Isabel. I am a Ph.D. student in Educational Leadership and International Education at George Mason University. I am initiating research for my dissertation on Leaders’ Influence on Culturally Responsive Practice in Schools.

I have met (talked with) (School Head’s name) and s/he has approved to support this study; s/he suggested that I contact you, as one whose leadership expertise and commitment in this area would be helpful to this research. In order to learn about your influence in this area at (school name) I would like to interview you. The interview would take between 60-90 minutes. If possible I would like to shadow you for part of your day.

You are not obliged to participate in this study. If you chose to, however, I assure complete confidentiality. The school as well as its personnel will not be named. All research documentation will be approved by the Human Subjects Review Board at George Mason University and will be shared with you prior to an interview.

Please let me know the best time to give you a call to set up an interview and address any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Margo Isabel
Ph.D. Candidate
George Mason University
Appendix D

Interview Guide for Leaders

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
How do the actions of leaders support Culturally Responsive practice?

1. What are leaders’ values and beliefs on the culturally responsive practice in their school?
2. How do leaders act to support culturally responsive practice in their school?
3. What effect do those beliefs and actions have on teaching in a culturally responsive context?

RESEARCHER STATEMENT: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I am very interested in specific ways leaders impact the school community. A leader’s influence on instructional practices and particularly how leaders understand their work within a cultural framework particularly intrigues me.

Interviewees: head of school; division heads; the director of studies; diversity director

1. What attracted you to this school and to this job?

2. What do you believe is special about this school? How are you supporting this unique aspect of the school?

3. Is there a specific challenge that the school is facing or something that you feel needs to be addressed? How are you approaching the challenges?

4. Over the past 5-10 years there has been talk and movement to expose students to a multicultural curriculum in order to better prepare them for what the future holds.

   a. What are your thoughts on this?
   b. Can you identify any school programs or practices that support this movement? Can you elaborate on that practice (program, activity)?
   c. What have been some of the obstacles? Can you provide a specific example of an obstacle?
5. How would you describe your involvement in the instructional practices and curricular input into school programs?

6. Are their specific school traditions that also support some of the things you have mentioned?

7. How do you see your leadership as most impacting the school? Can you provide a few examples that demonstrate this?

8. Can you please identify teachers, or other members of your faculty and staff, who you feel put into practice some of the instructional practices you have mentioned, who might be helpful for me to speak with?
Appendix E

Interview Guide for Teacher Leaders

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER-LEADER FOCUS GROUP

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
How do the actions of leaders support Culturally Responsive practice?

1. What are leaders’ values and beliefs on the culturally responsive practice in their school?
2. How do leaders act to support culturally responsive practice in their school?
3. What effect do those beliefs and actions have on teaching in a culturally responsive context?

RESEARCHER STATEMENT: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I am very interested in specific ways leaders impact the school community. A leader’s influence on instructional practices and particularly how leaders understand their work within a cultural framework particularly intrigues me. We all know that teachers are the most important influence on the students and impact their progress tremendously. You have been commended for your ability to reach students; and in particular to recognize the importance of the cultural context of the classroom and community. I am hoping to learn about ways your school was able to create and maintain a culturally responsive community.

Interviewees: Teacher leader focus group

1. What attracted you to this school?
2. What do you believe is special about this school?
3. Over the past 5-10 years there has been talk and movement to expose students to a multicultural curriculum in order to better prepare them for what the future holds.
   a. What are your thoughts on this?
   b. Can you identify any school programs or practices that support this movement?
   c. Can you elaborate on how or in what way leaders in your school help make these practices (program, activity) possible?
   d. What have been some of the obstacles? Can you provide a specific example of an obstacle and how the school leadership dealt with it?
4. How do you see the head of school or (your division director) supporting the school’s strengths?
5. How do see the head of school or (your division director) addressing the challenges?
6. How or in what ways do school leaders influence instructional practices and curriculum at this school? How do leaders most influence the multicultural curriculum and cultural competency in the school?
7. Are their specific school traditions that also support some of the things you have mentioned?
Appendix F

Informed Consent Form for Leaders

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Leaders’ Influence on Culturally Responsive Practice in Schools

RESEARCH PROCEDURES
This research is being conducted to determine how educational leaders of independent schools promote culturally responsive practice in their community. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to reflect on your experience as a leader in such schools in an interview, which will be audio-taped. The interview will last between one and two hours. You will also agree to be observed in some of your daily activities. This may include meetings and school events. The proposed events will be discussed and agreed upon during the interview.

RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS
There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in culturally responsive practice in independent schools.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The data in this study will be confidential. Interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed. Your name will not be included on written records of these transcriptions or on the field notes taken during the observations. The researcher in charge of the study will place a code on these data and through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your information to your identity. Only the researcher will have access to the identification key. Audio records and field notes will be kept in a locked filing drawer of the researcher’s desk and will be destroyed once the study is complete. Your name or the name of your school will not appear in any report that may result from this study, unless you provide prior written consent.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.
CONTACT
This research is being conducted by Margo Isabel, Doctoral Student at the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University as part of her dissertation requirement. The project is being supervised by Dr. Scott Bauer at George Mason University. He may be reached by phone at 703-993-3775, or by email at sbauer1@gmu.edu. For questions or to report a research-related problem you may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT
I have read this form and agree to participate in this study
☐ I agree to be audio-taped

Name
☐ I do not agree to be audio-taped

Date of Signature
Appendix G

Informed Consent Form for Teacher Leaders

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Leaders’ Influence on Culturally Responsive Practice in Schools

RESEARCH PROCEDURES
This research is being conducted to determine how educational leaders of independent schools promote culturally responsive practice in their school community. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to reflect on your experience as a teacher leader in such schools in a focus group, which will be audio-taped. The focus group will last between one and two hours.

RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS
There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in culturally responsive practice in independent schools.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The data in this study will be confidential. The focus group session will be audio-taped and transcribed. Your name will not be included on written records of these transcriptions. The researcher in charge of the study will place a code on these data and through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your information to your identity. Only the researcher will have access to the identification key. Audio records and field notes will be kept in a locked file and will be destroyed once the study is complete. Your name or the name of your school will not appear in any report that may result from this study, unless you provide prior written consent. The members of the focus group will agree to maintain confidentiality concerning information discussed during the focus group session.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.
CONTACT
This research is being conducted by Margo Isabel, Doctoral Student at the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University as part of her dissertation requirement. The project is being supervised by Dr. Scott Bauer at George Mason University. He may be reached by phone at 703-993-3775, or by email at sbauer1@gmu.edu. For questions or to report a research-related problem you may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT
I have read this form and agree to participate in this study

□ I agree to be audio-taped

__________________________
Name

□ I do not agree to be audio-taped

__________________________
Date of Signature
# Appendix H

## Data Analysis Matrix

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<th>Category</th>
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<th>Code</th>
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<td>Leader Behavior</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>The words I use now when I am doing my little soapbox speeches, are Challenging, enabling. We are defining challenging not by if the bar is high, sink or swim, so very few of you can make it and isn’t that great for us. We are rigorous, challenge is also enabling, students need to learn how to succeed, and it is engaging. You have to be excited, every morning you need to wake up and think I am looking forward to going to school. Respectful and affectionate, and I think the words you spoke a little while ago support that. If kids feel that they know me, the really like me, they love me for who I am then you can get away with murder with kids, you push, scream, yell you do whatever if the base, not only in talking but in action and program that the kids feel powerful and they feel known, and you are giving them the tools that help them feel powerful and known, then you are giving them the tools to do tremendous things, and they are going to interact with in the school, and outside of the school, in compelling, positive constructive ways.</td>
<td>Liveulton Head Pg 2-3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Could be describing the value of the individ. But it can also be the way the head communicates the vision at events. I think the word caring, affectionate and loved is important</td>
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<td>Setting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direction</td>
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<td>Developing People</td>
<td>DP</td>
<td>I like getting into the interpersonal stuff and problem, solving, with people….the people who know me but know me the least, probably would say recognize the more overt one which is my relationships with kids and people, you know, knowing everyone and engaging and the relationship that I have with kids and that I have always had…. I think ultimately what makes Liveulton is the relationships, the people that get hired first and foremost, I mean I have seen.</td>
<td>Dean pg 2-5</td>
<td></td>
<td>People see her interacting and building relationships and this is the key to Liveulton.</td>
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Appendix I

