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CASE STUDY OF A DISTRICT'S IMPLEMENTATION
OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT SOCIAL
STUDIES CURRICULUM

A Dissertation

by

DAGOBERTO ELI RAMIREZ

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Texas-Pan American
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2013

Major Subject: Educational Leadership

CASE STUDY OF A DISTRICT'S IMPLEMENTATION
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May 2013

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ABSTRACT

Ramirez, Dagoberto E., Case Study of a District's Implementation of Culturally Relevant Social Studies Curriculum. Doctor of Education (EdD), May, 2013, 333 pp., 2 tables, 2 figures, references, 158 titles.

Texas districts approved Update 93 from the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) in spring 2012. The policy update called for use of culturally relevant materials in school districts' implementation of their instructional program. The policy uses seventeen words to describe resources necessary to deliver, support, enrich, and assist in implementing the district's educational program: materials that "represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community". Using a qualitative case study approach in a Texas school district, this University of Texas-Pan American Educational Leadership Doctorate Degree research project investigated how and to what degree educational leadership shapes implementation of the TASB Update 93 culturally relevant curriculum policy. Via semi-structured interviews with personnel – superintendent, assistant superintendent for curriculum & instruction, principals, and teachers – the study uncovered how educational leaders' personal stories and values drove this seventeen-word policy implementation.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation presented here in its final form to several groups of people. These people are extremely important to me, and inform who I am today. The first group is my immediate family. I dedicate this dissertation: to my beautiful wife Graciela Arjona-Ramirez, the “nurturing spirit” love of my life; to my oldest daughter Bianca Kristina Ramirez, the “songbird” music teacher; to my second daughter Eliana Herlinda Ramirez, the “little longhorn” speech pathologist & special education teacher; and, to my son Arnoldo Caleb Ramirez, the “cyber geek” computer whiz, drummer, bassist.

The second group includes my parents and siblings. I dedicate this dissertation: to my father Arnoldo Ramirez (Nono), the hardest-working man I have ever known, who loved me to the day he died; to my mother Mirtala Herlinda Salinas Ramirez (Tala), the caring, providing, nurturing “mom,” who bought me a globe and a set of Funk and Wagnall’s encyclopedias all on my father’s barber income; to my older brother Vittorio Arnoldo Ramirez (Vito), the trailblazer who paved the academic road I eventually got on; and, to my sister Maria Alejandra Ramirez Mascorro (Candi), who proved that dreams deferred can be attained.

Finally, the third group includes my extended family. I dedicate this dissertation to my grandparents Fortunato Ramirez, Vidala Ramirez, Jose Salinas, and Evangelina Salinas, all of whom at one time or another encouraged, supported and celebrated me in academics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher acknowledges that there were countless numbers of individuals, most familiar and some strangers, that in some way, fashion, or form contributed to the experience of this research study project and its subsequent dissertation. The researcher further acknowledges that without those individuals this research study project and its subsequent dissertation would in most likelihood still have gone on; however, the researcher acknowledges that in that case, the experience would have been either somewhat or dramatically different.

The most immediate of those countless individuals who most recently affected my research were my dissertation committee members, and to them I am grateful. Dr. Shirley J. Mills proved to be a worthy chairperson who spearheaded, pushed, and allowed things to occur as her wisdom saw fit. Dr. Francisco Guajardo was my socio-cultural content go-to specialist who taught me deeply about the importance of introspection, story, and accepting the challenge. Dr. Miguel de los Santos was the policy and politics expert who brainstormed how “the seventeen words” in the policy on which this study is anchored were indeed worthy of a full-blown research study. [Dr. de los Santos also, as the superintendent of superintendents, helped connect me to La Frontera ISD where my study was conducted.] Dr. Maria B. Roberts used her expertise in curriculum and instruction to help me ensure that the language I used in my protocols, findings, and recommendations were ready for presentation and publication.

Thank you all, and the rest of the unnamed individuals on this road...

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research study investigated how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas. Furthermore, the project investigated the following three aspects about the district in South Texas: 1) how having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifests itself at the school and classroom levels; 2) how the implementation of policy of cultural relevance in curriculum is shaped by school leadership; and, 3) how the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translates into classroom practice. This chapter of the dissertation details the following components: statement of the problem; purpose of the study; research questions; theoretical framework – the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model; definition of terms; significance of the study; limitations of the study; and, summary.

Statement of the Problem

Milner (2011) concluded that culturally relevant pedagogy made a positive difference in the area of student achievement outcomes. Milner (2011) detailed how culturally relevant curriculum was related to student outcomes beyond results in standardized exams explaining that culturally relevant pedagogy: 1) *empowers* students to examine educational content and processes; create, construct, and deconstruct meaning; succeed academically and socially; and, see contradictions and inequities in local and larger communities; 2) *incorporates* student culture

in curriculum and teaching, maintaining it, and transcending negative effects of the dominant culture; and, 3) *creates* classroom contexts that are challenging and innovative, focus on student learning (and subsequently academic achievement), build cultural competence, and links curriculum and instruction to sociopolitical realities (Milner, 2011). These three outcomes point at the outcome benefits of culturally relevant pedagogy and teaching. Additionally, other studies have determined that a teacher's ability to develop and implement culturally relevant pedagogy is intimately connected to first building cultural competence (Milner, 2011). The researcher shared that cultural competence was connected to the ability of teachers to help foster student learning about themselves and others, and how the world works in order to be able to function effectively in it and also how to contribute to their communities (Milner, 2011). Additionally, Milner (2011) found that teachers and students need cultural knowledge in order to build that cultural competence that will enable teachers to teach more effectively and students to learn most efficiently. Implementing culturally relevant pedagogy fosters students building their identity (Rodriguez & Alanis, 2011; Skerrett, 2011) and leads to the development of community (Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011). When community building is implemented properly, then social capital is developed (Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011), leading to the empowerment of parents *and* students. Conversely, when culturally relevant pedagogy is not developed and is not used in the classroom, cultural competence is not built, students' needs often go unmet and their academic achievement suffers (Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011).

Although the review of the research literature indicated that culturally relevant pedagogy makes a positive difference in the classroom experience for students, further research on how state-wide culturally relevant curriculum initiatives translate into intentional district-level policies was needed. Specifically, research into how and to what degree educational leadership

shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas was needed. Furthermore, the following three overarching implications about policies mandating implementation of a culturally relevant social studies curriculum were also absent from the literature and therefore needed to be researched: 1) How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifest itself at the school and classroom levels? 2) How is the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum shaped by school leadership? 3) How does the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translate into classroom practice? These three overarching questions helped identify the problem of the uncertainty of how intentionally developing and implementing such policies impacts students academically and affectively that participate in a social studies experience in Texas schools. With so much benefit attributed to implementing culturally relevant curriculum (Milner, 2011; Rodriguez & Alanis, 2011; Skerrett, 2011; Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011; Ford, 2005; Feger, 2006; Medina, 2010; Arce, 2004; Zhang, 2001; Helfenbein, 2006; Chomsky, 1998; Urdanivia-English, 2001; Ajayi, 2006), having a clearly mandated policy demanding its implementation in the social studies classroom should not be a mystery, and should not be left to chance. This study was driven by the goal to uncover answers to these unknowns.

Purpose of the Study

In the winter and spring of 2012, school boards in Texas school districts approved the Texas Association of School Boards' four-page *Update 93, EFA(LOCAL)-A policy* (Texas Association of School Boards, 2012). This policy, among other things, mandated the use of instructional resources and instructional materials that present varying levels of difficulty, diversity of appeal, and a variety of points of view, with the stated purpose of delivering, supporting, enriching, and assisting the implementation of the school district's educational

program. Objective number 4 of 5 in the *Update 93, EFA(LOCAL)-A policy* specifically states that the local school board shall rely on the school district professional staff to select and acquire instructional resources that “represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community” (Texas Association of School Boards, 2012). It is therefore clear that school boards in Texas in the winter and spring of 2012 intentionally approved policy that mandates culturally relevant instructional resources and instructional materials be used in classrooms in their school districts to intentionally study the many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community. Because the study of ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community most naturally occurs in social studies classrooms, it should be expected that the implementation of *Update 93, EFA(LOCAL)-A policy* should be occurring via a culturally relevant curriculum in social studies classrooms in schools and districts in Texas. The purpose of the study was to explore how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas.

Research Questions

The overarching research question was: How and to what degree does educational leadership shape the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in school districts in Texas? The research sub-questions were:

1. How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifest itself at the school and classroom levels?
2. How does school leadership shape the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum?
3. How does the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translate into classroom practice?

Theoretical Framework – Knowing to Lead (KL) Model

The research study was framed through the lens of a framework which the researcher developed using the combination of two previously developed and published theoretical models. The first model is the Guajardo, Guajardo, Oliver, Valadez, Keawe, Henderson, and Rocha (2013) “ecologies of knowing” model which has three levels, namely, the *self*, the *organization*, and the *community*. The second model is derived from the works of both Trueba (1999) and Mehan (2008) in which the authors discuss the *technical*, the *political*, and the *cultural* leadership skills that are necessary in curriculum development and implementation as well as in organizational change and reform. This framework, the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model, was developed by intersecting the levels (*self*, *organization*, and *community*) of the former model with the skills (*technical*, *political*, and *cultural*) of the latter model. The KL Model was then used as an organizing and analysis tool with which to organize and subsequently analyze the data the researcher gathered in this research study. *Figure 1* depicts the KL Model’s resulting nine paired-combinations when each of the three ecologies of knowing (*self*, *organization*, and *community*) is paired with each of the leadership skills (*technical*, *political*, and *cultural*). This study used the KL Model in investigating how educational leadership shapes decisions about implementing policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in school districts in Texas. The KL Model is discussed in further detail in the METHODOLOGY section of the dissertation.

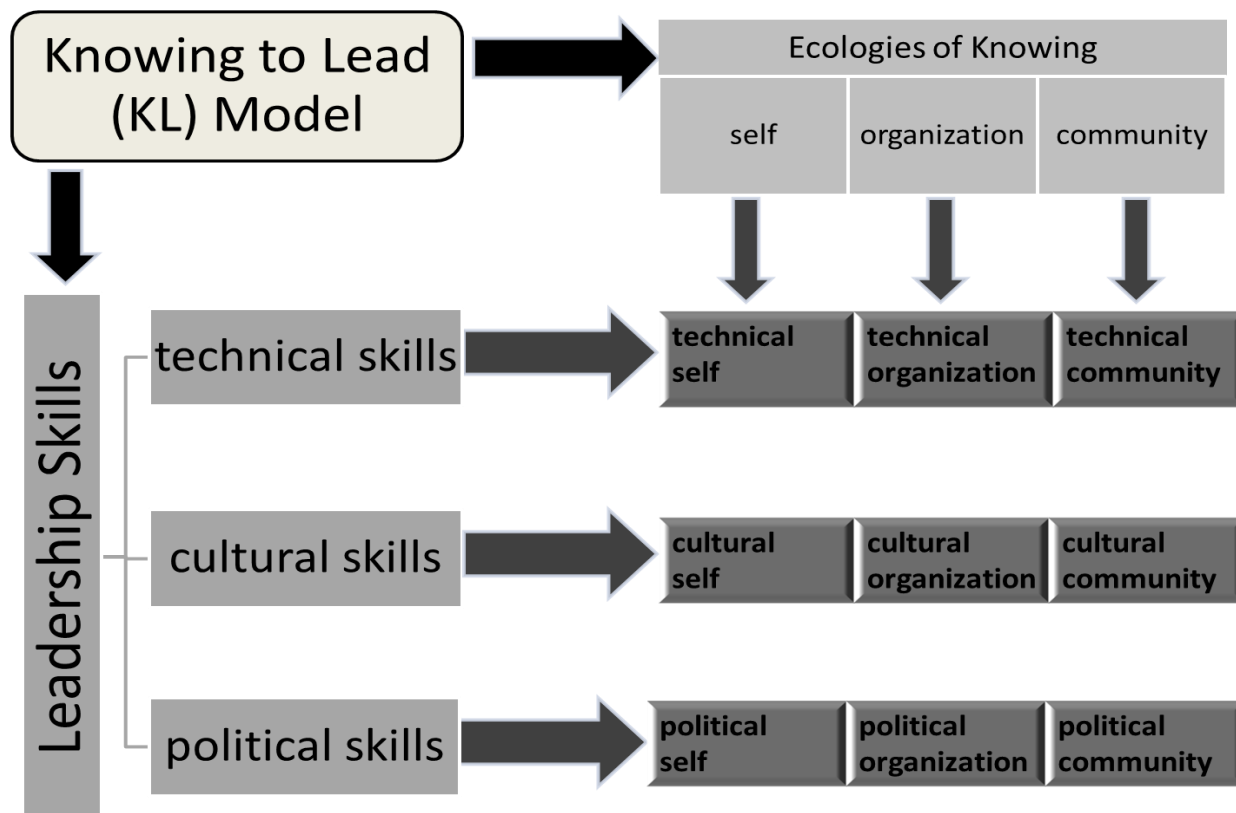


Figure 1: The Knowing to Lead (KL) Model.

Definition of Key Terms

Many key terms are used interchangeably in developing a research study, depending on the sample or purpose of each particular research study. For clarification, the following key terms used in this research study are defined as follows:

Cultural Relevance

Demonstration that evaluation methods, procedures, and/or instruments are appropriate for the cultures to which they are applied (Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement at the Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2012).

Culturally Relevant Curriculum

A pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Culture

The shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, institutions, and experience of a group of people. The group may be identified by race, age, ethnicity, language, national origin, religion, or other social categories or groupings (Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement at the Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2012).

Curriculum

Refers to both the content (the material to be learned), and process of learning (the actions and resources involved in teaching and learning) (Adult Learning: From Theory to Practice, 2012).

Ideology

The study of ideas, the collective knowledge, understandings, opinions, values, preconceptions, experiences and/or memories that informs a culture and its individual people; it is often aligned with political beliefs, but is much broader than that, relating to any social or cultural beliefs, and these beliefs are revealed in literary or other texts (University of Virginia, 2012).

Multicultural

Of, relating to, or including several cultures; of or relating to a social or educational theory that encourages interest in many cultures within a society rather than in only a mainstream culture (Reference Answers, Answers.Com, 2012).

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is the art and science of how something is taught and how students learn it. Pedagogy includes how the teaching occurs, the approach to teaching and learning, the way the

content is delivered and what the students learn as a result of the process (Oakland Community College, 2012).

Social Justice

The fair and proper administration of laws conforming to the natural law that all persons, irrespective of ethnic origin, gender, possessions, race, religion, etc., are to be treated equally and without prejudice; the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within a society (Dictionary.Com, 2012).

Social Studies

Social studies is an integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Social studies is most commonly recognized as the name of a course or set of courses taught in primary and secondary schools or elementary, middle, and high schools, but may also refer to the study of particular aspects of human society at certain post-secondary and tertiary schools around the globe. At the elementary school level, social studies generally focus first on the local community and family. By the middle and high school, the social studies curriculum becomes more discipline-based and content-specific. It includes various fields which involve past and current human behavior and interactions, such as sociology, history, political science, economics, religion, geography, psychology, anthropology, and civics (Reference Answers, Answers.Com, 2012).

Significance of the Study

Some researchers have found that there is a clear benefit to embedding culture and cultural relevance in curricular design. According to Ford (2005), the classroom experience and environment should be treated like hosting a dinner. She offered this reflection: “Regardless who the guests are in our classrooms, we must always seek to create learning environments that are safe, welcoming, and responsive to their needs” (Ford, 2005, p. 29). She added that just as we

sometimes are caught unprepared for unexpected dinner guests, when we have students from culturally diverse backgrounds coming into our classrooms, “although we may not be prepared for them, we must seek to make them feel welcome and a part of our learning community” (p. 29). Feger (2006) supported Ford when she discussed her incorporation of comprehension reading strategies with culturally relevant literature to achieve greater student reading engagement, further confirming an explicit benefit to addressing culture and cultural relevance in curricular design in general. Another research source which supports the inclusion of culture and cultural relevance in curricular design comes from Medina (2010) in her research into and findings of “examining translocal discourses and cultural flows in literature discussions.” Two major points in Medina’s analysis were: 1) that the students’ responses to the literature reflected their “participation in communities with multiple elements that reflected their transnational experiences” that “transform culture in dynamic ways” and, 2) that “students’ identities, histories, and imaginations are at the core of how they understand literacy events” which results “in deeper engagement and a sense of belonging in school contexts” (Medina, 2002, p. 58). Medina’s research found value in considering culture and cultural relevance in curricular design.

Arce (2004) provided additional insight into the power of culture and cultural relevance in curricular design in her discussion on theoretical and pedagogical frameworks in the area of bilingual education, as she explored the use of such curricula in the case studies of Latino teachers and their students. Among the five themes that emerged from Arce’s investigation are three critical to the research intended here: 1) the use of a culturally bound pedagogy, 2) the countering of hidden curriculum through critical pedagogy, and 3) development of identity and voice for both students and teachers. Adding support to addressing culture and cultural relevance in curricular design, Zhang (2001), in his research into cultural diversity in instructional design

stated that “recognizing and prizing the diversity found in many of today’s learners is prerequisite to the successful incorporation of cultural pluralism into instruction” (p. 299). Two of Zhang’s recommendations included 1) materials are respectful of cultural, ethnic, sexual, and/or religious diversity, and 2) a balance of different cultures and societies is represented in images or texts (Zhang, 2001), both noting the importance of cultural relevance in curricula. Helfenbein (2006) supported the argument by stating that cultural studies serve as a point of departure for the exploration of identity and place, further explaining that identity formation is understood as the fundamental operation in these lived experiences of schools, an operation that happens in particular spaces in particular contested ways, within structures not their own making, and within a complex history of culture and power. Further, Helfenbein (2006) stated that “cultural studies approach rejects any notion of essentialism that *closes the boundaries* of subjects” because in the end “culture, seen as an *open system*, continually in flux serves to create the space for new possibilities, better truths” (p. 91). Helfenbein, in essence, argued that a culturally relevant experience in the classroom – including the social studies classroom – opened up new possibilities that would otherwise be thwarted in a closed one-way one essential curriculum system.

As the findings and recommendations to be discussed later in the dissertation will show, investigating how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas added to the body of literature about curricular cultural relevance described by the research literature reviewed in the section above. Additionally, and possibly more importantly, it will now potentially assist local public school districts, state-level decision-makers, and educational leaders in Texas to make better decisions about establishing the most appropriate policy

implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum, selecting the best culturally relevant Social Studies curriculum for its students, and providing training, materials, and other necessary culturally relevant Social Studies implementation support resources.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations in the design of this research study that may impact the transferability of the results include the following: a limited participant sampling was used; while all attention and precaution was taken when conducting all phases of the research to keep the study as objective as possible, philosophical assumptions do exist and may have had an unduly subjective impact; and, while sampling bias was addressed as best as possible, sampling error may have played a role in the results.

Summary

This INTRODUCTION section detailed the following components: statement of the problem; purpose of the study; research questions; theoretical framework – Knowing to Lead (KL) Model; definition of terms; significance of the study; and, limitations of the study. As was explained, the research project investigated how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in school districts in Texas. The subsequent section, REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE, provides an extensive review of the literature on topics related to multiple aspects of the issues associated with implementing a culturally relevant Social Studies curriculum.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section provides a review of the literature pertinent to multiple aspects of the issues associated with implementing a culturally relevant Social Studies curriculum. This review of the literature section is divided into the following sub-sections: historical perspective on multicultural education and culturally relevant curriculum; the connection between critical race theory and cultural relevance; the connection between cultural relevance and educational leadership; benefits of culturally relevant curricular design; voices against culturally relevant curricular design; and, culturally relevant assessment.

Historical Perspective on Multicultural Education & Culturally Relevant Curriculum

Banks (1993) traced the initial historical roots to multicultural education – the forerunner and predecessor to culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum – to 1882 when George W. Williams published *History of the Negro Race in America*, noting that a major goal of multicultural education is to help reform school and other educational institutions in order for students from diverse racial, ethnic and social-class groups to experience educational equality. San Miguel (2011) noted pervasive erroneous myths about minorities, such as they preferred to live a life of superstition, ignorance, and poverty than one of enlightenment offered by education. The study kept the true and accurate portrayal of minorities out of the educational setting. It was ethnic studies that finally began to shed a light on the truth about them. Even erudite 19th century scholars themselves promoted falsehoods about minorities, such as the misrepresentation

that minorities loved the darkness and not the light (Getz, 1997). Banks (1993) attributed the more recent initiative to acknowledge and address the inequality in educational experience to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 1960's, offering a four-phase historical summary for it: 1) the incorporation of ethnic studies into educational curricula; 2) the identification of the need to reform the curricula rather than just add to it, along with the call to develop a multicultural education that demanded deep systemic change in education; 3) the expansion to incorporate other marginalized groups that included women and people with disabilities; and, 4) the connection of theory, research, and practice in reference to multicultural education, which led to culturally relevant pedagogy. It is this fourth prong – connecting theory, research, and practice – that led the call for studies into the benefits of cultural relevance in curriculum implementation in the schools and classrooms. Banks (2004) surmised that it was primarily the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 1960's that informed the very early development of the recent historical record of the educational field of ethnic studies and multicultural education that later became the field of culturally relevant curriculum.

Thanks in large part to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 1960's, revisionist scholars finally had a platform from which to launch their voices, which in essence critiqued the traditional view of education as an instrument of opportunity, democracy, and mobility and argued that it was one of cultural oppression, social control, and economic subordination (Anderson, 1988; Greer, 1972; Weinberg, 1977). San Miguel (2011) noted that in the early 1970's, a few historians and scholars began to deemphasize colonization, or what came to be known as victimization studies, and to focus on resistance. These new ethnic studies of the early 1970's which concentrated not so much on how ethnic minorities were oppressed but rather on the manner in which these minorities resisted this oppression over time, also had the spillover

effect of simultaneously connecting the theme of resistance in new studies of labor organizing and other areas of social life, including education (Munoz, 1974; Navarro, 1974; De Leon, 1974). The active and intentional participation of scholars exposing accuracy about minority groups has had the effect of expanding, extending, and diversifying the narrative about the historic struggle for education waged by minority ethnic activists in the first half of the 20th century, and continuing through this day (San Miguel, 2005).

San Miguel (2004) chronicled how the *Bilingual Act of 1974*, federal legislation that enacted federal policy to address the issue of bilingual education in the United States, also addressed cultural relevance and multiculturalism by encouraging multicultural understanding among English-speaking children. A provision in the bill allowed English-speaking children to enroll in the program so that these English-speaking children could acquire an understanding of the cultural heritage of the children for whom the *Bilingual Act of 1974* was designed, namely, limited English proficient second-language learners (San Miguel, 2004). San Miguel (2004) documented that the inclusion of both native language instruction and cultural appreciation in the definition of bilingual education in the *Bilingual Act of 1974* led to the origins of a contentious public debate over the goals of the bilingual education federal policy. The researcher shared that a major question that emerged as a result of this policy in 1974 was, “Should bilingual education use the children’s native language only until they could speak English, or should it maintain their native language even after they learned English?” (San Miguel, 2004, p.32). Proponents of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism clearly supported the latter, insisting that it was only in maintaining one’s language could one’s unique and distinct culture be respected and maintained (San Miguel, 2004).

Cammarota (2003) added to this historical perspective by sharing that true knowledge of democracy required learning about the values of diversity and dissent, which multicultural education afforded us. The researcher found that the American brand of democratic ideology inspired numerous movements for inclusion through the securing of rights and opportunities for marginalized populations (Cammarota, 2003). Multicultural education was a recent historical movement that followed the same path of inclusion, namely that of sustaining the values of diversity and dissent in American democracy (Cammarota, 2003). Cammarota (2003) argued that multicultural education provided the rare opportunity to practice and experience this unique form of American democracy by explicitly striving for the diversity of perspectives and dissent from domination, claiming that a culturally relevant curriculum is not by any stretch of the imagination anti-American. The researcher added that efforts to determine by law the ideological content that can and cannot be taught in our schools could be construed as being much more un-American (Cammarota, 2003). Nieto (1996) described multiculturalism as a perspective that promoted discussions that center on concerns that heavily affect culturally diverse communities – poverty, discrimination, war, the national budget, etc. – and what participants in society could do to change them. Although such a perspective on multiculturalism provided content on cultural diversity, multiculturalism’s primary focus lay in analyzing the historical struggles that those marginalized groups in American society encountered in their plight to attain first-class citizenship while it also promoted an intellectual praxis with which to overcome those struggles (Nieto, 1996).

Carter (1999) and Zinn (1999) traced the very foundations of American multiculturalism to the first amendment of the United States Constitution which laid the foundation for a steady flow of multiple and critical voices from civil to political society. The researchers shared that the

framers of the United States Constitution recognized the contradiction of preventing tyranny and promoting democracy without citizenship rights based on freedom of thought and expression, which pushed “freedom” one step further as it introduced the idea of protesting against the state if the public believed the government had acted unjustly (Carter, 1999; Zinn, 1999). Carter (1999) and Zinn (1999) found that the first right conferred by the first ten amendments to the constitution was freedom of speech – the right to speak and protest against any ruling authority – the very core of what multiculturalism espoused. Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2003) recommended that the problem-posing approach should accompany any multicultural curriculum because a teacher presenting educational content focused on diverse knowledge, values, and cultures yet disseminating it through a “banking education” format (Freire, 1970, 1994) unwittingly created an enormous contradiction. The primary goal of multicultural education was to challenge any master narrative by demonstrating that our world and its history consists of multiple stories and experiences (McCarthy, 1998), and having the multiplicity of life presented through the insular fashion of lecture-style education reduced its impact and funneled diverse perspectives through a singular authoritative lens. In a multicultural education, students learned to view events and situations from a variety of perspectives because a multicultural approach valued diversity and encouraged critical thinking, reflection, and action (McLaren, 1997).

In helping to define the specific goal outcome expectations for multicultural education, Cortez (2002) stated that multicultural education was deeply concerned with helping students develop the appropriate thinking and communication skills, as well as the knowledge and the attitudes, for living in a culturally diverse and globally interrelated world. DiPardo and Fehn’s (2000) study found that a specific multicultural studies course that focused on cultural issues in response to racial incidents that occurred at a particular school and its community, managed to

avoid discussing the local racial issues and instead focused on global education without constructing the opportunity for students to make connections to problems in their own community. This approach avoided the more volatile and “close-to-home” questions such as racism, social inequity, and the marginalization of different groups in the shaping of that school and its community (DiPardo & Fehn, 2000). Selener (1997) found that a global perspective gained through multiple lenses like multiculturalism called for required diversity in the construction of knowledge, and added that students needed to have a voice in what counted as knowledge, while also being allowed to question or dissent from any authoritative discourse. Multicultural education that fostered diverse thinking and perspectives along with valuing the students’ ideas, thoughts, and opinions modeled democracy better than most pedagogical approaches (Selener, 1997). The researcher added that democracy is a dialogue of diverse perspectives with the right of any interlocutor to contest and dissent from any given perspective (Selener, 1997), and stated that multicultural-based critical pedagogy facilitated such a dialogue. Connected to this discussion about democracy and its linkage to multiculturalism, Dewey (1966) argued that diversity was the most important theme in any treatment and discussion of the development and implementation of democratic principles. Dewey (1966) advocated for the unfettered expression of ideas and experiences to preclude ruling class domination as he shared that in order to have a large number of values in common, all members of the group had to have an equitable opportunity to receive and to take from others. For this to occur, Dewey (1966) believed that there had to be a large variety of shared undertakings and experiences, and multiculturalism is one perspective that offered this opportunity.

In an attempt to formalize a model to be used in implementing multicultural education, Marri (2005) developed the Classroom-based Multicultural Democratic Education (CMDE)

framework which brought together principles from the two fields of multicultural and democratic education. The model consisted of three elements: building of community; thorough disciplinary content; and, critical pedagogy (Marri, 2005). Community building involved creating a respectful, collaborative classroom environment that allowed students from diverse backgrounds to develop understandings of each other through discussions, group work, and problem-solving. Marri (2005) explained that in a community, students learned about democratic living by openly discussing issues with people who hold different perspectives. The goal of Marri's (2005) CMDE framework was to transform politically disengaged students into thoughtful, active, and effective citizens who then contributed to America's multicultural democracy. The CMDE model served the progressive political values and demanded teacher expertise, thus, its audience was initially limited to talented educators who shared similar aims (Marri, 2005). The framework's strengths were in highlighting these educational purposes and stipulating that students needed content and skills for mainstream success as well as for critical awareness and democratic participation (Marri, 2005). Marri (2005) used "deliberative pedagogies" as the core type of approaches in the CMDE multicultural education model in the classroom. These deliberative approaches (Simon, 2005), also advocated by the research of Evans and Saxe (1996), Gibson and Levine (2003), Fickel (2000) and Hess (2009) prepared students to address complex societal issues and problems as active citizens. Use of these deliberative approaches in the CMDE multicultural education model in the classroom implied a performance-based approach in which students actively applied knowledge and skills to build a deep understanding of important ideas and problems (Simon, 2005).

DiCamillo and Pace (2010) further researched Marri's CMDE model (2005) and found these implications in their study: 1) the model exemplified community building, content that

included mainstream and transformative perspectives on history, and deliberative pedagogies, particularly projects and examination of alternative texts; 2) school context in teaching was extremely important, as the study revealed that the larger progressive community in which the study was situated supported the study's history teacher's enactment of his multicultural ideas; and, 3) even in a supportive environment, challenges accompanied the implementation of a transformative, performance-based approach in teaching multicultural content and perspective to a class with over thirty students. Dicko (2010) found that other models, besides the CMDE model, were being used as a multicultural approach in the classroom, namely field experiences, service learning, and the realistic approach models. Dicko (2010) concluded that the best preparation for a successful multicultural experience in the classroom was to provide pre-service teacher training and opportunities to practice knowledge learned, fully supportive of prior research done by Hernandez (1997) and Wolk (1998).

Another teaching and learning model that was successfully used in multicultural education was that of Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning which provided insight into structures and practices that sustained communities of practice. Embracing learning as a process of socially situated activity in a particular time and place, such communities fostered mentoring cultures in which newcomers apprenticed to elders (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this model of situated learning, newcomers learned through participation, first in the periphery – an empowering space of observation, reflection, and practice – and gradually through fuller participation in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the model, elders were also learners as they deepened their content knowledge and engaged in the mentoring process to which newcomers brought their questions and experiences (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This process of legitimate peripheral participation underscored the importance of teaching communities that

provide mutual support and challenge, and in which everyone was a learner (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The research and subsequent literature showed that in the 1990s there was an expansion of multicultural teacher educator programs which primarily focused on and reported evidence in the form of critical teaching incidents, analyses of student work or questionnaire responses, and action research case studies (Chavez & O'Donnell, 1998; Martin, 1995). In the past decade, a few large-scale survey studies also revealed the significance of multicultural teacher educators' life experiences, attitudes, and understandings of and commitment to multicultural education (Grant, Elsbree, & Fondrie, 2004). Attwood (2011) argued that these results that were analyzed and reported in the literature showed that in order to face the inevitable challenges, the teachers of multiculturalism needed to participate in a teaching community where differences in histories, knowledge, identity, and experience contributed to individual and group learning. Such communities of practice were powerful places of mentoring and retreat that sustained the legacy of critical multicultural education, and yet they remained institutionally precarious (Attwood, 2011). Attwood (2011) also underscored how difficult it was for multicultural teacher educators to sustain spaces for learning to teach to questions of race, culture, and power. Laubscher and Powell (2003) expressed concern and asserted that when teacher educator preparation programs had been studied, more attention was actually paid to the experiences, reactions, and outcomes of learners in multicultural classrooms than to those of educators facilitating the process.

Daniel (2011) studied teacher preparation that went into getting teachers ready to provide multicultural classroom experiences to students and identified four specific issues and themes that were common to many multicultural teacher preparation programs: 1) assisted students in affirming their own unique cultural backgrounds; 2) facilitated in understanding ethnic identities and cultural pluralism; 3) developed knowledge and awareness of cultural diversity and

oppression; and, 4) developed skills that translated this understanding into culturally appropriate practice with specific groups. Lucas (2010) found that pre-service and in-service teacher educator trainings, sessions, and course work needed to pay closer attention to and make explicitly clear to participants the specific purposes of multicultural education and how these concepts can be infused into a social studies curriculum. Mildred and Zuniga (2004) found that in many teacher preparation programs that addressed multicultural education, students often resisted multicultural education by denying the relevance of diversity issues to work practice, refusing to acknowledge any need for self reflection around these issues, and consciously or unconsciously sabotaging classroom activities that addressed them. One of the most tension-inducing topics for many students in teacher preparation multicultural classroom, especially for white students, was that of white privilege or whiteness studies (McIntosh, 1989). The first-time realization for many that whites are, by virtue of nothing more than their skin color, subject to a variety of privileges was both enlightening and disturbing (McIntosh, 1989). Some students attempted to deny white privilege outright and resorted to distancing behaviors (Edler & Irons, 1998). Other students attempted to avoid responsibility (Kivel, 2000). Equally as common was the student that accepted the notion of white privilege, but experienced white guilt (Wells, 2008). Adding to the problematic issue of teacher preparation program students' resistance to acknowledge the relevance of diversity in the workplace that Mildred and Zuniga (2004) found in their research, other researchers uncovered that many minority students in these programs were also surprised by the manner in which different cultures were seen and discussed in the literature, namely the following two issues: 1) discussions of minorities were primarily focused on the pathological aspects of minority culture; and, 2) information about minorities was often structured and transmitted in a stereotypical and superficial manner (Le-Doux and Montalvo,

1999; Garret, 2002; Dominelli, 2004; Lum, 2004). This negative image of minority people reinforced the notion in these teacher preparation program students that they as minority people themselves were considered a problem for the rest of society because of their inability to conform to white middle class models of life (Dunham, Cannon, & Dietz, 2004).

Vavrus (2002) found that the way in which multiculturalism was addressed in teacher education programs was often solely via electives or add-on courses, which discussed concepts for teaching about diversity, tolerance, and respect. These types of approaches also fit the goal of cultural understanding and human relations, which were considered important for multicultural education, but not sufficient (Grant & Sleeter, 2007). In addition to creating students who were more culturally aware, the aim of multicultural education was to reform and fundamentally transform institutions by involving changes in the total school or educational environment such as opportunity, access, and educational outcomes were more equitable across all groups of people (Sleeter & Grant, 1999; Vavrus, 2002). In preparing future teachers, multicultural education sought to accomplish three main objectives: 1) to advance the universal human goals of justice, equity, and peace; 2) to address diversity which existed at every level from the local to the global; and, 3) to create an awareness and appreciation for the interconnectedness in the world that students must understand in order to navigate it successfully (Merryfield, 1996). Wells (2008) found that in order for multicultural education to be successfully infused into teacher preparation programs, educators had to consider appropriate ways to effectively use the complementary nature of global and multicultural education that institutions had to reform their approaches to teacher education in order to facilitate the effective use of global knowledge in the multicultural classroom, and in the process, these reforms would then help institutions to reach some of the broader, transformative goals of multicultural education.

Part of the historical record on multiculturalism also focused on how some researchers found that using multiculturalism and multicultural curriculum reproduced the very inequality the literature on multiculturalism helped expose. Swartz (1993) argued that separatism and supremacy was promoted when the curriculum consistently viewed certain groups primarily through a focus on victimization. To fully understand the nature of race and ethnicity, students needed an understanding of the disadvantage experienced by families of color as well as the nature of white experiences in the system of racial privilege (Frankenberg, 1993). The overemphasis in the classroom experience on the pathological and dysfunctional aspects of the minority experience raised two closely related issues: 1) the lack of attention given to the experiences of whites, and 2) the inability of education to look at the issues of race without conflating race with social problems (Margolis & Romero, 1998). Many educators, researchers found, were disinclined to engage in critical discussion about how race continued to operate in schools (Marshall, 2002) and for their part, many teachers exhibited a pronounced “cultural aversion” (Irvine, 1990) which caused them to actively avoid engagement with issues like race and racism that they viewed as controversial. DiAngelo and Sensoy (2010) identified four responses to students’ desire for teacher preparation programs to provide them with the “how-to’s” of implementing multicultural education in a simple answer list. The researchers shared that it was nearly impossible to simply tell practitioners how to do it because: 1) teachers needed to see and experience the complexity of multiculturalism for themselves; 2) one size really did not fit all, and thus one preferred methodology could not be identified; 3) teachers needed to understand for themselves the historical dimensions of inter-group relations; and, 4) teachers needed to be able to recognize patterns – within themselves and their society (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010).

The push to include multiculturalism in the classroom eventually led to institutionalizing “culturally relevant curriculum” within the educational community. Ladson-Billings (1994) defined culturally relevant curriculum as a pedagogy that empowered students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) asserted that it was only through the use of students’ backgrounds, their stories, things they could connect to via their lived experiences that a curriculum could be relevant to them.

The Connection between Critical Race Theory and Cultural Relevance

Although critical race theory is not the research study’s framework acting as the lens through which the research study’s data is being analyzed, critical race theory nonetheless is connected to cultural relevance in the classroom, and is therefore explained in this section of the review of the literature. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Ladson-Billings (1999) explained that critical race theory (CRT) is both an outgrowth and a separate entity from an earlier legal movement called critical legal studies (CLS) which sprang up in the mid-1970s due to the slow pace of racial reform. CLS became a leftist legal movement that challenged the traditional legal scholarship in favor of a form of law that spoke to the specificity of individuals and groups in social and cultural contexts (Ladson-Billings, 1999). In defining what CRT is, and how it differed from CLS, Ladson-Billings (1999) shared four important points about the development and current state of CRT: 1) CRT began with the premise that racism is normal and not aberrant in American society, and because it was so enmeshed in the fabric of our social order, it appeared both natural and normal to the people in this culture; 2) CRT employed storytelling to analyze myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that made up common culture about race and that invariably attempted to put and keep minorities down; 3) CRT insisted on a critique on

liberalism as it argued that racism required sweeping changes but liberalism had no mechanism for such changes; and, 4) CRT argued that Whites in American society have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation, and not Blacks and other minorities.

In reference to CRT and education, Ladson-Billings (1999) stated that CRT viewed the official school curriculum as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script, in essence, muting and erasing stories of minorities when those stories challenged the dominant – White – culture authority and power. Solorzano and Yosso (2001) explained that the overall goal of CRT in graduate education was to develop a theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical strategy that accounted for the role of race and racism and worked towards the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating other forms of subordination, such as gender, class, and sexual orientation. Solorzano and Yosso (2001) further shared five themes that formed the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of CRT in education: 1) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination; 2) the challenge to dominant ideology; 3) the commitment to social justice; 4) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and, 5) the interdisciplinary perspective. Solorzano and Yosso (2001) explained that CRT used storytelling, and more specifically counter-storytelling, to frame what CRT in education did, namely discuss what we do, why we do it, and how we do it. Counter-storytelling was both a CRT method of telling the story of those experiences that were not often told, by those in the margins of society, and a CRT tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose story was a natural part of the majoritarian story. Delgado (1995, 2011) stated that the importance of counter-storytelling in CRT lay in its ability to help the “outgroups” shatter complacency and challenge the

status quo of the “ingroup” story form of shared reality in which its own superior position was seen as natural and fair, and not as oppressive conduct.

Solorzano and Yosso (2001) shared that counter-stories in CRT education served four functions: 1) they built community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice; 2) they challenged the perceived wisdom of those at society’s center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems; 3) they opened new windows into the realities of those at the margins of society by showing the possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position; and, 4) they taught others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one could construct another world than either the story or the reality alone. Gay (2002) connected CRT to cultural relevance when he found that in addition to using the CRT tools of culturally responsive climates and structural arrangements in the classroom, multicultural curriculum and instruction were essential as well, and it was through an intentional use of counter-stories that multicultural curriculum and instruction flourished. Students learned better when the content was familiar (Gay, 2002) and using counter-stories to depict the histories, cultures, contributions, and experiences from ethnic groups and other minority groups in society ensured that there was familiarity in the content being used.

Numerous CRT scholars (Aleman, 2009; Pizarro, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999, 2004; Yosso, 2006) additionally found that while formal educational institutions serve as possible avenues for success and opportunity, these same sites were highly contested and political in nature and had the most deleterious effects on marginalized students, by oppressing, excluding, and damaging these students. These researchers (Aleman, 2009; Pizarro, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999, 2004; Yosso, 2006) thus advocated for educational leaders to become fully knowledgeable in the political

nature of how culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy is designed, how funding structures are politically determined, and how accountability measures are used in determining success.

Solorzano and Yosso (2002) identified at least three types of CRT counter-stories, and explained how each type is an important form that helped the marginalized groups in society get their own culturally relevant story out. Personal stories or narratives were often autobiographical reflections of the author that helped recount an individual's experiences; other people's stories or narratives offered biographical analysis of a person's experiences in the third person; and, composite stories or narratives drew on various forms of composite biographical and autobiographical "data" to recount and recreate people's experiences (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

The Connection between Cultural Relevance and Educational Leadership

A culturally relevant curriculum ultimately manifests itself into existence and implementation at the classroom level at the schools; however, a culturally relevant curriculum ultimately finds its way from policy to implementation based on decision-making and leadership that falls squarely on the shoulders of the educational leaders at the district and school level. This part of the review of the literature focuses on the connection between cultural relevance and educational leadership.

Billot, Goddard, and Cranston (2007) discussed a key aspect of educational leadership operating effectively in a setting that both acknowledged and valued cultural relevance: confident leadership and role modeling developed an environment of trust in a culturally diverse setting. The authors further stated that educational leaders build such confidence and trust in the system that it becomes quite apparent to all denizens of that educational institution that there was no real anxiety or deep concern in directly addressing the complexity of some key issues that

arose when cultural diversity and cultural relevance were promoted and celebrated (Billot, Goddard, & Cranston, 2007). In their study, Billot, Goddard, and Cranston (2007) explained that educational leadership at schools effectively addressing multicultural challenges and implementing culturally relevant curriculum recognized two important factors that helped make a difference: 1) adequate professional development opportunities must be provided for those aspiring to lead in these schools; and, 2) educational leaders must possess special capabilities and strongly articulated notions of social justice. It is important to note here that while the researcher of this research study did not use social justice as a framework for the study nor as a lens through which to analyze the research study's data, the review of the literature uncovered multiple references to the connection between the theme of social justice and cultural relevance in the school and classroom. Gaynor (2010) reiterated this social justice theme finding that multicultural education, in which culturally relevant curriculum was a centerpiece, had an overarching goal of creating a moral community that worked for the common good. Further, he added that power and privilege are lenses through which to understand educational content and human experience (Gaynor, 2010); in doing so, Gaynor once again connected to how educational leaders when leading need to consider the ethical implications of developing and implementing policies that address or don't address culturally relevant curriculum.

On the issue of how social justice is connected to educational leadership, especially for those who have been marginalized by society, Niesche and Keddie (2011) stipulated that school leadership can be instrumental in providing equity and social justice by 1) emphasizing the significance of pursuing equity, 2) leading staff members in establishing supportive social relations, and, 3) practicing dispersed leadership where leadership is exercised by a wide range of staff. These findings support the concept of policies about culturally relevant curriculum

because 1) such a focus for curriculum makes the content more equitable and accessible, 2) all staff at the campus working together to make a culturally relevant curriculum a significant cornerstone of the school experience can only help promote social justice and curriculum equity, and, 3) when dispersed leadership also involves supporting or even spearheading the implementation of a culturally relevant curriculum it teaches leaders that shared leadership can focus together on curriculum equity (Niesche & Keddle, 2011).

While the first part in this sub-section of the connection between cultural relevance and educational leadership focused primarily on researchers' findings connected to the leaders themselves and other adults in the system, studies on cultural relevance and educational leadership have also yielded findings about the implications for students in the system. Walker and Riordan (2010) explained that leadership should be about building the capacity of the collective – regardless of cultures they come from and values they hold – to make a difference, and that included students. When their statement was applied to culturally relevant curriculum, it makes it even more powerful – students as part of the collective participating on the leadership aspect of developing and implementing policy on culturally relevant curriculum. Andersen and Ottesen (2011) added that through a culturally relevant intercultural education, a school worked to develop common values and attitudes, but also promoted respect and recognition of others – this applied to the level of the students and not only the adults in the system. The message here was that educational leaders must lead the movement at their sites – districts, campuses, classrooms – to implement culturally relevant curriculum by involving students in the decision-making and implementation aspects of it.

While the first two parts of this sub-section of the connection between cultural relevance and educational leadership addressed “human resources” – adults and students – involved in the

educational system, the third part focuses specifically on the use of “non-human” resources, such as supplies, materials, and programs. Bruner (2008) alluded to the importance of staff development as part of leadership intersecting with culturally relevant curriculum in stating that current school leaders needed access to training not only to improve student performance, but to improve their skills and sensitivities when working with diverse students, families, and personnel. Additionally, Cuevas Lopez (2008) recommended that specific teacher education training – staff development – be an expectation for both pre-service teachers and current teachers who would work with culturally relevant curriculum in multicultural contexts, which was the work environment all teachers in today’s world now potentially face. Similarly, Dukes and Lamar-Dukes (2009) recognized the need for teacher training – which may require time resource and a lot of hard work – in order for those in the field to do more to understand the umbrella of diversity. Simply “wanting” to set policies about socially relevant curriculum and acting upon them would not be enough. Appropriate awareness and knowledge-building training have to be those first steps in moving from “wanting to get it done” to “getting it done” because planning preparedness for it had been effected.

As this section revealed, culturally relevant curriculum ultimately manifests itself into existence and implementation at the classroom level at the schools as it finds its way from policy to implementation based on decision-making and leadership that falls squarely on the shoulders of the educational leaders at the district and school level. It is that educational leadership that will ultimately provide necessary support for cultural relevance to thrive in the curriculum used in the schools and classrooms. Having reviewed the literature on how leadership is an important baseline component in order for curriculum design to be culturally relevant, a review of the literature that concentrates on the benefits of the use of such a component follows.

Benefits of Culturally Relevant Curricular Design

A discussion on cultural relevance in curricular design must first take into account how the education system in which this culturally relevant curriculum is expected to be implemented is itself organized. Freire (1970, 1994) described the traditional education system as banking education where students (as containers and receptacles) receive, file, and store deposits of knowledge that the teacher provides. The researcher juxtaposed this narration system where the teacher narrated information that students then simply mechanically memorized with that of his proposed problem-posing education where dialogue created students-teachers of both participants who became jointly responsible for the new education process in which all grew (Freire, 1970, 1994). In the banking system of education that Freire (1970, 1994) discussed, if a culturally relevant curriculum were an expectation, the teacher would fill the students with the knowledge of culture and cultural relevance. The students under the banking system would simply then memorize the information with which they as receptacles had been filled. Such a methodology is hardly an open and dynamic teaching and learning experience for both the teacher and student roles involved in that process. However, in the reconfigured problem-posing education system that Freire (1970, 1994) proposed in which the teacher of the students and the students of the teacher merged into collaborative co-teachers of and co-learners with one another, a culturally relevant curriculum design implementation would be a negotiated education in which both parties teach and learn about culture and cultural relevance. The problem-posing education setting as described by Freire (1970, 1994) could be the type of setting in which culturally relevant curricular design might best thrive. Researchers have studied and made claims of both benefits and problems associated with implementing culturally relevant curriculum, and both aspects are studied next.

Some researchers have claimed that there is a clear benefit to embedding culture and cultural relevance in curricular design in general. Ford (2005) delineated seven things that diverse students would be looking for: 1) diversity is recognized, honored; 2) cultural mismatches are minimal between teachers and students; 3) teachers make time to get to know students' uniqueness; 4) formal and informal assessments are fair, equitable; 5) meaningful, culturally relevant materials are used – and students' backgrounds, experiences are central to teaching and learning; 6) lesson plans, activities are infused with respectful, multicultural content; and, 7) teachers display cultural sensitivity, competence. Ford's research and findings in culturally responsive classrooms applied to issues, perspectives, and curricula program implementation affecting Hispanics in Pre-K – 12 Social Studies (Ford, 2005).