Single Case Study Synopsis

Worksheet 1. Analyst’s Notes while reading a case report


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synopsis of case: PK-6 grade school with emphasis in developing the whole child by integrating and balancing the academic and social curriculum. Head emphasized social curriculum and the importance of developing your self-identity in order to feel comfortable in your environment. The present head emphasizes the academic component – articulating and expanding it. Head one put the school on the map for diversity and began to develop roads. Head 2 followed and then expanded the roads.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Findings:</td>
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<tr>
<td>I. Value and respect for individuality and uniqueness. Need strong self-identity to succeed. You need others with common backgrounds to support you and help you feel comfortable.</td>
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<td>II. Use diversity as a learning tool. Don’t just reach and maintain diversity. Be bold – set direction, develop people and develop the organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>III. Leaders model behaviors they think will lead to successfully maintain CRP. (Dialog/curriculum building with CRP)</td>
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<td>IV. Create systems that provide support for teachers to maintain CRP.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uniqueness of case situation For program/phenomenon:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relevance of case for cross case Themes:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Value/Vision Theme 2: Setting D Theme 3: Developing O Theme 4: Teaching practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible excerpts for cross case report:</td>
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<tr>
<td>I. Page 7: “will see you all at the table.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>II. Pg. 13 Dona shaping Cjr/Glenda play dates</td>
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<tr>
<td>III. Dona - Cornell boxes; Ahead – conversation on patterns</td>
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<td>Commentary: IV. RC V. Human Resources</td>
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Appendix J

Cross Case Assertions Worksheet


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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Assertion</th>
<th>Evidence in Which Cases</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The leaders at these culturally responsive schools move beyond obtaining and maintaining a critical mass of diversity of the student body and work towards using the students' backgrounds as a means to enrich the program for everyone. Setting Direction</td>
<td>GB 1.1 pg3 How do you want to be known. GB 1.2 pg4 We all need allies GB 1.3 pg? Strong identity facilitates success GB 1.4 pg? we all have a place at the table GB 1.5 pg10 discomfort with difference leads to knowledge and learning opportunities GB 1.6 pg13 Mature system/integrating social/academic AL 1.7 pg8 all voices needed at the table AL 1.8 pg11 different types of diversity needed and why AL 1.9 pg15 Diversity provides comfort and affinity for students AL 1.10 pg25 Different types of affinity groups that provide learning experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The leaders at these culturally responsive schools are never complacent with the representation of diversity of the faculty and staff; they set goals, monitor numbers, and expand on ways to attract diverse faculty. Developing People</td>
<td>GB2.1 Web chart diversity sought LV 2.2 pg25 hiring protocol AL 2.3 pg12 data points and hiring goals AL 2.4 pg15 hiring committee structure AL 2.5 pg22 Team teaching mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The leaders at these culturally responsive schools build strong working relationships with their constituencies (especially with the faculty and staff) which lead to trust, collaboration, and openness toward change in both attitudes and practices that support culturally responsive practice. Setting Direction/Developing the Organization</td>
<td>GB 3.1 pg14 Cromwell boxes GB 3.2 pg15 Trust/open ear/listener LV 3.3 pg12 meeting feedback, respecting decisions made by others AL 3.4 pg17 DD and AD moving around and planning themselves waiting for dialog</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The programs and practices that support these cultural responsive communities are complex and extend into all areas of the school. The leaders support this complex structure by being active and equal members of committees and programs; by making their voices known and thus influencing the outcome of key decisions.</td>
<td>GB 4.1 pg 11 Director Discussions LV 4.2 pg26-27 complex schedule leads to meeting goals AL 4.3 pg19 &quot;expose not impose.&quot; AL 4.4 pg27-28 DAG and what is under it AL 4.5 pg29 Leaders are equals on committees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Content</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The leaders at these culturally responsive schools model the values of equity and inclusiveness, and demonstrate care and concern for all constituencies.</td>
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| 6    | The leaders at these culturally responsive schools recognize the need to integrate and balance the social and academic aspects of the curriculum and support a healthy balance of these 2 areas.  

**Developing the organization** |

| GB 7.1 pg19 | Responsive Classroom |
| GB 7.2 pg20 | “connecting” all that you do to the bigger picture |
| LV 7.3 pg5  | Stop and address things at the moment |
| LV 7.4 pg11 | Students have a voice and are able to lead different things |
| LV 7.5 pg16-17 | Importance of advisory program |
| LV 7.6 pg20 | Importance of assembly program |
| LV 7.7 pg22 | Importance of values program |
| LV 7.8 pg26 | Schedule set up to support both realms |
| AL 7.9 pg33 | Morning gathering and closing meeting |
| AL 7.10 pg33 | Different instructional strategies that combine both realms |
| AL 7.11 pg35 | Importance of guest speakers and the exposure it gives to kids |
| AL 7.12 pg35-36 | Meeting for worship as a learning tool |
References
References


Curriculum Vitae

Margo E. Isabel holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations and Latin American Studies from Scripps College (1986) and a Master of Arts Degree in Multicultural/Bilingual Education from Fairfield University (1999). Ms. Isabel’s educational experiences in administration both in South America and the United States include, serving as principal, assistant principal, and department chair, as well as work developing curriculum in bilingual, immersion, multicultural, and foreign language programs. Ms. Isabel has taught English as a Second Language, Spanish, and core subjects to four year olds through adults.