Feger (2006) supported Ford when she discussed her incorporation of comprehension reading strategies with culturally relevant literature to achieve greater student reading engagement, further confirming an explicit benefit to addressing culture and cultural relevance in curricular design in general. She stated that “recognition of students' cultural diversity determined their opportunities for success in literacy” (Feger, 2006). Feger provided opportunities for her students to “explore their bilingual/bicultural identities and accept the challenges of reading culturally relevant literature and non-fiction” (p. 18). She stressed that non-fiction informational text were extremely important also due to high stakes accountability-linked reading tests, and found such texts that were culturally relevant made a difference. Another support in the review of the literature for including culture and cultural relevance in curricular design came from Medina (2010) whose research examined “translocal discourses and cultural flows in literature discussions”. Medina (2002) employed three theoretical frameworks – 1) Translocality in the production of cultural practices; 2) Literacy studies across the local and

global; and 3) Theories of identity and discourse studies in literature discussions – to discuss her case study approach with immigrant children in an elementary school classroom in the United States in her research. Medina (2002) studied the following questions:

How are responses to literature discursively produced among elementary school students who have recently moved to the United States? Given their participation across communities and cultural practices, what are the dynamics of immigrant students' identification with texts? How are these identity and cultural dynamics discursively and collectively produced in immigrant students' responses to literature? (p. 45).

Two major points in Medina's analysis were: 1) that the students' responses to the literature reflected their participation in communities with multiple elements that reflected their transnational experiences that transform culture in dynamic ways and 2) that students' identities, histories, and imaginations are at the core of how they understand literacy events which resulted in deeper engagement and a sense of belonging in school contexts (Medina, 2002). In summary, Medina's (2002) research found value in considering culture and cultural relevance in curricular design.

Arce (2004) provided additional insight into the power of culture and cultural relevance in curricular design in her discussion on theoretical and pedagogical frameworks in the area of bilingual education, as she explored the use of such curricula in the case studies of Latino teachers and their students, which she referenced in her research. Among the five themes that emerged from Arce's investigation were three critical to the research that was conducted here: 1) the use of a culturally bound pedagogy, 2) the countering of hidden curriculum through critical pedagogy, and 3) development of identity and voice for both students and teachers. Arce (2004) contended that by using a dialogic process, critical educators were empowered to organize to

gain autonomy and the right to provide liberatory educational experiences to children in their classrooms through a collective political struggle. This again fully supported the premise that there was much to be gained by including culture and cultural relevance in curricular design. Arce also recommended addressing cultural and linguistic students in revamped model bilingual classrooms with: 1) special institutes; 2) integrated coursework; 3) collaborative partnerships; and, 4) teachers as instructors (Arce, 2004). This recommendation reinforced the importance of a culturally relevant curriculum.

Adding support to addressing culture and cultural relevance in curricular design, Zhang (2001), stated that “recognizing and prizing the diversity found in many of today’s learners is prerequisite to the successful incorporation of cultural pluralism into instruction.” Zhang then discussed how different groups – such as American Indians, Asian Americans, African Americans and Hispanics – all have different instructional design needs. Zhang specifically delved into the issues of “cooperating” and “time management” in reference to Hispanics (Zhang, 2001). In his research Zhang posed the following question and answer: “How do we achieve cultural equity and benefit from cultural diversity? Instructional designers can make a difference” (p. 301). He ended by offering ten suggestions as “criteria to evaluate a good culturally balanced-program.” Two of Zhang’s recommendations included 1) “Materials are respectful of cultural, ethnic, sexual, and/or religious diversity,” and 8) “A balance of different cultures and societies is represented in images or texts,” (Zhang, 2001. p. 306) both noting the importance of cultural relevance in curricula. Helfenbein (2006), supported the argument by stating that “cultural studies served as a point of departure for the exploration of identity and place,” and further explained that identity formation then is understood as the fundamental operation in these lived experiences of schools, an operation that happens in particular spaces in

particular contested ways, within structures not their own making, and within a complex history of culture and power. Helfenbein (2006) reported that “cultural studies approach rejects any notion of essentialism that *closes the boundaries* of subjects” because in the end “culture, seen as an *open system*, continually in flux serves to create the space for new possibilities, better truths” (2006, p. 92). Helfenbein argued that a culturally relevant experience in the classroom opened up new possibilities that would otherwise not exist in a non-culturally relevant curriculum system.

Other researchers claimed that there was a clear benefit to embedding culture and cultural relevance in curricular design specifically in social studies. In her research, Chomsky (1998) pointed to a lack of inclusion of Latin American history in officially sanctioned U.S. history curricula, and further stated that some of her Latino students “were among the most resistant to thinking in structural terms about race, ethnicity, and identity” (p. 33) when finally given the opportunity to discuss the topic in her class. In supporting the importance of cultural relevance in the teaching and learning of Social Studies, Chomsky used literature and first-hand accounts to reach her students, by studying individual Latino lives pushing her students through “reflections upon the realities of others’ lives” which led them to “care about learning the history” (Chomsky, 1998, p. 34). Chomsky (1998) shared that Mexican Americans (or Chicanos) have the most well-developed historiography of all U.S. Latino groups, availing them the opportunity to search for sources and themes about their history.

In her work, Urdanivia-English (2001) added support to the importance of cultural relevance in Social Studies. Urdanivia-English (2001) reported on her experience of working with eleven Latino 5th grade English Language Learners in Count County, Georgia. She described her initial efforts “to try to guide them as they try to learn social studies while developing their proficiency in English” (Urdanivia-English, 2001, p. 194). Urdanivia-English

(2001) also noted a lack of interest in the topics being discussed. Through the use of some learning strategies (KWL, social construction and participatory action research, using photography in teaching, book reads, local field trips, etc.), Urdanivia-English reached out to the struggling students. In reflection she admitted that “through the eyes of the children, I gained insight into what was important to them, as opposed as to what I had judged it necessary for them to learn” (Urdanivia-English, 2001, p. 196). Summarily, Urdanivia-English (2001) discovered that a culturally relevant social studies curriculum made a difference to the Hispanic students learning it.

Ajayi (2006) studied the aspect of culture and cultural relevance in a Social Studies curriculum for Hispanics and focused on the issue of how the task of language learning – English, in this case – combined with the additional task of learning a new Social Studies curriculum impacted the issue of identity. Ajayi (2006) noted that the “middle school Hispanic students [learning Social Studies] reconceptualize[d] their identities to negotiate English language learning that ensures the knowledge gained in classrooms prepares them for full participation in their [Social Studies] classrooms and their communities” (p. 473). Ajayi (2006) found that “the learners viewed their multilingual and multicultural backgrounds as an asset rather than a liability” and stressed the importance of further investigating “how students construct their identities and how such self-defined images of ‘self’ dictate how much students learn in English learning classrooms” (2006, p. 477). Further, Ajayi (2006) found that this development of the self, of identity, of cultural awareness in the Hispanics studied came “against a Eurocentric interpretation of culture – which conceptualized culture and identity simply as ‘a clearly demarcated set of lived and commodified cultural forms and practices specific to particular groups’ where the cultural forms and practices are exclusively defined,” with an

additional “attendant consequence ... that the knowledge, culture, history, and social practices of the minority groups are treated as illegitimate and excluded from the curriculum” (p. 478). In the end Ajayi (2006) concluded with these four observations from the data he gathered of the Hispanic students: 1) the students wanted to learn English language and the American ways of life while at the same time learn, use, and preserve their heritage, language, and culture; 2) the students expected the educational system to be a vehicle of multiculturalism where learners were recognized for having complex social identities and whose histories, languages, cultures, needs, and desires were valued and integrated into the curriculum; 3) the students viewed multiculturalism as an asset rather than a liability; and, 4) the students conceived of multilingualism and multiculturalism as a prerequisite for effective social participation in their classrooms and community.

Godina (2003) found that one of the benefits of providing an intentional intervention-type of introduction of a culturally relevant curricular experience to Mexican-American children was the student’s own reassessment of their heritage. Students who participated in the study with their teachers began to consider how they had ancestors who were intelligent, and students began to moving toward a more positive perception about their own participation in an academic setting (Godina, 2003). Brown (2007) discovered that in order for teachers to fully prepare their students for a culturally relevant curricular environment and experience, teachers needed to take into account these benefits when designing culturally relevant curriculum: 1) intentionally expose students to the advantages of multicultural strengths inherent in multicultural instructional resources; 2) develop a reciprocity of teaching and learning in the classroom, so that students and teachers actively play both roles; 3) openly discuss the cultural contributions and characteristics

of different ethnic groups; and, 4) build a community of learning in which the welfare of the group takes precedence over the individual.

Ladson-Billings (2001) found that the culturally responsive teacher was the provider of the largest benefit to students in the realm of cultural relevance, much more than simply and only developing a culturally relevant curriculum – the teacher made all the difference. The researcher found that three propositions were the hallmarks of a culturally responsive teacher when implementing a culturally relevant curriculum in the classroom: 1) they had focused on individual students' academic achievement; 2) they had attained cultural competence and help in developing students' cultural competence; and, 3) they had developed a sense of sociopolitical competence (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Similarly, Villegas and Lucas (2002) found that culturally responsive teachers were of great benefit to students, and discovered these six characteristics about them: 1) they recognized multiple ways of perceiving reality; 2) they had affirming views of students from culturally diverse backgrounds; 3) they saw themselves as both responsible for and capable of bringing about educational change that made schools more culturally responsive; 4) they understood how learners constructed knowledge; 5) they knew about the lives of their students; and, 6) they used their knowledge about their students' lives to design instruction that built on what they already knew and stretched them beyond the familiar.

Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) cited four motivational conditions that acted to benefit the implementation of a culturally relevant curriculum by culturally responsive teachers and their students: 1) teachers and students established inclusion in which they both felt respected by and connected to one another; 2) teachers and students developed a favorable disposition/attitude toward the learning experience through personal relevance; 3) teachers and students enhance meaning in the lessons which included student perspectives and values; and, 4) teachers and

students engendered competence by creating an understanding that students are effective in learning something they value. When educators sought the benefits of implementing a culturally relevant curriculum, Chamberlain (2005) identified four key points which were kept in mind by those who had led these efforts: 1) they implemented and encouraged policies that viewed diversity as an asset for schools, classrooms, and students; 2) staff development was provided on best practices for teaching students with and without disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds; 3) teachers were provided with ongoing opportunities to collaboratively explore best practices in culturally responsive pedagogy; and, 4) teachers resisted political pressure for exempting students from taking tests, as well as resisted pressure to teach to the test. Similarly, Bazron, Osher, and Fleischman (2005) found that the benefits of implementing culturally relevant curriculum were only fully realized when teachers actively engaged in the following: 1) they set high expectations and provided a scaffold of support rather than tracking culturally diverse students into low-level classes; 2) they gave students direct instruction on the “hidden curriculum” of the school (such as, which courses to take, which teachers to seek out, test importance, how to study, etc.); 3) they created environments that allowed students and teachers to connect with one another, both in and out of the classroom; and, 4) they helped to build a classroom community.

Banks (2002) shared that when educators used a transformation approach to implementing cultural relevance in the classroom, the benefits of culturally relevant curriculum were most accessible. The transformation approach (Banks, 2002) emphasized structural changes in curriculum that enabled students to consider concepts, events, and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups, and which eventually led to the ultimate goal of cultural democracy and empowerment. Banks listed these four anti-biased goals as benefits

through a culturally relevant curriculum: 1) the construction of a knowledgeable, confident identity as an individual and as a member of multiple cultural groups was nurtured; 2) comfortable, empathetic interactions with people from diverse backgrounds were promoted; 3) each child's ability to critically think about bias and injustice was fostered; and, 4) each child's ability to stand up for herself or himself, and for others, in the face of bias and injustice was cultivated. Derman-Sparks and Ramsey (2006) found that a benefit from the use of culturally relevant curriculum was the opportunity that such an experience afforded learners to face who they were by first getting directly in tune with their very own strengths and limitations. This self-awareness required attentiveness and the construction of a knowledgeable confident identity as an individual and as a member of multiple cultural groups (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006). The researchers found that this process of reclaiming a positive cultural identity as a benefit of a culturally relevant classroom experience looked very different for children compared to adults when dealing with oppressive social attitudes toward their identity compared with those in the mainstream who did not recognize that they even have a culture (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006). Tapping into the benefit of a culturally relevant curricular experience by developing such confidence also involved gaining knowledge about cultural diversity and developing the skills for applying the knowledge gained, especially when many teachers' backgrounds are very different from those of the students the teachers teach (Lynch, 2004).

As the review of the literature in this section summarized, some researchers claimed that there was a clear benefit to embedding culture and cultural relevance in curricular design in general and also specifically in the content area of social studies. The researchers and authors cited in this section demonstrated that analysis of their own research and studies found value in such curricular design and implementation. Not all researchers concur with the group just cited.

Voices against Culturally Relevant Curricular Design

There also exists, however, a group of voices in the research literature whose leading point of view is that addressing culture and cultural relevance in curricular design may not be necessary, or even counter-productive. In order to provide as objective and fair a review of the literature as possible, this counter-perspective is also reviewed here. This other side of the spectrum may have different reasons for espousing this stance, and they will be noted in this section of the review of the literature.

Otherized

Chandler (2009) confirmed that there was “a lack of attention, philosophically, that has been paid to how non-white groups in American history have been Otherized and tokenized in the telling of the American nation state’s narrative, essentially serving as the backdrop to the ‘American story’” (p. 272). Chandler (2009) provided an illuminating commentary when he said that “conservative cultural continuity is the dominant approach practiced in schools; regardless of the debates among scholars, conservative paradigms dominate practice” (p. 285). Indeed, his two qualitative ethnographic case studies, where he researched two white male teachers and their practices of teaching about race and race relations in their American history classes, captured an “acknowledgment that race still mattered and that there was a history from which Americans, black and white, could not escape, but it was oftentimes followed by statements suggesting that we were *gradually becoming a more just society*,” exposing a major theme that Chandler (2009) labeled as “liberal, incremental progress” (p. 284). Chandler (2009) summarized this general theme as follows: “In short, racism was not viewed as a system of oppression giving whites advantages *at the expense of others*, but rather an aberration that some whites and blacks committed on rare occasions” (p.287). Thus, in Chandler’s (2009) research the message was that

while non-white groups have been Otherized in curricular and teaching practices in American history, there was an implied perception that things were getting better for these non-white groups, and, therefore, no particular special attention needed to be paid to these non-white groups as far as addressing their culture and infusing cultural relevance into the curricular design that drove the teaching and learning for these non-white groups.

Neoconservatives

Shudak and Helfenbein (2005) reported additional conservatism within the present state of teaching Social Studies in American in which they chronicled that the “neoconservative” initial goal of “greater control over curriculum and pedagogy” and subsequently “after the clarion has sounded that public education is in shambles, point to the only viable solution, turning public education over to the market” (p. 152). Shudak and Helfenbein (2005) clearly believed that “these scholars [neoconservative in nature] are pursuing a quest for cultural certainty” that they ascribed as being simply “hegemonic consolidation of power” (p. 151). Urrieta (2005) addressed questions of what exactly “activism means as a practice for social change or, in the case of conservatives, as an agent to maintain or strengthen the cultural hegemony of the United States” (p.190). Urrieta (2005) argued that “those whom more progressive people in our society call ‘conservative’ or ‘right wing’ are very much activists fighting to support their own agendas within a system that allows them to appear neutral, logical, progressive, and rational” (p.191). He further argued against the Leming (2003) publication *Where Did Social Studies Go Wrong? (WDSSGW)* by stating that said publication was “an activist project based on irrational and shortsighted, but deeply ingrained, ideologies of cultural domination that attempt to maintain and reinvigorate a system of cultural hegemony, in this case by means of social studies curriculum” (Urrieta, 2005, p. 191). He added, “in a rapidly changing

multicultural society such as ours, such activist incursions must be critiqued and questioned for their legitimacy, because, although they appear to be neutral and, to some, rational, they may lead to further division and inequality and serve to reinforce cultural domination” (Urrieta, 2005, p. 191). Urrieta (2005) concluded that “preserving the hegemony of the culture of domination is really what is at stake in *WDSSGW*, a culture that is founded on the principles of white supremacy ... among other ideologies” (p. 191). As was noted, the research conducted by Shudak and Helfenbein (2005) and by Urrieta (2005) pointed out a second reason for opposition to addressing culture and cultural relevance in Social Studies curricula – the preservation of a white, cultural hegemony that had no room for any additional non-white culture and cultural relevance in its sanctioned curriculum.

Political Correctness

Additionally, there are researchers who believe that the call for a multicultural and culturally relevant perspective in teaching and learning language and specifically social studies is no more than simply a call for political correctness. Again, in order to provide as objective and fair a review of the literature as possible, this counter-perspective is also reviewed here.

Pasamonik (2004) defined “political correctness” as the principle that stated that “presumptions of *cultural relativism* – where all points of view are equally valid, and any truth is relative – are true and should not be discussed” (p. 207). These voices were against addressing culture and cultural relevance in social studies curriculum and in language learning by Hispanics for fear that it was no more than a politically correct “primary present-day cause of cultural chauvinism” (Waters, 2007, p. 367) by those relegated to minority status in language, culture, and, therefore, too, in societal stance. Waters (2007) assigned the argument that the influence behind the “politically correct” solution of the call for a classroom directed by “learner-

centeredness” – which could possibly even include the curriculum taught, thus, could include culture and cultural relevance in a Social Studies classroom – was in all reality “the product of entrenched, native-speaker racialism” that simply and unfoundedly attacks “teacher-centeredness” classrooms (p. 368). He argued that actually “in many cultures – perhaps the majority – authority and power [as in ‘teacher-centeredness’] are seen to have a potential to be exercised not just in harmful but beneficial ways,” (p. 368) adding that “in such parts of the world, a relatively ‘teacher-centered’ approach ... tends to be seen as more culturally appropriate” (Waters, 2007, p. 368).

Graff (2000) made the case against what he described as Freire’s “celebrated model of classroom dialogue,” (p. 27) which Graff advocated ought to be replaced by what he described as his own “model of counter-advocacy [that] is more democratic in principle” (p. 28). Initially, Graff (2000) appeared to applaud Freire as he stated “Freire’s goal in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is the laudable one of empowering oppressed students by helping them make political sense of their experience and become active agents of their liberation (2000, p. 28),” explaining that Freire sought to replace the ‘banking’ approach to education – where knowledge was a ‘deposit’ that students passively received from an authoritative teacher and ‘cashed’ in for a grade – with a ‘teacher-student dialogue’ as a form of ‘problem-posing’ experience generated independent critical thinking. However, Graff (2000) turned right around and immediately made his anti-Freire case stating that the pedagogy of the oppressed generally doesn’t work, further elaborating that “for every student that is ‘transformed’ by a liberatory classroom, more students were driven into resentful silence or pushed further to the Right” (2000, p. 29). Graff (2000) further stated that “the problem is that, no matter how open and dialogical the liberatory classroom tries to be, the political deck is inevitably stacked in favor of the teacher’s

perspective” (p.29). Graff (2000) then added these three assertions: 1) the critical perception of the world that the student acquires was ‘a correct method of approaching reality;’ 2) it constituted ‘a comprehension of total reality;’ and, 3) Freire left little doubt that he and his associates had the correct line on ‘total reality’ (p. 28). Graff (2000) in essence became what he labeled as a “critic of political correctness” that attacks whom he labels as “Leftist educators ... promoting and carrying out a kind of indoctrination campaign disguised as educational empowerment” (p. 28). Like Waters (2007) when he dismissed student centeredness as merely political correctness in the previous discussion, in the end Graff (2000) labeled empowering oppressed students by helping them make political sense of their experience as political correctness as well – both researchers negate any opportunity for students’ culturally relevant experiences to even be considered to be explored in the classroom.

As the review of the literature in this section showed, there exists a group of voices in the research literature whose leading point of view is that addressing culture and cultural relevance in curricular design may not be necessary, may be counter-productive, and may even simply be a case of political correctness. These researchers and authors are opponents and dissenters of culturally relevant curriculum. In addition to reviewing literature that exposes both the support for and a perspective against culturally relevant curricular design, literature about culturally relevant assessment issues is reviewed next.

Culturally Relevant Assessment

Part of the instructional process, when implementing curriculum, involves assessment; thus, any discussion about culturally relevant curriculum should address assessment issues. Stiggins (2005) found that, in general, the school system has attempted to motivate by holding schools accountable for scores on standardized tests and by continuing to intensify the stakes

associated with low test scores. The researcher documented that the high-stakes assessment trend: began in the 1940s with college admission tests; increased in the 1950s and 1960s with district-wide standardized assessments; grew to include state assessments in the 1970s; and, culminated with the advent of national and international assessments in the 1980s and 1990s (Stiggins, 2005). Chappuis, Chappuis, and Stiggins (2009) further found that while high-stakes assessment had been an expected part of students' school experiences, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation exposed students to an extreme overflow of testing, with extremely high stakes associated with any low results. While little evidence has shown that these multiple layers of assessments either improved school quality or reduced achievement score gaps, evidence does corroborate that dropout rates have increased and graduation rates have decreased for minorities, especially immigrants and second-language learners (Stiggins, 2005). In light of these researchers' findings, it is crucial that the review of the literature for this research study now focus on research on culturally relevant assessment of multicultural groups and national trends of how multicultural groups in general fare in the No Child Left Behind assessment era.

Volante (2008) argued that multicultural groups, including Hispanics, were unfairly treated within the "recent standards-based and the large-scale assessment programs that accompany their implementation." Volante stated that the effort to attempt to close the achievement gap between these groups and "their White counterparts" had in fact actually narrowed the curriculum even further to boost test scores (Volante, 2008). Volante (2008) corroborated the findings of Hilliard and Amankwatia (2003) in seeking equity in testing, looking for assessment instruments that were "culture free," "culturally fair," "culturally relevant," or "culturally salient." Volante (2008) tied the issue of fairness in assessment to the issue of fairness of opportunity by analyzing these specific factors: a) funding; b) teacher quality;

c) rigor of the curriculum; and d) school organization. Volante (2008) further supported Dreeban and Gamoran (1986) and Lee (2002) when he stated “Research suggest that all of these factors are below standard for multicultural student group.” As Volante (2008) explicitly noted, “culturally relevant assessment of multicultural groups is a fair and just goal that ought to be pursued” (p.22).

In this review of the literature with a focus on national trends of how multicultural groups in general fare in the No Child Left Behind era, a final piece to be considered is that of Durden (2008). Durden discussed No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) signed in 2002 with “political lens on children who were labeled as ‘at risk’, ‘disadvantaged’, and ‘minority’” (p. 415). Durden’s research supported Lee (2002) when he stated that “the Hispanic – White achievement gap has hardly changed over the past three decades despite the fluctuations in the Hispanic socio-economic and family conditions” (p. 416). Durden (2008) cited the 11 components that must be in place in order for schools to now receive federal funding specifically earmarked for “comprehensive school reforms” aimed at narrowing gaps such as the Hispanic – White achievement gap previously mentioned. Durden (2008) pointed to five noted key strategies implemented to close the achievement gap, including these three: (a) rigorous standards and high quality teaching for all students; (c) district support for instructional program; and, (e) faculty and staff seeing themselves as the learning community’s valued contributors. Durden (2008) shared four guiding questions to assess the extent to which a reform effort may address cultural relevance: 1) Does model include culturally relevant teaching (leaning in native language, cooperative learning, creative arts, stimuli, etc.)? 2) How does ideology support both a philosophy (all children can learn) and pedagogy (rigorous and challenging)? 3) How does reform bridge home-school communication and experience? 4) Are instructional materials a

“tourist curriculum” (p.416) or do they allow for multiple perspectives that affirm diverse student population contributions?

As the review of the literature in this section clearly verified, because part of the instructional process when implementing curriculum involves assessment, it is crucial that any review of the literature about culturally relevant curriculum also include assessment issues. Therefore, as the review of the literature in this section showed, the issue of assessment when researching culturally relevant curriculum development and implementation cannot be ignored, and is an important aspect to keep in mind throughout any study on the topic. Including assessment in this review of the literature completed the curriculum, instruction, and assessment cycle, leaving no chance for any gaps in the literature review process.

Summary

This section provided a detailed review of the literature pertinent to multiple aspects of the issues associated with implementing a culturally relevant Social Studies curriculum. This review of the literature section was divided into the following sub-sections: historical perspective on multicultural education and culturally relevant curriculum; the connection between critical race theory and cultural relevance; the connection between cultural relevance and educational leadership; benefits of culturally relevant curricular design; voices against culturally relevant curricular design; and, culturally relevant assessment. In an effort to provide a more complete picture of what the research has determined, it was important to demonstrate that while some findings supported the importance of culturally relevant curriculum, other findings downplayed its importance; therefore, both perspectives were showcased here when available.

While this review of the literature does indicate that some research and its findings exist in the realm of cultural relevance in curriculum, it is this researcher’s goal to add to the body of

literature by illuminating relevant, cogent findings about the following overarching question: How and to what degree does educational leadership shape the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas. Furthermore, the project will investigate the following three sub-questions about a school district in Texas that have policies implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum, and report the findings as well: 1) How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifests itself at the school and classroom levels? 2) How is the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum shaped by school leadership? 3) How does the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translate into classroom practice? The next section explains the research project's METHODOLOGY.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This research project investigated how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas. Furthermore, the project investigated the following three aspects about a school district in Texas: 1) how having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifests itself at the school and classroom levels; 2) how the implementation of policy of cultural relevance in curriculum is shaped by school leadership; and, 3) how the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translates into classroom practice. This research methodology section will detail the following components: purpose of the study; research design; theoretical framework – Knowing to Lead (KL) Model; research questions; site and participant selection; gaining access; instrumentation; data collection procedures; data analyses procedures; and, a summary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas. The sub-questions for this research study were: 1) How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifest itself at the school and classroom levels? 2) How is implementation of policy of cultural

relevance in curriculum shaped by school leadership? 3) How is the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translated into classroom practice?

Research Design

This research study used qualitative methodology, with a case study approach (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Erickson (1990); Gay & Airasian, 2003; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). Creswell (2012) stated that a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection; the term “bounded” referred to the fact that the case is separated out for research in time, place, or some physical barriers (Creswell, 2012). Data was collected from district and school leaders (whose responsibilities include implementing decisions about Social Studies curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices) and classroom teachers from one district in Texas. The data gathered from multiple sources of information (individual interviews) at the multiple sites generated the basis for case description and case themes to emerge (Creswell, 2013). A case study approach was appropriate in studying the research problem previously identified in the dissertation’s introduction – namely the uncertainty of knowing 1) how having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifests itself at the school and classroom levels; 2) how the implementation of policy of cultural relevance in curriculum is shaped by school leadership; and, 3) how the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translates into classroom practice – because the research study had a clearly identifiable case with boundaries and aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the case (Creswell, 2013).

Theoretical Framework – Knowing to Lead (KL) Model

The research study was framed through the lens of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model which the researcher developed using the combination of two previously developed and

published theoretical models. The first previously developed and published theoretical model is the Guajardo et al. (2013) “ecologies of knowing” model which has three levels, namely, the *self*, the *organization*, and the *community*. The second previously developed and published theoretical model is derived from the works of both Trueba (1999) and Mehan (2008) in which the authors discuss the *technical*, the *political*, and the *cultural* leadership skills that are necessary in curriculum development and implementation as well as in organizational change and reform. The researcher’s developed framework, the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model, was created by intersecting the levels of knowing (*self*, *organization*, and *community*) of the former model with the leadership skills (*technical*, *political*, and *cultural*) of the latter model. The KL Model was then used as an organizing and analysis tool with which to organize and subsequently analyze the data the researcher gathered in this research study. See *Figure 1: The Knowing to Lead (KL) Model*, for a visual depiction of the model. *Figure 1* depicts a chart that shows the KL Model’s resulting nine paired-combinations when each of the three ecologies of knowing (*self*, *organization*, and *community*) is paired with each of the leadership skills (*technical*, *political*, and *cultural*). This study used the KL Model in investigating how educational leadership shaped decisions about implementing policy that dictated culturally relevant social studies curriculum in school districts in Texas.

The KL Model was used to organize and analyze the qualitative research data that the one-on-one qualitative interview transcripts yielded. Specific details on how the KL Model was used as an organizing and analysis tool are discussed in the Instrumentation portion of this chapter and further described in the dissertation’s Chapter V (DATA ANALYSIS) and Chapter VI (FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS). The first components that the KL Model used were the Guajardo et al. (2013) “ecologies of knowing” model’s three levels of knowing,

namely, the *self*, the *organization*, and the *community*. Guajardo et al. (2013) explained that interactions occur at these three levels to organize conversations, identify entry points, and find spaces for interventions; these ecologies of knowing start at the most intimate, inner part, the *self*, and then naturally flow out toward the immediate *organization* and subsequently the larger *community*, in a three-ringed concentric circle formation. At the *self* level of knowing, conversations and experiences are made personal and relevant at the most micro of levels, as it is an opportunity for the individual to own their learning and their teaching through story telling (Guajardo et al., 2013). Guajardo et al. (2013) detailed how every participant becomes owner of their learning and their teaching through story telling by making this process personal, as it reframes the learning of the self and the collective and helps participants develop the necessary agency to act on their knowledge. At the *organization* level, this pace allows the learning to be couched within participants, families, schools, non-profit organization and/or their neighborhoods (Guajardo et al., 2013). The authors remind us that at the *organization* level the environment for learning is a critical element to explore and discuss, for it is within this social context that we develop our values, habits, and views of the world, further stating that the *self* within the *organization* is a critical unit for analysis (Guajardo et al., 2013). At the third level, the *community* is critically important in mapping the learning; its economy, educational systems, housing, other elements of its infrastructure, and investment in its future are critical to account for when making sense of the learning and reconstruction of our story (Guajardo et al., 2013). Guajardo et al. (2013) stated that as participatory members of the *community*, we must learn the skills, build the awareness, and plan the actions to change the behaviors and narratives from an outdated political practice grounded and informed by a zero-sum concept, to a new politic informed by caring and sustaining the quality of life for every child and citizen in our

communities. These three levels of knowing that encompass the Guajardo et al. (2013) “ecologies of knowing” model, the *self*, the *organization*, and the *community*, comprise one aspect of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model.

The other intersecting component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is comprised of the *technical*, the *political*, and the *cultural* leadership skills that are necessary in curriculum development and implementation as well as in organizational change and reform that Trueba (1999) and Mehan (2008) discuss. Mehan (2008) explained that *technical* leadership skills focus on supporting the development of new knowledge and skills and are used to add new resources, including such assets as equipment and curriculum. Leading with *political* skills involves working to build productive relationships and galvanizing important political constituencies (Mehan, 2008). Mehan (2008) further shared that *cultural* leadership skills help engage educator’s values, belief systems, and norms, often about controversial topics (i.e., placement of teachers, the nature of intelligence and its distribution across race, ethnicity, class, and gender, as well as school sorting or testing practices). Trueba (1999) addresses the *technical*, the *political*, and the *cultural* leadership skills as well. The author began by stating that traditionally the art and science of teaching (students in general but more specifically Hispanic/Latino students) has focused on using methodological and mechanistic tools – *technical* skills – completely dislodged and divorced from the sociocultural and historical circumstances of students’ families and community (Trueba, 1999). Trueba (1999) describes this *technical* skills approach to teaching as the positivistic tradition in education that understands teaching as a precise scientific undertaking and that views teachers as *technicians* who implement predetermined and preselected skills and strategies. The author further added that these *technical* solutions assume that schools and teaching are *politically* neutral, ascribing responsibility of any necessary changes to students and

their families and therefore not the schools, teachers, and the educational system in general (Trueba, 1999). These erroneous assumptions, Trueba (1999) believed, freed teachers from critically analyzing exemplary and effective teaching approaches and pushed them towards the act of simply grabbing and latching onto *technical* solutions. Trueba (1999) asserted that educators and educational leaders needed to steer away from incorrect apolitical assumptions of educational reality and ventured steadfastly toward the due critical assessment of the learning environments in their appropriate *political* contexts. The author added that the challenge was to inculcate in educators a sophisticated understanding of the *political* nature of such environments (Trueba, 1999). Trueba (1999) then connected to the *cultural* skills in educational leadership by explaining that educational institutions in many ways mirrored the greater society in which those institutions existed, including our *culture*, values, and norms. He challenged educators to consider addressing the larger society's issues of asymmetrical power relationships among the various social and *cultural* strata which if not intentionally addressed in the classroom would replicate themselves there as well (Trueba, 1999). Trueba (1999) thus contended that *technical* expertise and mastery of content and methodology were insufficient to ensure reflective and effective instruction and that what is only with *political* clarity that educators could then create, adapt, and reform teaching strategies and methodologies to actively engage children in the learning process while at the same time respecting their *cultural* capital and challenging them.

The Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is a cross-pollination result of the intersection of the components, levels, and theoretical underpinnings of both the "ecologies of knowing" (Guajardo et al., 2013) and the leadership skills (Mehan, 2008; Trueba, 1999) previously discussed. In developing the theoretical framework, the researcher contends that the KL Model serves as a dual-dimension organizing and analysis tool that can be used to organize and analyze the

researcher's qualitative case study's one-on-one interview transcripts and experience. The researcher here further contends that the cross-pollination process occurs by overlaying a specific and unique leadership skill (Mehan, 2008; Trueba, 1999) onto a specific and unique "ecology of knowing" level (Guajardo et al., 2013) which then helps create a specific and unique "knowing to lead" framework component. When the three specific and unique leadership skills (Mehan, 2008; Trueba, 1999) were intersected or combined with the three specific and unique "ecology of knowing" levels (Guajardo et al., 2013), the results were nine specific and unique dual-dimension "knowing to lead" framework components. For example, overlaying or intersecting Mehan's (2008) and Trueba's (1999) *technical* skill onto Guajardo et al.'s (2013) *self* level "ecology of knowing" produces the dual-dimension *technical self* Knowing to Lead (KL) Model organizing and analyzing "knowing to lead" component. Thus, overlaying or intersecting Mehan's (2008) and Trueba's (1999) three specific and unique leadership skills onto Guajardo et al.'s (2013) three specific and unique "ecology of knowing" levels produces the following nine specific and unique dual-dimension Knowing to Lead (KL) Model organizing and analyzing "knowing to lead" components: 1) technical self; 2) political self; 3) cultural self; 4) technical organization; 5) political organization; 6) cultural organization; 7) technical community; 8) political community; and 9) cultural community. Each of the nine Knowing to Lead (KL) Model organizing and analyzing "knowing to lead" components is described in detail next.

Technical Self

The "technical self" component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is derived from the meaning and usage of the terms "technical" and "self." Conversations and experiences are made personal and relevant at the most micro of levels at this "self" level of knowing, as it is an opportunity for the individual to own their learning and their teaching through story telling

(Guajardo et al., 2013). The participant becomes the owner of the learning and the teaching through story telling by making this process personal, as it reframes the learning of the self and the collective and helps the participant develop the necessary agency to act on the knowledge (Guajardo et al., 2013). Additionally, the “technical” leadership skill is the “mechanistic” precise scientific undertaking that educators employ in implementing predetermined and preselected skills and strategies (Trueba, 1999). The “technical self” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is next described in the following paragraph.

The “technical self” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that focuses on how first the educational leader digs deeply within the self to get to discover intimately those specific technical skills that facilitate the leadership role that the leader owns and therefore exerts at will, and subsequently allows the leader to take technical action within the leader’s own personal space and realm in the leadership role. At this level, the leader leads the leader – and not the organization and not the community at large – to act within and about the self. It is at this “technical self” level that the leader agrees within the self to unpack the stories that make up the leader’s most inner self that point at how the leader is technically adept and savvy enough to use as the leadership role is executed. Because the leadership skill aspect of this “technical self” level is so focused on fixing things and addressing problems in a prescribed scientific mode, the leader uses the “technical self” knowing to lead aspect in machine-like fashion yet it connects to the stories that the leader’s life has experienced; the “technical self” thus combines the human aspect of the self with the mechanical aspect of the technical realm.

Political Self

The “political self” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is derived from the meaning and usage of the terms “political” and “self.” Again, as was stated previously,

conversations and experiences are made personal and relevant at the most micro of levels at this “self” level of knowing, as it is an opportunity for the individual to own their learning and their teaching through story telling (Guajardo et al., 2013). The participant becomes the owner of the learning and the teaching through story telling by making this process personal, as it reframes the learning of the self and the collective and helps the participant develop the necessary agency to act on the knowledge (Guajardo et al., 2013). The “political” leadership skills are those skills that involve working to build productive relationships and galvanizing important political constituencies (Mehan, 2008) which need to be done with clarity (Trueba, 1999). The “political self” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is next described in the following paragraph.

The “political self” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that gets at how the educational leader finds the stories deep within the self that intimate with clarity those important political skills about relationships that the leader has developed and can first use to establish and nurture within, with, and all about the leader. In essence, the “political self” allows the leader the space and forum to have positive agency within to know that the leader is operating affectively and cognitively in a constructive and productive way. More than a mere mental health and mental state issue about the leader’s mental state of being and inner psyche, the “political self” gives the leader the skills to know that all is well within relationship-wise to take the necessary self-action that the leader must first take before the leader can then lead the organization and community.

Cultural Self

The “cultural self” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is derived from the meaning and usage of the terms “cultural” and “self.” Again, as was stated previously,

conversations and experiences are made personal and relevant at the most micro of levels at this “self” level of knowing, as it is an opportunity for the individual to own their learning and their teaching through story telling (Guajardo et al., 2013). The participant becomes the owner of the learning and the teaching through story telling by making this process personal, as it reframes the learning of the self and the collective and helps the participant develop the necessary agency to act on the knowledge (Guajardo et al., 2013). The “cultural” leadership skills are those skills that help engage educator’s values, belief systems, and norms (Mehan, 2008). The “cultural self” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is next described in the following paragraph.

The “cultural self” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that focuses on how the educational leader identifies, celebrates, and builds upon the stories deep within the self that exemplify and further encourage the development of self-values, self-belief systems, and self-norms. It is at this “cultural self” level that leader finds the innermost motivation to take action; the leader takes action about the life of the leader because the action fits within the moral trajectory within the leader’s life course that the leader has set. The “cultural self” speaks to the leader in terms of taking action because it is the right thing to do for the leader – at this level, the leader is not thinking about nor acting upon issues that are necessarily about the organization or the community. The “cultural self” is the ethical compass within that leads the leader to take action about and for the leader’s own sake.

Technical Organization

The “technical organization” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is derived from the meaning and usage of the terms “technical” and “organization.” The “organization” level of knowing is the critical element within this social context in which we develop our values, habits, and views of the world, and it is this space allows the learning and leading to be

couched within participants, families, schools, non-profit organization and/or their neighborhoods (Guajardo et al., 2013). As was shared earlier, the “technical” leadership skill is the “mechanistic” precise scientific undertaking that educators employ in implementing predetermined and preselected skills and strategies (Trueba, 1999). The “technical organization” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is next described in the following paragraph.

The “technical organization” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that allows the leader the knowledge, platform, and permission to take precise, prescribed, and predetermined action with the leader’s role within the organization in addressing issues and problems that need to be addressed. The leader is able to act in a leadership role within the organization in this “technical organization” level because the leader has developed the technical ability – the “how-to” capacity – to work within organizations through practical experiences within organizations, and understands that organizations need to be technically adroit at finding and implementing solutions. At this “technical organization” level of knowing to lead (Ramirez, 2013), the leader is fully cognizant that there are agreed-to precise, prescribed, and predetermined technical actions and solutions within the organization as well as from other organizations outside the leader’s own organization that may either facilitate or further complicate the efforts which the leader and the leader’s own organization take in addressing issues and problems. In the case of this particular qualitative case study, those organizations may include, but may not necessarily be limited to, the following: the district’s school board; the district’s central office structures; the district’s school organization; the Texas Education Agency (TEA); the Texas State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC); the U.S. Department of Education; and, the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). The leader therefore understands that the leader’s technical impact and influence upon the organization through the

leader's actions is very contingent upon the shared technical abilities and technical collective wills that any and all organizations connected to the leader's own organization allow. At this the "technical organization" level, the leader, in many ways, *does not* take technical action alone and independently, because the leader *cannot* act alone and independent of others.

Political Organization

The "political organization" component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is derived from the meaning and usage of the terms "political" and "organization." As was shared earlier, the "organization" level of knowing is the critical element within this social context in which we develop our values, habits, and views of the world, and it is this space allows the learning and leading to be couched within participants, families, schools, non-profit organization and/or their neighborhoods (Guajardo et al., 2013). As was also shared earlier, the "political" leadership skills are those skills that involve working to build productive relationships and galvanizing important political constituencies (Mehan, 2008) which need to be done with clarity (Trueba, 1999). The "political organization" component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is next described in the following paragraph.

The "political organization" component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that allows the leader to use any and all relationships the leader had made, developed, and cultivated both within and outside the leader's immediate organization to harness both human and non-human resources to lead the organization as effectively and efficiently within the leader's role in the organization. The scope of both the platform within which the leader leads and the level at which the leader makes impact and has influence is greater exponentially than when the leader leads at the "political self" level because the amount of human capital involved increases from leading and thus influencing one – the self – to leading and thus influencing many

within and outside the immediate organization. It is at this the “political organization” level that the leader is able to use the professional relationships the leader has fostered due in large part to being a leader within the organization to lead, influence, and thereby continue to increase the leader’s political capital; the more the leader leads at the “political organization” level, the more the leader will be able to potentially lead because of the professional relationships that will continue to grow and develop.

Cultural Organization

The “cultural organization” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is derived from the meaning and usage of the terms “cultural” and “organization.” Again, as was shared earlier, the *organization* level of knowing is the critical element within this social context in which we develop our values, habits, and views of the world, and it is this space allows the learning and leading to be couched within participants, families, schools, non-profit organization and/or their neighborhoods (Guajardo et al., 2013). Again, as was discussed earlier, the “cultural” leadership skills are those skills that help engage educator’s values, belief systems, and norms (Mehan, 2008). The “cultural organization” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is next described in the following paragraph.

The “cultural organization” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is the level at which the leader’s leadership actions are helping develop and foster the organization’s values, belief systems, and norms. The leader working at this the “cultural organization” level of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model has moved beyond and outside the moral self in taking action in the organization. The leader is also moving beyond and outside the scope of mere and pure technical and political activity within the organization in which the leader leads. When the leader is able and willing to work at the “cultural organization” level, the scope of what and how the

leader influences the organization takes on such a public persona that the leader's work will not go unnoticed. Other leaders within and outside the leader's organization, and other organizations, will take notice of the leader's "cultural organization" actions; thus, when the leader is able and willing to work at the "cultural organization" level of leading, the leader's moral influence is potentially manifest in multiple organizational circles.

Technical Community

The "technical community" component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is derived from the meaning and usage of the terms "technical" and "community." Guajardo et al. (2013) stated that as a participatory member of the "community", the educational leader must learn the skills, build the awareness, and plan the actions to change the behaviors and narratives from an outdated political practice grounded and informed by a zero-sum concept, to a new politic informed by caring about and sustaining the quality of life for every child and citizen in our communities. As was shared earlier, the "technical" leadership skill is the "mechanistic" precise scientific undertaking that educators employ in implementing predetermined and preselected skills and strategies (Trueba, 1999). The "technical community" component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is next described in the following paragraph.

The "technical community" component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that allows the leader to practice those technical skills in helping the community at large address issues that it faces. As in the self and organization realms, the technical aspect of this leadership aspect within this specific realm – the community – is also defined and informed by primarily those mechanical strategic actions void of the relational connections that working at the self and organization levels entails. In this "technical community" aspect of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model the leader leads the community for the sake of simply solving problems and

addressing issues and not necessarily building the self or the organization through relationship and stories of interconnectedness.

Political Community

The “political community” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is derived from the meaning and usage of the terms “political” and “community.” As was shared earlier, Guajardo et al. (2013) stated that as a participatory member of the *community*, the educational leader must learn the skills, build the awareness, and plan the actions to change the behaviors and narratives from an outdated political practice grounded and informed by a zero-sum concept, to a new politic informed by caring about and sustaining the quality of life for every child and citizen in our communities. As was also discussed earlier, the “political” leadership skills are those skills that involve working to build productive relationships and galvanizing important political constituencies (Mehan, 2008) which need to be done with clarity (Trueba, 1999). The “political community” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is next described in the following paragraph.

The “political community” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that allows the leader to lead while building relationships at the community level at the realm beyond the self and beyond the organization, all with the goal of harnessing the resources needed to effect change. At the “political community” level of leadership, the leader is intentionally stepping outside the boundaries that encapsulate the leader’s influence only upon building stories and relationships at the self and at the organization levels. As a community builder, the “political community” leader realizes that the power to “get things” done at the community level rely heavily upon the leader’s skills and prowess to tap into the politic that gives the community its special identity.

Cultural Community

The “cultural community” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is derived from the meaning and usage of the terms “cultural” and “community.” As discussed, Guajardo et al. (2013) stated that as a participatory member of the “community,” the educational leader must learn the skills, build the awareness, and plan the actions to change the behaviors and narratives from an outdated political practice grounded and informed by a zero-sum concept, to a new politic informed by caring about and sustaining the quality of life for every child and citizen in our communities. As shared earlier, the “cultural” leadership skills are those skills that help engage educator’s values, belief systems, and norms (Mehan, 2008). The “political community” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is next described in the following paragraph.

The “cultural community” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is the level at which the leader is engaging in leadership actions that help define and create the community’s unique values, belief systems, and norms. At “cultural community” level, the leader no longer acts to help create and develop values, belief systems, and norms within the leader or within the leader’s immediate organization. The leader is now operating as a community builder of ethics and morality, helping define the ways in which the community establishes its rules and regulations on how to create a community conscience. Actions taken by the leader are not mere technical fixes, nor are they for pure political and relationship gain. Similarly, actions taken by the leader are also not about developing only the self or the immediate organization. In many ways, in order for the leader to act effectively and efficiently at the “cultural community” level, the leader *has to be* technically savvy and politically sound, and the leader *has to* understand the leader’s own stories of the self and be able to wield political muster at will as well – and the leader must do all these all at once.

Figure 2 lists each of the nine Knowing to Lead (KL) Model organizing and analyzing “knowing to lead” components along with a short, succinct definition of each component. These definitions in *Figure 2* are based on the information in each of the previous sections. The researcher provides this figure in order to capture in one handy space all the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model organizing and analyzing “knowing to lead” components with their working definitions.

Knowing to Lead (KL) Component	Definition
technical self	leader uses technical skills within personal space; combines human aspect of the self with the mechanical aspect of the technical realm
political self	leader uses positive agency within; leader operates affectively and cognitively in constructive and productive way; all is well within relationship-wise
cultural self	leader develops values, beliefs, and norms at the self level; sets leader’s moral trajectory; ethical compass within the leader
technical organization	leader uses technical skills at the organization level; technical leadership at organization level often contingent on shared, collective technical abilities and wills from other leaders and organizations
political organization	leader uses relationships to negotiate space to lead the organization; leader uses politics to harness human and non-human resources with which to lead; uses and grows professional and personal relationships
cultural organization	leader helps develop values, beliefs, and norms at the organization level; leader moves outside the moral and ethical self to influence the organization’s culture
technical community	leader uses technical skills at the community level to solve community problems and address community issues
political community	leader uses relationships to help build community; leader harnesses human and non-human resources to negotiate political space at community level
cultural community	leader develops values, beliefs, and norms at the community level; leader moves beyond the moral and ethical self and organization level to influence the community’s culture

Figure 2: Knowing to Lead (KL) Model Components and Definitions

Each of these nine specific and unique dual-dimension Knowing to Lead (KL) Model organizing and analyzing “knowing to lead” components were used to initially organize and subsequently analyze the researcher’s qualitative case study’s one-on-one interview transcripts, thus producing themes and patterns which eventually became part of the research study’s data analysis in Chapter V (DATA ANALYSIS) and finally led to the research study’s findings and recommendations in Chapter VI (FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS).

Rather than opting to only use either the Guajardo et al. (2013) “ecologies of knowing” model, or only use the Trueba (1999) and Mehan (2008) leadership skills model, the researcher chose to combine both previously developed and published frameworks in developing the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model developed and published here in order to develop a multi-layered, dual-dimension deeper, richer analysis of the data. This process allowed the researcher to reach “thick description” in this qualitative research study that Geertz (1973) wrote about in his discussion on qualitative research design. The researcher contended that it was only by analyzing the entire and complete case study qualitative research study’s one-on-one interview experience employing the nine “knowing to lead” components encompassed by the multi-layered dual-dimension Knowing to Lead (KL) Model that a thorough, rich, “thick description” emerged, which then led to the research study’s subsequent findings and ultimate recommendations. The entire and complete case study qualitative research study’s one-on-one interview experience was analyzed using the theoretical framework – the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model – as an analysis lens. The following aspects were analyzed: 1) the physical experience of sitting with the participants to conduct each one-on-one interview while carefully observing and taking detailed notes; 2) listening to the participants discuss their lived experiences that emerged from the detailed discussions that the one-on-one semi-structured interview protocol surfaced; 3)

subsequently re-listening to the participants' detailed answers on multiple opportunities to continue to listen for detailed responses and important nuances in the words chosen and the vocal inflections and intonations used in offering answers via the stories told; 4) carefully and accurately transcribing the more than twelve hours of digital audio recordings that the one-on-one interviews yielded; 5) engaging in "member checking" which allowed each participant opportunity to review the transcription for accuracy, feedback, further details, and clarifications; and, 6) the continuous, on-going personal reflexive thinking opportunity the researcher was afforded in the research study's one-on-one interview process in order to move the researcher from a totally observer stance to that of a participant observer as the study progressed from inception to finality.

The Guajardo et al. (2013) "ecologies of knowing" model would have been an excellent singular theoretical model to use as the only lens for the research study's data analysis. The three levels – the *self*, the *organization*, and the *community* – give appropriate and adequate data analysis depth and breadth of the one-on-one interview process called for in this study. Using the Guajardo et al. (2013) "ecologies of knowing" theoretical framework model by itself would have allowed the researcher to focus on the levels of knowing – the *self*, the *organization*, and the *community*. The participants' responses were identified as those being endemic, foundational and deeply meaningful in how their own personal educational leadership was shaped and how that educational leadership, in turn, helped shape the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in their district and school. Similarly, the Trueba (1999) and Mehan (2008) leadership skills model would have also been an excellent singular theoretical model to use as the only lens for the research study's data analysis. The three leadership skills – the *technical*, the *political*, and the *cultural* – gave appropriate and adequate

data analysis depth and breadth of the one-on-one interview process called for in this study. Using the Trueba (1999) and Mehan (2008) leadership skills theoretical framework model by itself would have allowed the researcher to focus on the leadership skills – the *technical*, the *political*, and the *cultural*. The participants’ responses were identified as those being also endemic, foundational and deeply meaningful in how their own personal educational leadership skills were shaped and how those educational leadership skills, in turn, helped shape the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in their district and school.

Either model – the levels of knowing model (Guajardo et al., 2013) or the leadership skills model (Trueba, 1999; Mehan, 2008) – would have provided appropriate and adequate data analysis and subsequently yielded accurate findings and significant recommendations. The cross-pollination dual-dimension outcome theoretical framework model resulting in the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model provides two perspective lenses at once – rather than a singular mono-perspective – through which to analyze the gathered data. Rather than create a winner-take-all competition or argument over which one model’s components – the “levels of knowing” (Guajardo et al., 2013) versus the leadership skills (Trueba, 1999; Mehan, 2008) – would best serve the research study’s purpose here, the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model provides a better winner-take-all scenario by cross-pollinating both models, combining the two models’ foci and expanding the research study’s analysis by adding depth and breadth.

Research Questions

The overarching research question was: How and to what degree does educational leadership shape the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas? The research sub-questions were the following.

1. How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifest itself at the school and classroom levels?
2. How does school leadership shape the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum?
3. How does the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translate into classroom practice?

Site and Participant Selection

The school district site and its corresponding middle school and high school level leadership participants and classroom teachers were selected from the area located along the border lands adjacent to Mexico along the Rio Grande River in South Texas. This regional area is known as the Rio Grande Valley.

The site was chosen based on the gender and years of experience of the superintendent, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, the two principals, and the four teachers that participated in the research. Table 1 delineates how the criteria for choosing the site and participants for this research study were employed.

Table 1

Sampling Strategies for District

Sampling Strategies for District			
Male Superintendent			
Female Assistant Superintendent			
Female Principal High School		Male Principal Middle School	
Less than five years		Six years or more	
Teachers		Teachers	
One male teacher	One female teacher	One male teacher	One female teacher
Less than five years	Six years or more	Six years or more	Less than five years

The criteria contained in Table 1 are described in narrative form here. The first selection criterion was the gender of the superintendent for the district; the district had a male superintendent. Once the participating district was selected based on the male gender of the superintendent, the next selection criterion was the gender of the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction; the district had a female assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction. The next selection criteria were the gender and years of experience of the principals at the district. The district had one female high school principal with less than five years of experience and a male middle school principal with six years or more of experience. The last selection criteria for participants were the gender and years of experience of the participating

teachers. The high school had one male teacher with less than five years of experience, and a female teacher with six years or more of experience. The district middle school had one male teacher with six years or more of experience, and a female teacher with less than five years of experience.

The purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013) criteria for the selection of the participant school district was based on those who have responsibilities for making and implementing decisions about social studies curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. The most accessible (Creswell, 2013) cases from the eligible participants at all districts and campuses were the ones selected by the researcher to participate in the research study. Criteria set in Table 1 were used to select the participating district, and its corresponding superintendent, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, principals, and teachers.

The participant selection criteria set forth in the previous paragraphs (namely job description, gender, and years of experience) were used in making the final participant selections. In securing each participant's commitment and agreement to participate in the research study, the researcher used the process and procedures delineated in the following section that describes the process of gaining access. Part of the site and participant selection process included preparing and issuing an assurance to all potential participants that any material, data, and information that they would provide as a result of their participation in the research study would be protected for confidentiality. This would be done by creating anonymity of any and all names and labels that could potentially serve as proof-positive identifying markers of individuals, people, places, and other things associated with the research study. This anonymity was created by implementing a process where actual names of individuals, people, places, and other things associated with the research study (including the sites and participants)

would be replaced by pseudonyms. The following list provides the initial pseudonyms for the district, schools, and participants associated with the research study's site and participant selection which subsequently appears throughout the study:

La Frontera ISD was used as the name for the Rio Grande Valley independent school district where the research study was conducted; Dr. Alvaro Arnolando was used as the name for the male superintendent of schools; Bianca Benitez was the name used for the female assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction; Tuco Benedicto High School was used as the name for the high school where the research study was conducted; Candi Cardenas was used as the name for the female high school principal; Diego Duarte was used as the name for the male high school teacher; Eliana Enriquez was used as the name for the female high school teacher; Los Veteranos Middle School was used as the name for the middle school where the research study was conducted; Fortunato Franco is the name that was used for the male middle school principal; Gracielo Gonzalez was used as the name for the male middle school teacher; and, Herlinda Hernandez was used as the name for the female middle school teacher.

The researcher made every effort to assure that no real names were used in the process of writing the dissertation. If any of the pseudonyms used by the researcher bear any resemblance to real names of actual people living or dead, such an occurrence is purely coincidental. Additional pseudonyms and brief descriptions will be provided as specific individuals, people, places, and other things associated with the research study emerge in the dissertation. Please see Table 2 Pseudonyms for Participants for a table view of the information contained in this paragraph that identifies and describes the pseudonyms that the researcher used in the research study.

Table 2

Pseudonyms for Participants

Pseudonyms for Participants			
Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo = Male Superintendent of Schools			
Bianca Benitez = Female Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction			
Candi Cardenas = Female Principal High School		Fortunato Franco = Male Principal Middle School	
Teachers		Teachers	
Diego Duarte = One male teacher	Eliana Enriquez = One female teacher	Gracielo Gonzalez = One male teacher	Herlinda Hernandez = One female teacher

Gaining Access

Creswell (2013) explained that qualitative research involves a series of important necessary steps connected to gaining access. The first step is to study a research site and get access permission that will facilitate the easy collection of data (Creswell, 2013). The second step is to obtain approval from university institutional review boards (IRBs) (Creswell, 2013). The researcher sought and received approval from the IRB at this university, the University of Texas-Pan American, to conduct this research study. The third step is to find individuals at the

research sites that can then help get access permission to the research site and facilitate in the data collection (Creswell, 2013). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) referred to these individuals as “gatekeepers” who can serve as the initial contact for the researcher who can lead the researcher to other participants. The gatekeepers the researcher contacted were district superintendents at the selected potential sites from the 37 school districts and several additional charter schools/districts in the Region One Education Service Center area in order to secure permission from them to conduct the study at their site (district); at the same time, the researcher also asked the potential superintendent participants to help identify the district-level personnel most directly responsible for making and implementing decisions about social studies curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices, so that the researcher could then prepare to get permission to ask those district-level personnel at the potential participant sites to participate in the research study.

On September 5, 2012, the day after the researcher successfully defended his dissertation research study proposal, the researcher made the final site selection decision to officially invite the La Frontera Independent School District to become the official participant district in the research study; therefore, the researcher contacted Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo (the male superintendent of schools at La Frontera ISD) to announce the final decision to Dr. Arnoldo and to also ask if Dr. Arnoldo could re-verify that he could commit to allowing La Frontera ISD to participate in the research study. Dr. Arnoldo verified that yes, as superintendent of schools at La Frontera ISD he could and would commit La Frontera ISD to participate in the research study. The researcher then briefly discussed with Dr. Arnoldo the next step that would occur in the research study process, namely that the researcher would submit the research study proposal to the UTPA Institutional Review Board (IRB) for IRB-approval; this hurdle would have to be navigated

before any of the research study's research activities could commence at La Frontera ISD. The researcher also mentioned to Dr. Arnoldo that as soon as IRB-approval was granted his input would in making decisions about selecting both the campus sites and identifying the campus-level personnel most directly responsible for making and implementing decisions about the social studies curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices at those schools. The researcher could then also get permission to ask them to participate in the research study. Dr. Arnoldo prepared, signed, and forwarded a formal letter on La Frontera ISD letterhead stating that La Frontera ISD agreed to participate in the research study; the letter initially became part of the IRB application packet, and was subsequently used as the official "gaining access" entry document used both at the district and school level.

On September 10, 2012, the researcher submitted his IRB proposal to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research at the University of Texas-Pan American. The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research at the University of Texas-Pan American officially approved the research study on October 18, 2012. The researcher called Dr. Arnoldo at La Frontera ISD on October 18, 2012, to let him know that the research study had been approved. Dr. Arnoldo expressed eagerness to get the research study going at La Frontera ISD, and asked the researcher if he could please go by his office at the La Frontera ISD central office administration building that that same afternoon if possible. The researcher met with Dr. Arnoldo at 2:00 PM on October 18, 2012, to discuss any and all "gaining access" issues that still needed to be resolved as of that date. As the meeting began, Dr. Arnoldo stated that the researcher should first contact Ms. Bianca Benitez, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction to officially invite her to participate in the study. Dr. Arnoldo said that he was confident that Ms. Benitez would agree to participate. Dr.

Arnoldo then shared his ideas on several possibilities for the researcher to consider in selecting the high school principal and the middle school principal that the researcher could approach to become participants in the research study. After discussing the backgrounds of all the potential school principal candidates Dr. Arnoldo identified, the researcher made his selection. Dr. Arnoldo gave suggestions on how the high school principal and the middle school principal at the selected schools be approached when asking them to consider participating in the research study. Dr. Arnoldo suggested that the researcher simply show up at each school (Tuco Benedicto High School and Los Veteranos Middle School) and permission to see the principal. Dr. Arnoldo said that the researcher should give a copy of the letter from Dr. Arnoldo that served as the official “gaining access” document and mention that their schools had been selected as the potential school research sites. The researcher thanked Dr. Arnoldo for his time and the insight and direction he provided in assisting the researcher in planning the next steps.

The researcher left Dr. Arnoldo’s office and immediately called Ms. Benitez to give her a brief summary of the research study, and to officially invite her to participate in her capacity as the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at La Frontera ISD. Ms. Benitez agreed to participate in the study. The researcher was eager to start immediately since it was already late-October by then, and the researcher knew that with the upcoming holiday season approaching opportunities to set aside time for matters extraneous to the daily operations at the school district – such as research being conducted at the district and schools – would become more and more difficult with each passing day. Ms. Benitez agreed and asked the researcher to please first schedule the one-on-one interviews with the principals and teachers at the schools, and then call her to establish an appointment for her one-on-one interview. The researcher concurred and proceeded to make plans to contact each of the two school principals, Ms. Candi

Cardenas at Tuco Benedicto High School and Mr. Fortunato Franco at Los Veteranos Middle School. The researcher called Ms. Cardenas at Tuco Benedicto High School and Mr. Franco at Los Veteranos Middle School that same afternoon. Both Ms. Cardenas at Tuco Benedicto High School and Mr. Franco at Los Veteranos Middle School agreed to become participants in the research study. Mr. Franco set his one-on-one interview for the next day, Friday, October 19, 2012, while Ms. Cardenas set hers for the following Tuesday, October 23, 2012.

The researcher gained access at each school – Tuco Benedicto High School and Los Veteranos Middle School – on the two dates established for interviews for the principals: Mr. Franco from Los Veteranos Middle School on Friday October 19, 2012, and Ms. Cardenas from Tuco Benedicto High School on Tuesday, October 23, 2012. The interviews (which are detailed in the dissertation’s data presentation and analysis chapter, Chapter IV) took place as scheduled. When each interview concluded, each principal arranged for the researcher to gain access to the two potential teacher participants at each respective school. Mr. Franco, principal at Los Veteranos Middle School, shared a list of potential social studies teachers with the researcher. After carefully studying the teacher roster and looking at gender and years of experience, the researcher made the necessary decisions and approached Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez first and Ms. Herlinda Hernandez subsequently about participating in the research study. Both Mr. Gonzalez and Ms. Hernandez agreed to participate in the research study, and each one-on-one interview was set. Similarly, Ms. Cardenas discussed a roster of her Tuco Benedicto High School social studies teachers when her one-on-one interview concluded. The researcher analyzed the list carefully, focusing on gender and the years of experience, and selected Mr. Duarte and Ms. Enriquez as the potential teacher participants at Tuco Benedicto High School to approach to ask to consider participating in the research study. Both Mr. Duarte and Ms. Enriquez assented, and

their one-on-one interviews were scheduled. In general, this was the basic “gaining access” process that the researcher used.

Instrumentation

The data collection process at La Frontera ISD consisted of one-on-one semi-structured qualitative interviews. Creswell (2012) stated that a qualitative interview occurs when the researcher asks one or more participants general, open-ended questions and records their answers. Additionally, Creswell (2012) shared that in qualitative research, the researcher asks open-ended questions so that participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or by past research findings. Creswell (2012) clarified that the one-on-one interview is a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time. He further added that one-on-one interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, who are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably (Creswell, 2012). The researcher found that Dr. Arnoldo the district superintendent, Ms. Bianca Benitez the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, the principals Ms. Cardenas and Mr. Franco, and the classroom teachers Mr. Duarte, Ms. Enriquez, Mr. Gonzalez, and Ms. Hernandez were unhesitant, articulate, and comfortable interviewees in the one-on-one interview setting in which they each participated.

Appendices A, B, C, and D (See Appendix A – Interview Protocol for Superintendent, Appendix B – Interview Protocol for Assistant Superintendent, Appendix C – Interview Protocol for Principals, and Appendix D – Interview Protocol for Teachers) are the interview protocols that were established and employed for the one-on-one interviews. These instruments (also described briefly in this section) were used because their designs appropriately matched the purpose of the qualitative method of case study the researcher used. Interviews facilitate the

researcher in reaching areas of reality otherwise inaccessible, such as people's experiences and attitudes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The interview also serves as a convenient method of overcoming space and time (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Additionally, past events and faraway experiences can be studied by interviewing participants who partook in them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). When conducting the one-on-one interviews with all participants, the researcher made annotated, detailed field notes using the five senses, paying attention to what was said, as well as how it was said. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with participants involved in the study. The instruments (briefly described next) used in the one-on-one interviews included exploratory, investigative open-ended questions that helped elicit details about issues, assumptions, and beliefs associated with making and implementing decisions about culturally relevant social studies curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices at the district, campus, and classroom levels.

In order to create consistency in conducting the one-on-one interviews, the researcher developed a set of interview protocols that were employed in conducting all the one-on-one interviews. Four separate interview protocols were established based on the job position the participant held: a first protocol was developed for the superintendent of schools (see Appendix A); a second protocol was developed for the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction and instruction (see Appendix B); a third protocol was developed for the principals (see Appendix C); and, a fourth protocol was developed for the teachers (see Appendix D). To establish the consistency between and among the four separate interview protocols for research study participants from the four separate and distinct job positions (superintendent, assistant superintendent, principals, and teachers), the researcher took care to ensure that the topics, themes, and foci that were explored via the interview protocols were common to all four

protocols. Each of the following topics, themes, and foci were explored in all four separate protocols that were used to interview the superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal, and teacher participants: 1) participant personal and educational background; 2) participant understanding and perception of *culturally relevant curriculum*; 3) *curriculum policy* conversations participant has had with people above and below her/him in the district's organizational chart; 4) conversations about *culturally relevant curriculum* participant has had with people above and below her/him in the district's organizational chart and with students, parents, and community members; and, 5) participant understanding and perception of the research study's specific *culturally relevant curriculum* policy focus, the seventeen words – implementing the district's educational program by using “*resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community.*” While the researcher allowed each one-on-one interview to proceed in an organic fashion and with its own natural flow within the established interview protocol, the researcher used the framework and structure of the protocol itself as a set of parameters to guide the framing of the interview process. This allowed for an important combination of both consistent, common topics, themes, and foci to be explored and rich, “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) details to emerge.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures using the one-on-one interview instruments previously discussed are described in further detail here. Informed consent was sought from all potential participants in the study prior to any instrument being administered in the data collection phase of the study. The informed consent was secured using a form developed and approved by both IRB and the University of Texas-Pan American. Subsequently, the researcher used a qualitative

interview as the instrument with which to obtain and collect data (Creswell, 2012). As was discussed in the sections on site and participant selection and on gaining access, a one-on-one interview was scheduled with each participating district and school leader responsible for making and implementing decisions about Social Studies curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. These district and school leaders were the district superintendent, the district assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and the school principals. Each interview was scheduled and subsequently took place at each participant's work site at a mutually agreed upon to date and time, and lasted for approximately one hour and fifteen minutes on average; the shortest interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, and the longest interview lasted one hour and thirty minutes. The interviews were digitally audio-recorded using a Zoom 2 audio recorder; these audio-recordings of the one-on-one interviews were then transcribed prior to being analyzed. Based on the data these initial one-on-one interviews yielded, no additional one-on-one interviews were developed, scheduled, and conducted. One-on-one interviews were also conducted with classroom teachers participating in the study (See Appendix D – Interview Protocol for Teachers). Again, based on the data these initial one-on-one interviews yielded, no additional one-on-one interviews with the classroom teachers were developed, scheduled, or conducted. As was previously mentioned, all one-on-one interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed prior to the analysis stage in the process.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis procedures that were used to analyze the one-on-one interview transcripts are described in this section. In order to help develop a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates a culturally relevant social studies curriculum in school districts in Texas, the researcher used the

data analysis procedures described by Creswell (2012) in analyzing the data collected in the research study. The researcher followed these six key procedures in the process of analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data that the research study yielded: 1) preparing and organizing the data for analysis; 2) exploring and coding the data; 3) coding to build descriptions and themes; 4) representing and reporting qualitative findings; 5) interpreting the findings; and, 6) validating the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2012). As Creswell (2012) described, qualitative research has these important features: it is inductive in form (going from particular and detailed data to general codes and themes); it involves the process of simultaneously analyzing while collecting data; the phases are iterative (meaning the researcher cycles back and forth between data collection and analysis); the qualitative researcher analyzes the data by reading it several times (developing a deeper analysis and understanding each time); and, qualitative research is interpretive research (meaning that the researcher makes a personal assessment as to a description that fits the situation or themes that capture the major categories of information).

The first step the researcher used in analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data that the research study yielded was that of “preparing and organizing the data for analysis” (Creswell, 2012). As the Methodology section described, the researcher gathered data from the one-on-one semi-structured interviews with Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo the superintendent, Ms. Bianca Benitez the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, Ms. Candi Cardenas a high school principal, Mr. Fortunato Franco a middle school principal, two high school teachers Ms. Eliana Enriquez and Mr. Diego Duarte, and two middle school teachers Ms. Herlinda Hernandez and Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez at La Frontera Independent School District. Because qualitative research both involves the process of simultaneously analyzing while collecting data and contains phases that are iterative (meaning the researcher cycles back and forth between data collection and

analysis) (Creswell, 2012), the researcher realized very early in the research process that this first step in analyzing the data – namely that of “preparing and organizing the data for analysis” (Creswell, 2012) – was taking place simultaneously with the very initial data gathering and collection phase.

As the very first interview was taking place – that of Los Veteranos Middle School Principal Mr. Fortunato Franco on October 19, 2012 – the researcher took intentional steps to ensure from the onset he was already preparing and organizing the data for analysis by partaking in the following types of activities. The researcher made sure that he was prepared to take handwritten notes of observations and key points to remember and include later when the time to prepare and organize the data arrived. The researcher made sure that the Zoom 2 Handy Recorder digital recording device was working properly and had a fresh set of batteries, *before* arriving for the first interview, thus preparing and organizing the data gathering effort for success. The researcher carefully set important identifying data point markers during the interview with Mr. Franco (dates, years, background information, etc.) so that the researcher could listen for those key data point markers later when the digital recordings were being transcribed. When the time came for the researcher to begin to actually transcribe the digital recordings of the one-on-one interviews, the researcher opted to conduct the transcription process in the same order that the interviews occurred. This was done in order to establish the same transcription-occurrence frame of reference sequence that would coincide with the initial interview-occurrence frame of reference sequence, and it proved to be a valuable strategy that helped the researcher prepare and organize the data for analysis. The researcher investigated various tools and methods to possibly use in transcribing the digital recordings of the one-on-one interviews, including the Dragon Naturally Speaking 12.0 digital software. In the end, after

experimenting with the Dragon Naturally Speaking 12.0 digital software and with simply doing it manually on a computer using the Windows Media Player to play the “wav” digital file and start-and-stop it with the media player’s on, off, and pause buttons, the researcher opted to conduct the transcription process using the Windows Media Player. The researcher concluded the transcription process on January 21, 2013. The researcher then reached out to each of the eight research study participants to allow them a “member check” opportunity, allowing them to review the transcript of their own interview in case they wanted to clarify any portion of the transcribed interview. The interview transcription proved to be the culmination of the first step the researcher used in analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data that the research study yielded, namely that of “preparing and organizing the data for analysis” (Creswell, 2012). Once the data was in audio, handwritten, and transcription formats, the researcher was prepared to engage in the second step – “exploring and coding the data” (Creswell, 2012).

The second step the researcher used in analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data that the research study yielded was that of “exploring and coding the data” (Creswell, 2012). The researcher first explored the data by: obtaining a general sense of the data in re-listening to the digital recordings and re-reading the two hundred twelve pages of transcription data several times; writing down informal “mental” notes and memos on both electronic (Word document) and hard copy format; spending some “thinking time” to brainstorm about the organization of the data; and, considering whether additional data were needed. After an initial exploration of the data, the researcher began to engage in the coding process that involved several steps. The first step in coding the data was to once again *initially* read through all the data – *initially* is used here only in the sense that the researcher engaged the data anew (almost as if for the first time) with a specific task and purpose in mind, namely to begin to allow the data to “speak” to the researcher,

pointing things out to the researcher, telling the researcher about some of the important signposts to pay close attention to along the way. This first step in coding the data of initially re-reading through the data included all two hundred twelve pages of transcription data and all the additional pages of observations and reflections; thus, this stage encompassed an amount that can be described as “many pages of text.” The researcher then moved to the next portion of the coding process, dividing the text into segments of information. This portion of the coding phase called for the researcher to first determine the coding frame (whether sentence, paragraph, or phrase) and then determine what the participant was saying in the coding frame. The researcher opted to use phrases in the coding frame, and thus began to develop those codes by re-reading the transcripts, one by one, and beginning to identify phrase segments of data that stood out and called for a code. The researcher used the participants’ own words, *in vivo* coding, in developing the codes and kept this initial coding process to a minimum, practicing “lean coding” as opposed to “over-coding.” The researcher sought to develop no more than forty codes in this initial coding phase of the process. After labeling phrases of information with corresponding codes and making additional comments on the margins as needed, the researcher next re-read these first established codes and corresponding segments of text phrases and began to reduce the codes. In this phase the researcher targeted reducing the approximately forty codes to no more than twenty codes. The researcher did this code reduction by combining codes that overlapped with each other or were redundant because two codes were used for the same idea. This process of code reduction thus prepared the researcher for the third step used in analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data that the research study yielded, namely that of “coding to build descriptions and themes” (Creswell, 2012).

The third step the researcher used in analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data that the research study yielded was that of “coding to build descriptions and themes” (Creswell, 2012). The first thing the researcher did in this step was to begin to create themes – broad categories of information – by grouping codes together, thus beginning to collapse codes into themes. The researcher sought to create broad themes; these broad themes described such specifics as settings discussed in participants’ responses, what had occurred or transpired according to the responses the participants offered, or certain feelings or values that participants pointed out in their responses. These broad themes also allowed the researcher to begin to build a narrative description of the story that the data was telling. This narrative description that emanated from the codes collapsed into themes formed the beginning of the findings in the research study; however, the research study’s qualitative findings were firmly identified and thus represented and reported in the following next step.

The fourth step the researcher used in analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data that the research study yielded was that of representing and reporting qualitative findings (Creswell, 2012). The researcher sought to review all the data and analysis that had transpired to this point in the research study in order to ascertain and subsequently report and represent the findings. In order to report the findings in as thorough and accurate a method as possible, the researcher engaged in the following types of reporting: described the setting in detail when the setting was particularly important and essential to the findings; identified and discussed the most significant themes, including multiple perspectives, useful dialog, metaphors, and analogies when appropriate; narrated descriptively and extensively to produce “thick description” (Geertz, 1973); and, made the written findings narrative as realistic as possible, not steering away from potential controversy by intentionally including any noted tensions and contradictions. The researcher

chose to use narration – the power of the written word – to represent the greater portion of the research study’s findings, opting to use visuals, tables, and charts in a few instances when the data called for it. Because the data come in the form of words, the researcher knew that the findings and their representations would also naturally come in the same form of words. Once the findings were narrated and represented, the researcher moved to the fifth step used in analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data that the research study yielded, namely that of “interpreting the findings” (Creswell, 2012).

The fifth step the researcher used in analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data that the research study yielded was that of “interpreting the findings” (Creswell, 2012). The researcher in essence “stepped back” from the research data and analysis, and asked what all the data and its analysis meant. In stepping away momentarily from the data and the analysis narrative that the research had developed, the research was able to do the following activities: the researcher gave on-going personal reflection based on the researcher’s own history and experiences; the researcher was able to re-read the literature that had been reviewed and compare the researcher’s findings with that in the literature that had been reviewed; the researcher summarized “in a general sense” what had been uncovered; and, the researcher raised potential limitations in the study, made suggestions for future research, and discussed practical applications for the findings from the research study. This led the researcher to the sixth and final step used in analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data that the research study yielded, namely that of “validating the accuracy of the findings” (Creswell, 2012).

The sixth and final step the researcher used in analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data that the research study yielded was that of “validating the accuracy of the findings” (Creswell, 2012). The researcher provided this important last step in this portion of the research

study by triangulating the data and the findings. This was done by cross-referencing across the different sets of data, primarily the different interviews with the different participants. This section on data analysis procedures described the types of activities and strategies that the researcher employed in the process of analyzing the data. While the researcher briefly detailed in general how that data analysis occurred in the process in this section, the specific details of the actual data analysis that this research study yielded is described in greater depth in the next section of the research study – the data presentation and analysis, in Chapter IV.

Summary

The research project explored how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in school districts in Texas. The sub-questions for this research study were: 1) How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifest itself at the school and classroom levels? 2) How is the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum shaped by campus leadership? 3) How does the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translate into classroom practice? In this research methodology section, the researcher detailed the following components: research design; theoretical framework – Knowing to Lead (KL) Model; research questions; site and participant selection; gaining access; instrumentation; data collection procedures; and, data analysis procedures. The next section details the DATA PRESENTATION.

CHAPTER IV

DATA PRESENTATION

The research data is presented in this chapter. The purpose of the study was to explore how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas. The research question in the research study was “How and to what degree does educational leadership shape the implementation of a policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas?” The sub-questions for this research study were: 1) How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifest itself at the school and classroom levels? 2) How is implementation of policy of cultural relevance in curriculum shaped by school leadership? 3) How is the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translated into classroom practice? In order to answer these research questions, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with participants in this qualitative case study.

This section will discuss data presentation of those one-on-one interviews which were conducted with the superintendent of schools, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, a high school principal, a middle school principal, two high school teachers, and two middle school teachers from La Frontera ISD who agreed to be participants in the research study. To do that data presentation, the researcher here presents each of the eight stories that emerged from those interviews using the following five topics, themes, and foci to organize, explore, and present the data from the interviews: 1) participant personal and educational background; 2)

participant understanding and perception of *culturally relevant curriculum*; 3) *curriculum policy* conversations participant has had with people above and below her/him in the district's organizational chart; 4) conversations about *culturally relevant curriculum* participant has had with people above and below her/him in the district's organizational chart and with students, parents, and community members; and, 5) participant understanding and perception of the research study's specific *culturally relevant curriculum* policy focus, the seventeen words – implementing the district's educational program by using “*resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community.*” The chapter is organized into eight separate stories, one story for each of the eight interviews that were conducted as part of the research study. Each story is framed around the five topics, themes, and foci previously mentioned.

Interview One: Fortunato Franco, Male Principal, Los Veteranos Middle School

Fortunato Franco, principal at Los Veteranos Middle School, was interviewed first. The interview occurred on October 19, 2012, at 9:00 AM at his principal's office.

1) Personal and Educational Background

I asked Principal Franco to share about his background and his education, to establish a historical perspective on his life and his education. He took a deep breath, and began to speak, detailing his background:

Well, my name is Fortunato Franco, and I am going to have to take a guess here, that I have been in education around 25 to 27 years. My background essentially is coming out of the University of Las Americas. Initially I was getting into education to become a coach... and a situation in my life allowed me to look at things in a different way so then I went into the educational leadership program... I joined the dark side, if you will, and

became an assistant principal in Southland ISD, at a middle school, which was an eye-opening experience, and then from there another door opened up for me at La Frontera ISD as an assistant principal at a high school, which at that time was La Frontera HS, and I did that for about 7 years, and then I interviewed for the principalship here at Los Veteranos, and this is going on my 6th year here at Los Veteranos.

Having established his post-secondary educational background, I probed Mr. Franco further, asking him to share about growing up as a child, and his education then:

I'm a Trueblue native. I was born and raised in Trueblue. I lived just south of what is DHC [Down Here College], when there were no buildings around. I went to Gramirez Elementary in that area, in the barrios. I did the gang thing for a little bit, there, just because of where I lived. I think a lot of our students don't have a choice about some of the things that they're exposed to, and being exposed to those experiences doesn't give them an insight that they don't believe they have a choice. So they're kind of led and they follow, wherever it takes them. Sometimes they're poor decisions...

I then asked Mr. Franco to share what influence he might attribute to his parents as far as education. He smiled, shook his head a bit and explained:

The term *laissez-faire* I believe applies to my parents, right on the money. They pretty much, what you are going to reap or sow are things that you took the initiative to go after. It wasn't getting home and do your homework. I seldom saw any intrusion in my life... my parents only intervened when it was deemed necessary... as far as direction, and educational direction or advice, minimum.

Mr. Franco basically stated that his parents did not really encourage or influence him to attend post-high-school studies. So I asked him to share where he thought that might have come from.

I would say, maybe, a close friend of mine that I grew up with. His parents were a little bit at the middle class, and the things that I saw them encouraged my friend at that time, I kind of picked up on that, and that it was something that I needed to consider.

He looked pensive and reflective as he shared this memory that the influence came from a friend and not from his parents. He reflected more and then added some details:

...after that I got married and the educational leadership, the program itself to me was a very enjoyable thing because I was actually there to try and learn, and really challenge my beliefs and background about what I should be picking up to get ready for in this particular job. And it wasn't something to do just because everybody was else was doing it, you know, like everything else prior to that.

Mr. Franco nicely tied in his background and schooling experiences, from the beginning to the present.

2) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Understandings and Perceptions

Mr. Franco was then asked some questions about both his understanding and his perception of *culturally relevant curriculum*.

Mr. Franco's first response was about his understanding on what culturally relevant curriculum is and why it is important:

I had a very intense conversation with my social studies department chair, and one of his colleagues, that's one of our 8th grade teachers, and the conversation was exactly that. The cultural skills we are trying to impart on our particular students that come in with really a *tabula rasa*, they come in with no experience with politics, with social events, with government events, and the background and the people that make up those events, and why they mold what we are this very day.

Mr. Franco continued in a very candid way:

My conversation, from a cultural standpoint, I believe that, and I, maybe I am getting a bit too philosophical, but our government is essentially imposing the American way on our cultural separation and from really where our kids come from, and, they're not all from across the border, but most of what you see at the border is directly connected to historical events just in this area, and our kids are still not, they don't travel. They don't get up in the morning and look at the news and stay up with current events. I think they're more in a vacuum, and what's happening in the Valley is their world, if you will."

Principal Franco's passion, concern, and deep feelings about state-imposed curriculum decisions that affect those who want and need a more culturally relevant experience showed through in his replies.

I pressed Mr. Franco to share what his feelings about culturally relevant curriculum were.

He elaborated:

Well, my feelings, I guess, go so far as to say that I don't believe truly without being too logical or oversimplified in my statement that I really believe that a lot of times is that what TEA [the Texas Education Agency] and what the state wants for our students may not necessarily be in line with what we perceive to be what's best for our children.

Mr. Franco opened up and went on. "...and, don't even get me started with the federal government. The federal government is even worse with regards to their particular standards..."

While Mr. Franco's concern about the U.S. Department of Education focused on the accountability system that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) education legislation created, his distress with the federal government was prompted when asked about implementing culturally relevant curriculum.

3) Curriculum Policy Conversations

Mr. Franco was asked to share the types of conversations he might have had that centered on *curriculum policy*. He thought for a few seconds and then discussed how La Frontera ISD, the state education agencies, and what his teachers wanted in a curriculum policy were often at odds with what is needed for the children:

There are, I believe, conflicts or, the term is not conflicts, there are opposites to what I feel we really should be doing that we still have to conform to what the state requires because they want results. I'll take it a step further, STAAR, End-of-Course, anything that has to do with our most recent assessment, what have they done to the public schools? They give you the TEKS but they take the assessments and they put it over here [shows separation, space, movement between TEKS and assessments]. Who has the assessment? TEA has the assessments. They tell you teach the TEKS, but you need to teach them at three different levels. Now, we're not going to tell you what level this particular TEKS is going to be tested at. That's something for you to decide. We know what we're going to test them on, but we're not going to let you know.

Mr. Franco, shook his head in apparent disgust, and went on to detail more frustration: So, they give us the TEKS for all our content areas, they ask us to put a timeline together or a scope and sequence, teach it at a rigor that may be at a level of 1, 2, or 3, because they need to be ready for 1, 2, or 3, because we're not going to tell you what it's going to be. We want you to create your own curriculum as well, okay, around these TEKS. We're not going to tell you what to do. That's up to you. And then we're going to give you assessments to see if you accomplished enough throughout the year for your kids to be successful. Now, what kind of a system is that, sir?

Mr. Franco paused for a few seconds. Next, Mr. Franco looked directly at me, took a deep breath, and elaborated a bit more:

They just said here are the student expectations or the TEKS have changed a little bit, but for all intent purposes nothing's changed. You should be okay. Well then why don't *you* give us the scope and sequence? You have the assessment, right? You're not going to give us the assessments. You give us the scope and sequence. Tell us at what level we need to teach these student expectations, so that we're ready for the test. Isn't that what that's about? No. They hide the test from us, sir. They hide the test and they do everything in regard to making decisions about schools, about ethnicities, about populations, about college, based on that one assessment. And who has that assessment? We don't.

4) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Conversations

Mr. Franco was asked to share the types of conversations he might have had that focused on *culturally relevant curriculum*. I first specifically asked him if he ever had conversations with his superintendent or assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction about the importance of culturally relevant curriculum:

The answer to that question is no. The conversations I think are in the trenches with our teachers, but really when you climb the ladder and you get closer to the central office area it's more about results, and how your kids are doing with the district-made benchmarks that we give every six-weeks and what we need to do, the plan of action, to make things a little better with regards to results. So, everything that we do is not necessarily whether it's the right thing or the wrong thing to do, like a culturally relevant curriculum. It's based on how the results are showing that our children are being

successful on those standards, not necessarily are they grasping the full extent of a particular content.

I asked Mr. Franco if he could elaborate on what he shared. Mr. Franco proceeded to tell me more about this concern he expressed:

The answer to that would be no, because the system itself, even though we kind of shifted away from a process of elimination type of assessment, and now we're looking at making our children thinkers, it's still based on test results and it's still based on the one assessment that is still in somebody's vault in TEA that we won't see until it's time. And so everything revolves on, the real passion stems from our teachers, and the real conversations are had with our teachers, but to say that we actually have conversations at a district level, I would say no, because it's still a machine that looks for results and results only.

I then wanted to know about parents, and whether he had conversations with them about culturally relevant curriculum:

No, at our side of town we struggle with parental involvement to a large degree. And it goes back to the, it's always about the money. So when we try and incorporate the importance of learning and the importance of concepts, it's difficult to make them make time away from their schedules to come and listen to something that the relevance may not quite make a connection to them. We have a PIA (a parental involvement assistant) and we have parent volunteers. We do those things, but I can safely say our parents are nowhere near where we are now where we're trying to get their kids with regards to the actual content.

5) Understanding, Perception of Culturally Relevant Curriculum Policy

Mr. Franco was asked to discuss what the seventeen words in the following Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) policy meant to him: "...implementing the district's educational program by using *resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community.*"

I wanted to know what the words meant to him and what the policy in general meant to the instructional practices at Los Veteranos Middle School. "I truly believe that that happens."

Principal Franco went on to give an example of celebrating Veterans Day:

Los Veteranos Middle School is named after our veterans, so when we do cultural events and we celebrate Veterans Day here, it's a special occasion for not only our students but our true veterans because our veterans and the families surrounding our veterans that went to war, they have children here. They have grandchildren here. So, when we celebrate Veterans Day and we ask our community to come in and we sit our veterans in front of our children. I give them a moment, and we hand them the mike. We hand the microphone to the veterans themselves to say a few words, and let me tell you, those words were just powerful. Powerful from an emotional standpoint. Powerful with regards to respect. Powerful with who they really are and what they experienced out there to some degree.

Mr. Franco paused for a few moments, reflected a bit more, and then took the conversation to a different direction:

I think the disconnect – maybe I've somewhat answered the question and I am going to take the answer away to some degree – I really truly believe that the disconnect comes in the form of where we live and how *our system does not allow our children to celebrate*

our own experiences. I can give you an example. As an English teacher where they read a particular stem and they talk about, ‘The man was parasailing on the beach.’ You know, our kids see this and [whistles] it flies right over their head. And it’s not a matter of vocabulary. It’s a matter of the lack of experience that they have had with something that someone else feels like, ‘Well, that’s an easy question.’

Mr. Franco paused briefly, but looked like he wanted to proceed with more details. I asked him if he wanted to tell me more. He went on with more details:

So, do we teach about different religions? Do we teach about different cultural groups? We teach about all those things. But do we celebrate *our own*? Very minimally within the curriculum. Very minimally. We might when we look at the Battle of the Alamo and all the characters involved in there. We might hear a name in there that we’ve heard, you know, because our parents said it, or because our uncle said it. But when we celebrate all of these other things that aren’t common or are things that aren’t spoken either in the household or amongst your relatives, *I don’t believe we celebrate our culture in its true essence because again we’re conforming to something that the state wants our children to learn.*

I wanted to dig deeper into that disconnect Mr. Franco mentioned with the example of *parasailing*. So I asked him if he thought that the state education agency – TEA – could find creative ways that would allow for local districts to take control of their curriculum, and still make it rigorous that would honor student’s culture and background. Mr. Franco sighed, nodded, and explained:

The answer to that is a simply, if it’s allowed, yes... who’s to say that the state can’t allow us to create our own assessments based on our culture that parallels the same thing

that in north Texas or in Dallas or Houston they create their particular assessment with some connect to reliability, and we'll all be very happy, sir. We'll all be very happy, because, again, *being an American doesn't totally mean that you have to conform to everything that is right by certain standards, by certain cultures, or the leaders that we have leading us.* Instead of going against the current the way our children are asked to do to swim upstream with particular content, they would be going with the stream and learning that much faster, because they're already at a certain level of knowledge with that content.

Mr. Franco paused before he continued his discussion on the topic as he shared more details:

You see, there are parameters or structures that are still contradictory to what they're trying to accomplish, you know. Are they easy to align? I think it's doable. I think it's doable. *Would we be doing our kids justice? Yeah, I think they'd benefit tremendously. I think they would have probably a clearer understanding of the bigger picture if we were to do that than to beat them over the head with some things that, it just doesn't make sense. I just don't get it. I don't get it because I don't understand it.*

Mr. Duarte didn't stop there. He continued his reflection on the subject as he concluded the interview:

That's probably one of many areas that I think are contradictions with what we are doing with our kids, that I still believe can be fixed. *It's something that can be an area of specialty for your particular culture that allows you to celebrate your culture without imposing someone else's culture or someone else's beliefs,* but still stay within the whole – what's the purpose of that – to learn, you know, and really, really understand things at a

level that helps you when you are making decisions about everyday life. *I think that's where the disconnect really bothers me with our kids is this – we have an assembly-line kind of a system where all we want them to do is pass one assessment.* What is the result of that? Well, can you honestly prove to me that every child that passes the STAAR test is going to be successful in society? I would beg to differ, you know. As a matter of fact I think a lot of the content sometimes turns our kids off, and it's not about drugs. It's not about low socio-economic issues. There's just no interest in that.

Interview Two: Diego Duarte, Male Teacher, Los Veteranos Middle School

Diego Duarte, male teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School, was interviewed second. The interview occurred October 19, 2012 at 4:00 PM in his classroom.

1) Personal and Educational Background

In starting the interview, I asked Mr. Diego Duarte to please share about his background and his education, to establish a chronological perspective on his life and his education. He nodded his head, smiled, and began to speak, detailing his background:

Well, my name is Diego Duarte, and I was born and raised here in La Frontera, Texas. I attended La Frontera schools, graduated from La Frontera High School in '79. On and off I went to school to the university here at Grande Rio University for seven years. This wasn't something that I was really interested in doing, *but it was expected of us by our parents*; so it took me seven years to finish, my Bachelor's degree. I attended from '79 to '86.

Mr. Duarte next explained how he went from attending college, graduating, and into teaching profession.

I had no intention of teaching. At the time I was working with banks, and that's how I paid for my education, *but I realized that there were a lot of games being played, a lot of racism, a lot of prejudice even here in the Valley at that time.* I knew that I probably wouldn't get ahead, so I decided I'd find something else.

Mr. Duarte was actually offered a position with a governmental agency at the same time he received a call from a local school district offering him a teaching job, and he looked into the teaching position:

I interviewed and got hired in December, and my first date of teaching was the first day after the Christmas holidays. That's how I got into education. I had no experience. Honestly, I almost quit two weeks into it. The kids were tough. You talk about baptism by fire. I think it was the pride in me that didn't let me quit, and I went home and I said, 'I'm tougher than these guys, and I'm going to prove it to them.' I made it that year, and the next year was a better year and I passed the tests that were required by the state. I guess like they say, the rest is history. And I'm here twenty-four years later – twelve in El Huarache ISD and twelve here at Los Veteranos Middle school at La Frontera ISD.

I wanted to take him back, further than high school and college. I wanted to probe about growing up, family life, and educational experiences, aspirations, and encouragement. So I asked Mr. Duarte to share about that background:

My dad had a third grade education, but he was sharp as a tack, in mathematics. He could do a lot in math, up to what could be expected with a third grade education. My mom maybe had a second grade education. *But it was not a question of whether we were going to go to school or not. It was, we were expected to.* We didn't miss days at school. At the

public school system here in La Frontera we didn't miss days just because. We weren't taken out to go shopping. They didn't take us out of school to go work in the fields either.

It was a very positive influence.

Mr. Duarte paused briefly, then narrated more on his parents' influence on his family's education:

Our parents always made time for us, and it was expected that, *we were never told that we were expected to go to college but that's what we knew that our parents expected from us*, especially my dad. Unfortunately he dies before he sees any of us. We were out of high school and we were already attending the university, but he never saw any of us graduate. There are seven surviving brothers and sisters. Out of those seven, all of us graduated high school and five have college degrees. I have a sister who is an attorney, and another sister that has a CPA license. I guess in terms of success, we've all been successful in the public schools and at the university.

As Mr. Duarte shared his early childhood life, his passion came through, especially as he spoke about the tremendous influence his parents had on his education.

2) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Understandings and Perceptions

Mr. Duarte was then asked some questions about both his understanding and his perception of *culturally relevant curriculum*. After rereading Ladson-Billings' (1994) definition on *culturally relevant curriculum*, I first asked Mr. Duarte what he understood *culturally relevant curriculum* to mean:

Well, honestly, I had not heard that term here recently. I'm sure that in some of the workshops I had heard it, but I'm still a little hazy but when you mentioned it and as I'm reading it here, I'm not sure if I'm correct, but I almost get the feeling that "culturally

relevant,” since most of my students are of Hispanic background, I’m wondering if this is not something that maybe the term means that *we need to be more culturally, not aware, not necessarily, but maybe teach more lessons where we would bring in their cultural experiences, the Mexican or the Hispanic influence into the lesson*. That’s what comes to my mind.

I then followed up asking him how he felt (positive, negative, or neutral) about that type of curricular experience for students:

I think it’s important... I think it’s needed, and I think that it actually, if a kid can – you know, I teach American history, and it’s about mostly the history of our country. *Unfortunately a lot of the contributions that minority groups make are not found in our history books, and I think that, and students will ask you, why do I have to learn about George Washington, and these guys that are white and are dead? It’s a valid question, and I think if they learn about Washington and they can bring in their own experiences into the mix, I think they’ll be richer for it, and they have a better understanding than if we just teach them one or the other.* I think if you mix these two, in the right balance.

Mr. Duarte went on to explain some curricular work he did through a grant project while he taught at El Huarache ISD:

Let me tell you what we did in El Huarache that I think relates to this. We got a grant from the Rama Chica Project with Dr. Salvador Coscorron, and what we ended up doing is we ended up throwing out the textbook and we concentrated on nothing but the history of the Valley, which is fine, but in the process we left out the bigger picture. We didn’t target the history of Texas and the history of the United States, and *I think we did the kids a disservice because they left there that two years that we did that, all our lessons,*

everything, all our curriculum was the Hispanics here in the Valley, but there were other things happening around the world and the kids never got to see that because we didn't share it with them. We had lessons on *corrido* music, which is great but I don't think we had to spend the whole semester doing that. I mean if we were going to do a lesson on music then bring in other types of music from other cultures and see how they were relevant with each other, or how similar or different they were. Especially in our English class, we went out and did oral interviews with people that were some of the founders of the Valley, who'd been here forever, and we interviewed them, and then we took those interviews and made them into stories...

What Mr. Duarte had just described here was using *culturally relevant curriculum* in the classroom, although he expressed reservations about dropping the standard district- sanctioned state-standards-driven curriculum to be replaced by the *culturally relevant* Valley curriculum. Mr. Duarte further shared other concerns:

Then we made TAKS-like questions out of those stories, and that was the main curriculum. It's almost like the way it entered into the curriculum, it existed as quickly. All of a sudden one day we were there, and we're not doing that anymore. We're like, 'Wait a minute! We threw out the baby with the bath water!' We stopped teaching American history and did nothing but the history of the Valley, and then we stopped doing that and we went back to doing American history, about two years later. *There was a loss of interest.* Administrators no longer bought into that, and so it was, 'Go back and do what you were doing.' *For a while it sparked the kids' interest but then it all became almost like redundant, the same thing over and over again. I think that if we had just used that as well as the history of Texas, the history of America, and put it all together I think*

the kids would have been much richer and I think that curriculum would have been a lot better, too.

3) Curriculum Policy Conversations

Mr. Duarte was next asked to share the types of conversations he might have had that centered on *curriculum policy*. I asked Mr. Duarte if he had conversations on curriculum policy, specifically if he participated in curriculum development:

This year for the first time I actually got hired to do curriculum. I had always been against it, and I probably won't do it again next year because I don't feel that I – *I left there with not a very positive experience because it was, the curriculum you wrote was too fast-paced* and everyone talked about how the STAAR or how the old TAKS was, we were teaching an inch deep but a mile wide, and that the STAAR was going to be depth and rigor, that *we were going to delve deeply into these issues, and topics, and concepts. That's not true. I don't see it.*

Mr. Duarte obviously had a negative experience in the only true curriculum policy experience he remembered.

4) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Conversations

Mr. Duarte was asked to share the types of conversations he might have had that focused on *culturally relevant curriculum*. I first asked him if he discussed using this type of *culturally relevant curriculum* with his principal, Mr. Fortunato Franco:

No, I can't honestly say that we've had these types of discussions here in the recent past, as far as with this topic of *culturally relevant curriculum*. *I know that when they do the walkthroughs they sometimes hear me do a little bit or a lesson. I'll try to bring in their experiences like when they cross the border and they'll say, 'Hey, I didn't know that that*

would happen.’ The district’s curriculum assistant is Anglo. She’s from Iowa or Indiana or somewhere, and so even though she married a Hispanic man here from the Valley, she’s not quite there yet as far as she doesn’t know all our culture yet. She’ll say, ‘I didn’t know why you all did that.’ For her it’s more of a learning experience, but it’s not something that we discuss as part of the curriculum but I don’t think I’ve ever discussed it in the terms that you’re asking.

I asked Mr. Duarte if in planning with his colleagues at Los Veteranos Middle School the issues of connecting the written curriculum to the students’ homes and background ever came up:

Yeah, well, I find that *that* conversation comes up more with the 7th grade teachers because those 7th grade teachers will say, ‘Hey, you know, that fits in with what we’re doing,’ and they find that connection more readily than I do in 8th grade. Now, I will say that when we were doing the British Acts that were imposed by the King on the colonies, the kids quickly made the connection almost before I got it out of my mouth, ‘Oh, when we bring stuff, you know, the smuggling? *Ah, cuando traemos cosas de Mexico, verdad, sir, que las escondemos?*’ [Oh, when we bring things from Mexico, right, sir, that we hide them?], and human smuggling, and drug smuggling. They hear that a lot in the – believe it or not, these kids do watch the news. And they see stuff, but then when I bring it up, they make the connection. Or a teacher – not only me – or other teachers when they bring it up, they make the connection. So we were talking about smuggling, and some of these kids were saying, ‘Hey, sir, I’ve heard that word, ‘human smuggling,’ ‘human trafficking,’” I said, ‘Alright. There we go. Same concepts.’ So, yes, it does come up.

I asked Mr. Duarte if he thought that the students connecting to the “smuggling” topic was the only topic the students would connect to, or if fact he thought that maybe the students would make personal connections all along the school year:

I think they will. You know my experience has been that when we do the Constitution and the Bill of Rights... when we start talking about the personal freedoms and rights, and then we get into the amendments, the fourth amendment, illegal searches and seizures, you’d be surprised how all these guys want to share stories about, cop stories, where they, ‘Sir, uh, my dad, this happened to him, and we got stopped, and they forced us to get out, and they searched our vehicle,’ and stuff, and then we get into the racial profiling, and they’ll say, ‘Well, yeah, *pos somos Mexicanos*. [Well, we are Mexicans.] You know it was some white guy that stopped us, you know,’ especially when they travel up-state. Some of these kids I’ve had in the past their parents are truckers, their dad is a trucker, and they say they go into these states, like Mississippi and they say they get stopped consistently, because they see you’re from Texas, so automatically *dicen* [they say] drug dealers. *And so they make that, and so we start talking about the rights that we have. And that always, their interest is always heightened by that. They love the fourth amendment. Those illegal searches and seizures, they like that, so I always find that they have personal stories to share with us about what happened to them.*

It was obvious from Mr. Duarte that he saw value in allowing students to connect the content that he as the teacher was exposing the students to with the content in their lives, their personal connections, their own life stories. These were culturally relevant curricular conversations with students in the classroom, but I also wanted to know about conversations he

was having with parents and with community members. So, I asked him if these conversations came up with parents and community members:

No, a lot of these parents remind me of my parents, especially, you know, my dad never went – in all his life – he never went to a meet-the-teacher night or a PTO or an open house. No, none of those things. But he was always, he knew when we were going to get report cards, and we didn't get progress reports back in the old days. It was just, 'Let me see them.' That's the deal... My mom on the other hand, she'd go, but she was one of those, you know, lack of education, '*El maestro sabe* [the teacher knows]. The principal knows.' So they'd, the teachers were the professionals so what they'd say is fine. 'I'm going to support them.' And I'm finding that most parents even today have that kind of mentality, where you're the professional. '*Usted es el maestro. Usted enseña*. [You're the teacher. You teach them.]' What I find out, though, is that a lot of these parents want us to support them when they tell their kids that education is important.

Mr. Duarte paused briefly, and then proceeded as he continued sharing his detailed explanation on the topic:

They also feel like, in fact, powerless, that they can't make their kids understand that education is important, and they want us to reinforce that with the kids, that education is important. They'll talk about, you know. '*Cuando yo estaba en Mexico, yo no tenia esta oportunidad*. [When I was in Mexico I did not have this opportunity],' because we have a lot of immigrants here, a lot of parents that were, are from Mexico and they are here whether it be legal or illegal it doesn't matter. They'll share their experience of the lack of opportunity in Mexico. They say, 'Now I'm here. I don't know any English. I see myself as a second-class citizen. I go to the store and I have a white person that talks to

me in English, *y no le entendio* [and I don't understand him].’ And so for them they understand that life is difficult, even more difficult because they don't have that education that they want for these kids, and they want us to reinforce that.

5) Understanding, Perception of Culturally Relevant Curriculum Policy

Mr. Duarte was asked to discuss what the seventeen words in the following Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) policy meant to him: “...implementing the district’s educational program by using *“resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community”*”:

Well, you know, let me start off by saying that a lot of these kids, one the questions that a lot of kids ask me is, ‘Sir, was anything happening here in the Valley, when we talk about George Washington in Philadelphia, writing the Declaration with Jefferson, is there anything happening here?’ They want to know what was happening here in the Valley. Were we relevant or not? Another question they want to know is, ‘What did we contribute, you know, as *Mexicanos*, as Hispanics? *Do we have any relevance in this history that you’re forcing us to learn?*’ And, man, that’s a powerful question, and it makes my job, it makes my job more difficult because now I have to come up with examples of what they want to know. Were we relevant?

I asked Mr. Duarte to share any final personal reflections on how those seventeen words may have made a personal connection to him:

I think it’s helped me, you know, as I’m sitting here and trying to answer these questions, and hearing you speak, I’m thinking in my mind, you know, I’m processing a lot of this stuff and I’m thinking, “Man, I’ve got to be more aware of the kids, too, and their ethnicity, and their cultural background, and what they bring to the table here.” It can’t

be just me pushing American history and the TEKS and the STAAR objectives that need to be covered.

I followed up by asking him how he thought that could be accomplished given that the state is very set in its curricular ways. This is how Mr. Duarte concluded the interview:

Well, I think that we really need to let them speak, and maybe writing some activities here, let them understand that their ethnicity and their culture is nothing to be ashamed of, and that what they have to say is very important.

Interview Three: Candi Cardenas, Female Principal, Tuco Benedicto High School

Candi Cardenas, principal at Tuco Benedicto High School, was interviewed third. The interview occurred October 22, 2012 at 9:00 AM in her office.

1) Personal and Educational Background

To commence the interview, I asked Ms. Candi Cardenas to please share about her background and her education, to establish a chronological perspective on her life and her education. She smiled, and began to speak, detailing her background:

My name is Candi Cardenas, Candi Salinas Cardenas. I say Candi Salinas Cardenas, that's my maiden name, and I think that family is so very important to me. Generally, when I sign important documents or other things I include my middle name, my maiden name there. So it's Candi Salinas Cardenas, and I've been teaching for 35 years and all 35 years have been part of La Frontera ISD schools. I started off right out of college at La Frontera ISD and I've been ever since, a second family, so to speak.

Next, Ms. Cardenas shared about her early life and growing up in a small south Texas town.

Originally I was born and raised in Troncoso, Texas. Troncoso is about, very close, about 20 miles away from Chapetona, Texas in the Hill Country, gateway to Roscoe State Park, Texas. So that's where my initial years as I grew up until I graduated from high school. That's where I spent my initial years with my family in Troncoso, very different demographically from the Rio Grande Valley. From there I went on to college. I went for two years at a junior college in Chapetona, twenty miles away, still living at home with mom and dad, and after those two years I spent in Chapetona to finish out my four-year degree I moved to San Mateo and I attended what was then Southerly University in San Mateo. I finished out my bachelors there, and very serendipitously I ended up in La Frontera. It was amazing. I went in to interview at a college job fair. I was looking for a job in the area of San Mateo or San Balderas where I could be close to my parents and my home, my family, and I stumbled upon La Frontera and I'd thought I'd practice job interviewing with La Frontera ISD. And guess what? Here I am now, thirty-five years later. This is home. Thirty-five years later I consider, I'm a Valley girl and I consider home to be La Frontera, Texas although I was born and raised in Troncoso. That's a little bit about me.

I asked Ms. Cardenas to share a bit about her early elementary school years in Troncoso, Texas:

My elementary years were in Troncoso school district, a very small town, about 1,500 people, smaller than the size of my high school that I have right now, and that's the total population of the town, 1,500. My graduating class I want to say was probably 20, 25 students, so pretty easy to get into the top 25. I went to elementary school there in Troncoso. I want to say demographically maybe 70% Anglo, something to that effect,

I'm not sure exactly, at the time I really didn't pay attention to that, in terms of demographically, but I do know that *we were definitely the minority as the Mexican-Americans. We were truly in the minority. I think that was something that really pretty much hit me in the face like a culture shock when I came to La Frontera schools to see the majority totally being of my own ethnic background. It was amazing. I had not had that experience before.* So in my own elementary years, and my high school, as I grew up in Troncoso, totally we were the minority.

Ms. Cardenas went on to detail more about her public school experiences growing up in Troncoso, Texas:

My elementary school was designed structurally in such a way that the educational design in itself facilitated the segregation that I saw as we grew up, because for the most part students who were our ELLs [English language learners] with the problems in terms of speaking English and having concerns with the language went to a, through the sequence of going first grade, first high, second grade, second high, and then moving on up the scale that way. That was to facilitate and to strengthen the language, to make sure that we had the English background that we needed linguistically. Of course, now we look back and I see through my own experience now that, really, you're adding an extra year or two to our high school careers or rather our educational careers and so, obviously, by the time kids go to be seniors some of those that went through that route were 19 by the time they got to be seniors. It made it much more difficult for us as Mexican-Americans if we went through that route to be able to graduate. Most of my Mexican-American classmates went that route. I want to say maybe five or six of us were able to

go the standard first, second, third, and so forth on up the line in elementary. I was one of those few that was able to go that route.

I asked Ms. Cardenas to explain how it was that she was one of the few Mexican-Americans that was able to “go that route” in Troncoso schools:

I think that by the time I went to school it was pretty much understood that my father was going to have some say in it if I didn't go that conventional route of first, second, third, and then on up. My dad and my mom were strong, strong advocates of education, although I think he went to third grade, sixth grade, I really don't remember but he didn't make it out of elementary school I don't believe. But he was very, very strong when it came to us and making sure that we got our education and that we went to school on a daily basis, and did our homework.

Ms. Cardenas paused a few moments, reflected some more, and then provided more details:

My brothers as they moved through high school set the tone and the standard, and so by the time I came around I think it was pretty much understood that I needed to take that route of college prep classes and so forth which also had very few Mexican-American kids in them. I remember the anecdote that Dad would often say. My middle brother had not been put into the college prep courses with algebra and some of those, and at the time they had like “related math” as the “other” pathway, career pathway that often most of our Mexican-American friends and family would be automatically be put into. I remember that my brother had not been put into algebra and so my dad went to school and said, ‘He needs to be in algebra.’ And they said, ‘Chevo,’ because Dad’s name is Chevo, ‘Chevo, he’s going to fail algebra.’ And Dad said, ‘Well, let him fail it. He’ll just

retake it again, but he's going to take algebra.' And sure enough, he did, and he *did!* So, he went through, and both of my brothers are college graduates. My older brother was the valedictorian of his class and even that of itself has a story. They had to recalculate grades two or three times to make sure that it was, because he was in hot contention with another Anglo young man and I suppose, as the benefit of the doubt, that those were things at any school any time with any ethnicity, you're going to double, triple, quadruple check those averages to make sure. He was the first Hispanic valedictorian at Troncoso High School. I would say it was in the mid-60s when he graduated.

To put her own educational experience in Troncoso in perspective, I asked her to share about her own high school graduation and beyond:

I graduated in '73. Also in the top ten, yes. I think I did fairly well. I was up there. I don't know, I think I was number three, something like that, number four. I went on to Chapetona Junior College right there, and that was significant because at that particular junior college I got to meet a lot of people from around the area, Pescueso, Regorsituda, Chapetona, Vidrio City, a lot of area towns that had *some very strong activists when it came to the racial, trying to advocate for racial equality, I guess, and particularly friends that I met from Vidrio City.* At the time it was when Juan Anselmo Gomez some of those others, strong advocates, activists really, were making their play for equality and I think Salomedon Ranucho was running for governor. *It was a totally different era, and that's where I grew up. I think that, in itself, informed or shaped a lot of my outlook when it came to education and its importance and how it was through education that we were going to advance.* That was one of the most important lessons that my father, and my mother although my dad was the strong patriarch of our family, and so he is the one that I

generally name, but it was both he and my mom, like, 'You've got to do it. You've got to get out there and do something.' That was their influence on me.

Sensing her willingness to continue I asked Ms. Cardenas to discuss more about her parents' influence:

That was the standard that my dad set as we went through. Because my father was very strong on his opinions and in terms of his expectations and making sure, that he was not afraid to go in there and talk to our superintendent of schools, our principal and advocate for us if he felt that we were not being given a fair shake. I think that's what made the difference. Many of my friends' parents would not do that. Many of them being farm laborers working in the ranches, or whatever it was, no, not all of them but certainly the majority, didn't have that fortitude to walk into a principal's or superintendent's office and say, 'I want to question my daughter's grade.' I think that it was an expectation that, for my family in particular, was set by my father.

Ms. Cardenas paused briefly, took a deep breath, looked directly at me and then added more details:

My father was also known to go and advocate for other kids, not just his own. Some of my friends, their parents would come to my dad and say, you know, 'Hey, he wasn't treated right,' or 'This wasn't done,' and he would go in and advocate for someone else's child as well. He kind of took that role in the community. Having painted that kind of picture, I grew up with the expectation that, my dad would say, '*No va a ser cualquier lavatraste.*' 'She's not going to be a dishwasher somewhere.' In that sense it was an advantage to us because he knew the pathway he wanted us to take.

Ms. Cardenas reflected on and openly shared how the community of Troncoso actually had a racial discrimination practice in education background:

We didn't choose our own schedules, they were handed to you, first day of school, 'Here you go, report to these classes.' Our career pathways were chosen for us. A curriculum that included certain groups, racial groups to go automatically into Ag [agricultural classes] so they could learn the field and farm work. You know, certain racial groups that would automatically be put into *that* career pathway that was for a vocation of sorts that would keep you out of the college ranks. When I look back at it now, I think, 'Wow. How many *other* classmates did I have that *might've* done so much more had the expectation been there for them as well?' As opposed to our Anglo counterparts who for the majority did move on to college. *That's* where I see the disparity, and it's a shame, because, I know that I was there because someone had to step in for me and say, 'She's going to be there.' And if my dad hadn't, I might have fallen through the cracks, to use a cliché, as so many others did.

Ms. Cardenas' rich, "thick" description (Geertz, 1973) of her educational background which she detailed methodically, helped set the stage for our subsequent conversation about culturally relevant curriculum.

2) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Understandings and Perceptions

Ms. Cardenas was then asked some questions about both her understanding and her perception of *culturally relevant curriculum*. I began by sharing that Ladson-Billings (1994) shared that culturally relevant curriculum is "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and

attitudes.” I asked Ms. Cardenas to share what that meant to her, and how it manifested itself in her job as school principal:

When you look at it through the prism of the culture and how over years in time we developed an understanding of what is important to us. *What is important to us is closely tied to the culture and the way that we grew up, and our families and those things we value. When you look at any curriculum, one of the major things is to make it relevant. If we don't have kids that can somehow build a relevance for and make meaning out of the information, the concepts, the skills that are being taught, where is our retention? How are they going to retain this and how are they going to actually use it in more strategically and meaningful ways later on as they go into problem-solving in the community and anywhere?* There has to be a relevance back there, somewhere, where they can make a connection so that they retain the material, so that when they get into a situation where they can use that information to make a difference, to be significant in the community, in their career, in somewhere, there's got to be something that pulls at the heart strings. There's got to be something that makes them passionate about it, so that they can actually make a difference.

3) Curriculum Policy Conversations

Ms. Cardenas was asked to share the types of conversations she might have had that centered on *curriculum policy*. I first asked Ms. Cardenas specifically about conversations on curriculum she may lead with her teachers and staff:

I'm very much for the empowerment of teachers. I involve them in every possible way that I can. There of course is the basic framework and the parameters within which we work, the district prescribed curriculum that our own teachers from across the district got

together to work on, and we had quite a few of our own Tuco Benedicto High School teachers involved in that. That was something we made sure even before we opened the doors of Tuco Benedicto High School, that our teachers were involved.

Ms. Cardenas continued discussing how teachers are involved in curriculum policy conversations:

That summer we had a lot of activities going on, one of which was getting teachers that were already hired for Tuco Benedicto High School to be part of the curriculum writing committee. We had teachers in every subject area that represented our school in the curriculum writing section. Even working at that level, which I guess is really at the administrative level with central office being the ones that directed that program, and then here locally at our campus, I am very much for empowering teachers and giving them opportunities and voices in what they're going to bring in as extra resources.

4) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Conversations

Ms. Cardenas was asked to share the types of conversations she might have had that focused on *culturally relevant curriculum*. I asked Ms. Cardenas if the issue of cultural relevance in curriculum ever came up in conversations with central office administration:

I cannot say truthfully that it comes up specifically, that we address it directly, to say that we have culturally relevant curriculum in place; however, it's infused in many conversations through the preparatory work that we do for our ELL [English language learner] students. But to say that I've had specific formal conversations about it with upper administration, only indirectly, in the curriculum, and not the curriculum actually, but in the resources that we choose. Our curriculum is pretty much designed already but in the resources that we choose.

Next, I asked Ms. Cardenas to share how conversations about culturally relevant curriculum might be held with students and parents:

To have parents ask me specifically on whether our curriculum is culturally relevant, no, I haven't had anyone that specifically asks it in that way. I've had curriculum conversations with parents. They want to know what's being taught in the classrooms, and how we're going about to do things. To that end we've established the first PTO organization in a high school in La Frontera ISD, here at Tuco Benedicto High School. The first meeting was just basic introductions and letting them know the purpose of the PTO which is to bring the program, in terms of the curriculum, the instruction, the relevance to the parents. *I think that's maybe in some way knowing that those parents get involved, like my dad did, if those parents can be an active part, even whether they understand what all of the different intricacies of the curriculum. Even if they don't understand, like my dad did not understand that. All he knew was that we've got to have something there where you're going to be giving my daughter, my son the best possible that you've got.*

Ms. Cardenas paused momentarily, reflected some more on the topic being discussed, and proceeded to add more:

There are parents that have the time and are able to come to school, and be here, and then there are parents that are so involved with their own jobs, their own work, and their own demands that they are not necessarily here but I know they're here in spirit and I know I still have their support, but when parents are actually physically here, to me, what does that tell me? It tells me that I have support. It tells me that I know there's someone at home that I can count on, that can continue the work we're doing here. That's something

that's difficult sometimes because *if you think about it, we're shaping lives, we're working with kids, but then they leave our school and they enter a different realm when they go home. We don't know what goes on over there.*

5) Understanding, Perception of Culturally Relevant Curriculum Policy

Ms. Cardenas was asked to discuss what the seventeen words in the following Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) policy meant to her: "...implementing the district's educational program by using *"resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community."*" Ms. Cardenas reflected on the prompt and began to share what those words meant to her:

I think about our obligation, my obligation on this campus, not just to represent the ethnic, religious, cultural groups. Not just to have our resources represent these different groups, but also to take that resource, that representation, to delve into that material, that resource, to learn from those aspects of culture that may surface, to learn how we can actually use that knowledge of what has happened in the culture, whether it be Hispanic culture, whether it be Indian culture, whatever it happens to be. To take those resources, to delve into that material, to learn from that and to take that information and see how we can use it to shape, and change, and make a difference as our kids go out there and become our community leaders. I don't know. I hope that I've, in some way, taken my background, the things that I've experienced over the years, the way that I was raised with the values and the principles and the understandings that my parents, my dad instilled in me.

Ms. Cardenas took a moment to think some more, and then proceeded to continue her discussion.

I hope that I've taken all that conglomerate of experiences and understandings to try and bring a better environment to our kids here at Tuco Benedicto High School, to the kids I worked with at the previous two schools I worked at. You know, to take all of that and make an environment where these kids will see that the world is open. The world is open to them. The contribution to the national heritage and to the world community? How can we take our resources, the things that we talk to the kids about and use as springboards for knowledge, whether it be Sandra Cisneros' work or whatever it may be? How do we take that and show the kids that through history, through our experiences, through the development and the different stages that this nation has gone through to get to where we are now? We have an African American as the president. Through all of these experiences that we've got, how have we as human beings, as people been able to effect change for the better so that nationally, this world, the national heritage and the world community? Our voice is heard, and for the kids to believe that their voice will be heard.

I asked Ms. Cardenas to reflect where she learned to respect these aspects about school, life, and culture:

I learned it from my parents' example. My dad was always the one that went to school and talked to them, or did whatever. He was the one in our small town that would walk into the restaurant and sit down with the people, the rest of the Anglo farmers, ranchers that were very influential people in the community. He would walk in and sit at the table and have a cup of coffee with them, which was what none of the others did. He took it upon himself to do that. 'Invited or not, I'm here, and I want to know what's happening in this community and how do we fit in because we're part of it.' *I don't know if I'm idealizing that because my love for my dad, or truly to me, those were things I learned*

through his experiences that he would say. You have to create your own opportunity, and you find a way.

Ms. Cardenas then shared about conversations her parents had with her about her family heritage and their community:

I think that's part of our culture – the conversations, the afternoon conversations sitting there talking and laughing, and at the breakfast table, a lot of the stories at the breakfast table, of how my grandparents came across the border, how we established ourselves there in that small community in Troncoso, and what my grandfather, my dad's father did to begin to make a niche for himself in the community. He owned a little store. He was a baker. The different things he moved into as a businessman in the community was amazing in that era of time, for him to have done that, and how my dad and his brothers grew up and all of that. Then, on my mom's side also, to listen to her stories. It's all in the story. We each carry our own story within us, and the stories that she would speak of, of her years of migrating to Wisconsin to different places with the mom and the dad, my grandparents, and the way that she was brought up. Pulling all of the stories together that framed their lives and shaped the way eventually they together, I guess, envision in what their eyes my brothers and I were destined to do. Truly I was brought up with that understanding, that I had a destiny. My dad was especially driven, and I think that's really a good word, driven. He was driven to see our success.

Probing deeper, I asked Ms. Cardenas if these types of family background conversations were ever part of culturally relevant instructional materials and assignment growing up in Troncoso.

You know, sadly, no. Sadly, no. I never had a Hispanic teacher in the entire elementary and high school years that I attended school in Troncoso. In terms of your question, do I remember an assignment where it was a culturally relevant assignment where someone would say, ‘Well, go back into your culture and see how things developed?’ No, I don’t remember one at all. Your question is a very strong question, because, why didn’t I have an assignment like that, something where I interviewed my grandfather, which was a phenomenal story that I could have gotten from him? Perhaps because I never had a Hispanic teacher who could connect with my experiences to say, ‘How did *your* grandparents make it into the United States?’ *Perhaps the cultural relevance was that gap between those teachers that didn’t share my culture and my ethnicity and my family’s experiences, and perhaps that’s why I didn’t have an assignment that would have made that important and significant. You know, the importance and significance was at the breakfast table with Mom and Dad, and not in the classroom with my teachers and administrators.*

I asked Ms. Cardenas to reflect on whether a policy like the one we had discussed calling for culturally relevant curriculum might give a child sitting in her school and at other schools in Texas a chance to answer to the question about culturally relevant assignments remembered decades later differently than she just had:

I would hope that the answer would be yes, and I know that you’re asking in a very pointed way because I know that, *yes, at this chair sits the person who can make that change, who can effect that change, and make it happen.* It’s early in the year and we’re a new school, so we’re establishing traditions and those are things that definitely, you know, delving into the past.

I asked Ms. Cardenas if the resources existed today to make that culturally relevant curricular experience happen in Tuco Benedicto High School classrooms:

We do, we have resources sitting at this table. You talk about how big a bite can we take, how much, without the funding? Honestly, *right now, we talk about education, every dialog and every conversation pretty much that really gets into the complexities of brain research and of student learning and of retention is going to talk about significant, meaningful, relevant curriculum. How does the brain work, the synapses that occur and the sparking of those neurons? It all goes back to having something that connects, a meaningful connection that's significant. That's what helps kids retain.* That's how kids learn. And we always talk about that, but to what extent do we really say, okay, how you define relevance? And *what are those specific things that truly are relevant to kids that can make a connection to family life, to the home, to those things that together, families and school communities, are trying to instill in children? To what extent do we say where is and what is the relevant, meaningful, significance in the curriculum?*

Ms. Cardenas passionately continued her discussion on resources to teach a culturally relevant curriculum:

And, it's not to change the TEKS or the concepts or the skills that we're teaching. Those stay intact. Those are pristine. *Our kids are going to have to learn biology, calculus, all of those things – but in what way? What is the vehicle? What is the vehicle? And that vehicle needs to be relevant, and culture particularly here in the Rio Grande Valley is a vehicle like a railroad train. You know, it can go right through mountains. It's strong. It's strong.* Coming from the Santa Elena area, the Troncoso, where I came from to over here,

the difference culturally, the strength of the culture here, and what a force it can be, if we were to put it to use.

I then bluntly asked Ms. Cardenas what might be the obstacles that impede the implementation of a culturally relevant curriculum at Tuco Benedicto High School:

Almost immediately I would say two things... Number one, it's all within the *teachers*.

It's the instructional leaders in the classrooms and us as instructional leaders administratively. We need to bring it to light to our teachers, and show teachers – through talking to them, explaining, *and* demonstrating. Two, *being open-minded enough to try to come up with new assignments and new ways of incorporating some of those things that are part of our cultural heritage*, and then being creative enough, open-minded enough to say, 'Okay, I'm going to bring the culture in,' and then creative enough to say, 'How am I going to do it and still be true and keep the fidelity of my curriculum in place?' So, the challenge is there...

In closing I asked Ms. Cardenas to reflect briefly on what participating in the study via this interview meant to her:

As I am sitting here having this discussion, I am already beginning to see what kind of changes can happen that will not only have us be in compliance with the seventeen words but also more significantly *make a difference in inciting interest and inciting passion in our kids and of understanding of their heritage at the same time that we're trying to move them along with their curriculum to the level that we want them to be*. And, you know, sometimes we've got to come back to the basics, and the basics are what are right here. *The basics are what are within us that we personally bring to the table*. We can begin to personalize our curriculum in a way where they begin to see that there is that cultural relevance that we can tap into and have conversations

with Mom and Dad at home at the kitchen, and how much can be enriched through a personal narrative from Grandma and Grandpa, from Mom and Dad and things that they've heard?

The final question I posed to Ms. Cardenas was in reference to what she may have learned from participating in the interview:

What did I learn here? *I think I have a lot more to give; a lot more to give. My father paved the road for me. Who am I paving the road for?* I think I have a lot to give in terms of the experiences that in looking back happened and were smoothed out for me so that I could have an easier way of pulling forward and doing some significant things in my life. I need to now help our kids here, and there are kids here that they are going to succeed in spite of us. They're amazing. They're tremendous. We have some fantastic kids. They're terrific. But in every school, you have some kids that don't have that person that advocates for them. *In every school you're going to have those kids that will fall through the cracks if you don't reach out and grab them before they're, before they're gone. And maybe my story might be the one that can help, that can help keep them on track. There are still kids out there that I need to pave a little for.*

Ms. Cardenas' interview was a deep discussion that proved to be a candid conversation which yielded much descriptive data that the researchers was able to cull through for important information that supported the research.

Interview Four: Eliana Enriquez, Female Teacher, Los Veteranos Middle School

Eliana Enriquez, female teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School, was interviewed fourth. The interview occurred October 22, 2012 at 4:00 PM in her classroom.

1) Personal and Educational Background

To commence the interview, I asked Ms. Eliana Enriquez to please share about her background and her education, to establish a chronological perspective on her life and her education. She began detailing her background:

Okay, my name is Eliana Enriquez. I attended QRST High School in QRST schools. I attended Damron Elementary, Atkins Elementary, and Cerrillo Middle School. There are five of us in my family. My parents are non-English speakers; they only speak Spanish, so when I entered Kinder I didn't know English so I learned the English in school, a second language learner. *Most of my English teaching was at school. I didn't have that at home. My parents didn't help us with work, homework, so we had to do all of our learning in the classroom. So I picked up very early in life, as far as I can remember, that I had to get as much education as I could from the teachers.* So that I think played a big role in why I became a teacher, because that opportunity, I didn't get that opportunity like a lot of students right now that they do have their parents that they speak both languages. I didn't have that.

Ms. Enriquez continued her early childhood narrative as she reflected on her education experiences growing up:

And I was also a migrant. We migrated. We would go to Idaho, and then we would go to California. We would end up leaving like in the beginning of May and didn't come back until September. So we missed the beginning and the last of the school year. We ended up going until I was about fifteen. When I was fifteen we stopped going. My parents saw the need for us to get educated, and for us to attend a college or something. *My parents were very reluctant in us getting college-educated, because we were four girls and one*

boy. *My oldest sister got a full scholarship to Baylor – yes, very smart – but my dad didn't let her go. He didn't let her, so she ended up going to cosmetology.* And then she got married. We all got married very young, and that's when we got educated, when we got married.

I asked Ms. Enriquez to elaborate on the migrant experience. Ms. Enriquez paused briefly and shared some more:

We were a family. It would take us three days to get to Idaho, and we bonded, and we needed each other because we didn't know anybody. When we would go we didn't know anybody. In Idaho there was a place, we called it *el campo*, but you weren't sure you were going to get a house or an apartment at *el campo*. I mean, if you got there on time, then it was first time first serve. That's as far as I can remember. The only good thing about it is that in Idaho we went to Marsing, Idaho. We had a cousin, an older cousin that if we didn't get a place we would stay with him until we got a house or lived in *el campo*, that's how they would call it. But *we worked there, and I just remember working very hard and saying to myself, 'I don't want to do this for the rest of my life. I have to get educated. Somehow, I have to get educated.'* And that was the mentality. My dad would stress that. He'd say, 'Look. Don't get involved with none of the kids that are migrants because then you are going to end up coming. So you have to look out for something else.' I guess that was instilled, not by my parents, but I guess my parents did it in a way that, 'You know, this is hard life. Do you want this, or do you want something else?' That's what Dad would say.

I asked Ms. Enriquez to provide me more details about the life of a migrant as she grew up.

We would go to night school. We would go to night school. That was provided by I guess the school district there. We would attend night school. You worked during the day, you came home, you ate dinner, and then the bus would come pick you up. And it was kind of like a relief of stress. It wasn't like, 'Oh, no, we have to go to school.' It was like you got to have a little bit of fun. I liked it. We really liked it because they would show movies, we would have little dances, plus we got caught up on our studies. We liked it.

Ms. Enriquez took a brief moment to reflect some more on this topic, and then she continued:

In the evenings it was the same routine. You got home, you'd help Mom with chores because there were four girls, and then you'd help Mom with dinner, and then you would eat, clean up, and you would just relax, watch TV. My parents did not allow us to go outside. No. So our only, I guess, fun was to go to school. That's why we attended school. Our parents were very, very protective of us. We really didn't go nowhere, so going to school was like a way of doing something other than being with family.

I next asked Ms. Enriquez to reflect on whether her migrant experience growing up was valuable:

Oh, yes, definitely, definitely. *We were so united, even today. We do everything together. If something happens to one everyone comes to the rescue. That's the way we are.* And even with our kids. I treat my nephews and nieces like if they were mine, and if I have to discipline them, I discipline them. We bonded so much that we live here in Edinburg. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. Even thinking about it makes me cry. I don't want to live far away from my brothers and sisters. I want to be close. We all live very, within a mile or two.

2) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Understandings and Perceptions

Ms. Enriquez was then asked some questions about both her understanding and his perception of *culturally relevant curriculum*. I began by reading the Ladson-Billings (1994) definition of culturally relevant curriculum is “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.” I asked Ms. Enriquez to share what that meant to her, and how it manifested itself in her job as a middle school social studies teacher:

Well, I think that *I relate to my students a lot because a lot of them, they're bilingual, or their English is a second language to them, like I was. So I tell them, 'You know, sometimes I don't pronounce it right, but that's okay. You know, let's learn together.'* So, *I tell them all the time. I say, 'Look. I had parents that didn't speak English, and they still don't, but that didn't stop me. I continued.'* And I have my degree, because I'm very proud of my degree [pointing to a copy of her college degree on the wall behind her teacher's desk], and I make sure that they know it's there. I say, 'Look, I was able to accomplish it.' I want to be an example to them.

Ms. Enriquez paused briefly, and then began to share some more after reflecting on the topic of discussion:

I finished college in 2008. It took me a while but I did it. I started in '95 at University of Las Americas, and then, you know, things happened, I ended up getting married. And , so that kind of stopped me, and then I divorced, and then I said, “Well, I have to get back,” and my parents helped me, my sisters helped me with financially and everything, so I graduated with cum laude, with honors. It's a reminder to me [pointing at copy of degree] that this was hard work, and it's a reminder to them that they can do it, just like I did.

Bringing the conversation back to cultural referents that Ladson-Billings (1994) discussed, I asked Ms. Enriquez if using students' backgrounds to connect to the curriculum was important:

I think it's essential. How can you teach a student if you don't know what that student's background is? I want them included. I want them to feel included into my presentations, into my vocabulary, so I bring in the pictures. If I didn't bring in the pictures to me it would be gray. It would be too gray. I don't want to be biased. I'm not. I just want the kids to feel comfortable. I want them to feel part of it. I want them to know that the area was part of it, because that pulls them in into history. It pulls them in into, 'Hey, you know, we *were* part of this, or our ancestors were, maybe not us, but our ancestors.' *I don't want them to see it as – how can I say it without being biased? I'm not. Okay? I'm not. I don't want them to think that it's only a white world. It's a mixture of a lot of people.*

As a follow up, I asked Ms. Enriquez how seeing themselves in the "story" in the lesson affected students:

Oh, they get hooked in! They want to know more. Sometimes the conversation goes like [using her hand to signal an airplane taking off a runway] – and that's okay. We just come back. We don't let it go too much. We bring it back. And then I kind of bring it back to something related to what they're supposed to know, like, for example, tomorrow we're going to be talking about Mexico's independence, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. So I want them to look. I'm going to say that Miguel Hidalgo probably saw the Americans fight mother country, and they said, 'Well, if they can do it we can do it.' So that's where they got the idea that we can fight off Spain. They felt frustration, just the same as the

colonists felt against the British. They stood up for themselves. And of course I want my kids to stand up for themselves. Education. Education, it takes you to a lot of places. It opens doors for you.

3) Curriculum Policy Conversations

Ms. Enriquez was asked to share the types of conversations she might have had that centered on *curriculum policy*. I asked her to share if she was involved in formal or informal curriculum writing and conversations that might ensue in that setting:

No, I have not had the opportunity to write curriculum for the district because the way that La Frontera does it is they do it in the summer and they get certain people from every campus. Unfortunately I wasn't chosen, so I'm hoping this coming year I am chosen so I can input my two cents. But I do it here at the campus and for myself. You have to. Yes. And what I also do is I try to do pictures. When I do vocabulary – and I think vocabulary is essential. If they don't know vocabulary then they're not going to comprehend what they're reading. So *when I implement vocabulary I like to implement pictures related to them. Like, "culture," I get pictures of the Valley, because I want them to know that they're important, that their culture is important, and it relates to vocabulary.*

Other than this reference Ms. Enriquez made to curriculum policy implementation, she did not discuss any other conversations she may have had connected to the topic of curriculum policy.

4) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Conversations

Ms. Enriquez was asked to share the types of conversations she might have had that focused on *culturally relevant curriculum*. I first specifically asked Ms. Enriquez if she ever had conversations about culturally relevant curriculum with her Texas history teacher colleagues.

Yes. It comes up with the PowerPoints. We all mentor each other. I'll do a PowerPoint and share it. I have the least experience. I guess I see things different because I just started five years ago in 2008. I send them the PowerPoints and I tell them, 'If you guys want me to change anything let me know, but this is what I'm doing.' Sometimes they'll do a PowerPoint and I'll go, 'Oh, I'm changing it. Look, what do you think if I add this?' *I try to incorporate as much as local history because I think that's important* because then you have kids that say, 'I went to the Alamo and I didn't know why, but now I know why. Like, oh! Too many Mexicans!' I go, 'Yes!' Like the presidential debates, I tell them, 'Look guys. You have to listen to what they're talking about because you're not going to see another presidential debate until four years from now, and you'll be, what, seventeen. So you have to, see what they have to say. How is this going to affect you? Tell your parents. If your parents don't understand, tell your parents. Educate your parents. You're your parents' teachers. Teach parents. You're the teacher.' So I share these ideas when I talk with the other Texas history teachers.

In asking Ms. Enriquez if she ever had discussions with her principal, Mr. Fortunato Franco, or with assistant principals or deans of instruction about culturally relevant curriculum, Ms. Enriquez gave a simple one-word answer: "No."

5) Understanding, Perception of Culturally Relevant Curriculum Policy

Ms. Enriquez was asked to discuss what the seventeen words in the following Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) policy meant to her: "...implementing the district's educational program by using *"resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community."* She stated the following.

In Texas history we do cover these types of topics. Even in Reading they have some of the stories about the Apache Indians, about the Indian heritage which kind of relates to our area, so I think that their resources are very well-connected to *our* ethnic, *our* religious, and *our* culture, especially our culture. I have seen some of their passages that they do in Reading. It's kind of related somehow to the Indians and our culture, not that much as social studies and Texas history, basically, everything that is here in these seventeen words, but I would say that Reading when they do their essays also. In writing, they write essays and sometimes they ask questions like that, history-related questions.

I asked Ms. Enriquez if the district curriculum allowed her to use her migrant and language-learning experiences as models so that students could then bring in their own culturally relevant life experiences into the classroom:

Not as much as I would like to, but then again Texas history has so many TEKS that we have to teach throughout the year. We're on a timeline. So we try as much as we can. For example, you see my bulletin board [pointing at her bulletin board]. We did the Columbian Exchange, and the kids didn't know 'Columbian'. I said, 'This is the Columbian Exchange. *Entrecambio* of goods, what the Europeans took from this new world and what they brought from the old world to the new world.' So they understand the concept of the old world and the new world, and that's what I wanted because that they have to understand. Well, where did we come from? You have to know, 'Oh, there were Indians here but the Europeans came and they intermixed and this is how we have this new culture.' So to me that little project they do as a group is very important, because they didn't know that horses didn't exist in this area. The Europeans brought the horses, and now they're everywhere. And even a little specific thing as a rat. Europe brought the

rats, too. And then we have, once we do the Columbian Exchange, then Spain starts, and Spain and France and other countries start sending explorers, and that's how I bring in their own experiences.

She continued explaining the culturally relevant conversations and experiences she has with her students:

Like when we do vocabulary. I give them the vocabulary picture and I then give them the correct definition and I say, 'Now you summarize that. How would you want it that, write it down like if when you're texting. When you're texting somebody you don't tell them word by word. You say the most important things. Write it down, like that.' At first it was very hard. 'Well, how much?' 'Well, write enough so that *you* understand it, because that's what you're going to be studying. That's how you're going to understand. And maybe not words. Maybe you just want to draw a picture, then go ahead and draw a picture.' So I try to get their learning style because not everybody is, you don't have your cookie cut student. You have students that learn different ways. Like I'm a visual person, as you can see. I'm very visual. I like colors. I like pictures. That's my word wall. Look, for *alcalde*. I have the one from the Simpsons. *I try to use something related to what they're doing right now so that they'll understand the word.*

Ms. Enriquez paused for a moment and then added more examples of her culturally relevant teaching:

The word "council," I used the city of Edinburg. I said, 'Look, look, these are our councilmen.' And I said to them, this is how we got the concept of a city, a city council. They used to call it *ayuntamiento*. And *ayuntamiento* was the city council. When the missions were done, and they started the priest would elect city councils, but Indians,

from the community, and they called it *ayuntamiento*. If you go to Mexico right now they are using *ayuntamiento*. They use it. We don't use it. We call it the city council, but it's same thing. We got the concept from them. So, I do that a lot. But this, Texas history, you *can* do that. It lends itself to it. *Se presta, verdad?* [It lends itself, right?]

Ms. Enriquez then took the opportunity to express concern and frustration at the district-mandated CSCOPE curriculum that she said was not culturally relevant and was a fast-paced and rigid timeline that did not give students a chance to bring in their own stories:

I am on a timeline. *And sometimes I say, 'Who is doing this timeline? How long have they been out of the classroom?' But then I come to my... I vent, and then I say, 'Well, they know that. They do this because they have to go from here to here, and we have this much of time...' But we vent. Teachers do vent. 'Look at this! They were crazy when they were thinking!' Many times it is obvious that they are out of touch with what the students could bring in to the classroom learning.*

I then concluded the interview with Ms. Enriquez by asking her to discuss the biggest lesson she learned from the interview:

The seventeen words. I think about it because what it says, that the board shall rely on *us* to select, so in reality they're signing off on something but they're not getting... It falls back on *us* as a professional. *It's a necessity, because history is not only about Mexican Americans, or Europeans, or, it's about a lot, everybody.* And you *have* to do it. That's why I say, when I tell them, 'We're talking about Texas, guys, but this is not the only thing that was going on. There were many other things going on. That's why we refer back to Europe.' I say, 'Look, in France. France was in war with Spain back home, and it affected the *Nueva Espana*.' So, of course, you have to. Everything is connected. It's a

kind of web. It's connected... *This is an eye-opener, the seventeen words, because, ah, you put more pressure on me... Everything is included there. Everything that defines the social studies is there... heritage, religious, culture, groups and how they contribute to culture... Stories. That's not in CSCOPE...*

Interview Five: Gracielo Gonzalez, Male Teacher, Tuco Benedicto High School

Gracielo Gonzalez, male teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School, was interviewed fifth. The interview occurred October 23, 2012 at 4:00 PM in his classroom.

1) Personal and Educational Background

To commence the interview, I asked Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez to please share about his background and his education, to establish a chronological perspective on his life and his education. He began his conversation with me in detailing his background:

Well, my name is Gracielo Gonzalez. My background, I am half-Latino, half-Anglo. My mom and dad met when they were in college together in the 80s. My dad was actually a migrant student here in La Frontera. He graduated from La Frontera High School in 1975. So, yeah, my father actually came from here and went to the University of Up North on scholarship, Miguel Gonzalez. I think he told me that he got a migrant scholarship over there because he qualified because he worked in the fields until he was fifteen. He met my mother. She's from a little city right outside the school. She went kind of opposite of my dad who went 2,000 miles to school. She came 15 minutes, but still was real eager to get away from her family situation. They moved back down here, actually, in '82. I was born the following year in '83 here in the Valley in Rio Grande Regional.

Mr. Gonzalez reflected for a moment, and then proceeded to continue detailing his family background.

My mom eventually got homesick, I think, a couple of years later when I was three. So my first language was Spanish. I find it interesting that it was my first language and then I had to learn English when I went over there to Up North at age three. So when I went over there I was saying *papa, amiga, mi abuelita, mi mama*, stuff like that. I mean, it changed to Aunty Gin, and Uncle Edward, and stuff. And so I had to kind of relearn over the years. I'm pretty decent now marrying a girl from Mexico, I mean, it helps a lot with my in-laws. So, yeah, I moved back over there.

Mr. Gonzalez reflected on the experience of moving as a child, and shared more memories about his early childhood:

I moved back over there and I grew up in two cities, mainly, again, my mother's original city, which is really a diverse population of both black, white, and a very small population of Latinos, until I was in fourth grade. Then we moved, my parents didn't like the school district, so we ended up moving into a rural kind of upper class little city called Entryway. My sister and I were the lone minorities there in Entryway in school. It was very, very, very, *very* Anglo. It was, I think, probably 97%. There were very few Latinos. Initially we fit in pretty well, my sister and I, because we're both very *guero* [fair skinned]. There was never really that big of an issue, race, but eventually, you know, kids will become meaner and stuff as time goes on.

Mr. Gonzalez then moved the discussion to the topic of education during his high school years:

When I got into high school they actually formed something called "the minority group," which was interesting. We'd always laugh. The Latino population, I think, consisted of four of us. One was my sister. Another was a cousin of mine that had been getting in

trouble here so his mother my aunt shipped him to stay with us up there. So we were the three, and then there was another boy that we knew that he was actually an immigrant, Sergio from Honduras. So he hung a lot with us because he really liked my cousin because they both spoke a lot of Spanish. So we were in that group. I think there were maybe three African American kids and another kid from Africa whose name was Ozzie but I can't remember his last name. So my sophomore through my senior year we were members of this minority group. We got out of class once a week to talk about issues that we saw or thought about. For us there was a lot of focus on 'What is Latino? What does that mean to you guys?' We were Mexican background so we'd kind of fall back into that big umbrella of what Latino is. We were Mexican American. Sergio did not speak a lot of English, and neither did his sister. They'd kind of talk about being Latino but they're more Central American. So we would discuss issues, not super-important to the school, but... I remember once it was brought up, how to get people to saying the "N" word, with the black kids, it was one of the things that they brought up. I remember getting into, not an argument, but a discussion about, 'Well, you guys use it all the time with each other. How is it that, I mean, you get offended and...' And they'd argue, 'No, no, no, you can't call us that because you guys are Latino and you guys are white. And it's offensive.' The minority club!

Next I wanted to ask Mr. Gonzalez directly about the influence his parents had on his education:

My parents? They set up a real good goal. I mean, all the way through when we were in school, we were those kids, my sister and I, we would ask, 'Well, do we *have* to go to school to college?' And my parents would say, 'I mean, *yeah*, there's no two choices

about it.’ They were always very clear with why. They would not say, ‘Well, you’re going to go just because we say.’ They’d say, ‘You can go to college. You’re going to go to college for sure and get a degree, but after that, it’s your choice what to do with it. The reason we want that, is because we want you and your sister to have choices. We want you to be able to choose where it is you want to work, and what you want to work as.’ I guess the benefit not only of my parents being very pro-college, no if’s, and’s, or but’s about if we were going to go. Also, they’re both really well-read people. My parents were big readers, so, just seeing them every night, both of them would be there reading. I know that when we were young my mother would always be reading to us. *I can remember Mom reading even when we were maybe in fourth or fifth grade, sitting down. I remember “The Little House on the Prairie” being like one of my favorite books because of the descriptions that Wilder would always use to describe all of the old processes, like drying meat and stuff like that.*

Mr. Gonzalez then reflected on his college experiences when he attended Up North State University:

I ended up at Up North State University. I got there and it was an eye-opening experience. I lived in the dorms, obviously, with a lot of other people. The interesting part was that Up North State had a minority program called MAJICO [Maximizing Academic Jaunt in College Organization]. MAJICO was really, really awesome. It actually brought a bunch of kids from the Valley as well as a bunch of kids from inner-city Elatraz who were minority students to campus early to explore and to get to know each other for about maybe ten days and see where all the major buildings were. It was pretty fun. I met kids from Southland and Mamachita. I fit in really well with them

because I was thinking, ‘They sound just like my cousins.’ So I felt right at home, like I was back down here. So it was really a fun time. I hung out with them, and then I made some friends with, again, all those kids were soccer players and I was a basketball player. I followed up to see if maybe he had played basketball successfully at his high school, to see if it had an impact on him:

My high school coach, I would never say he was a *racist* guy, but I thought he knew who he wanted to play and he never really gave me a shot. So in high school, I could shoot the basketball relatively well. When we’d go play pick-up games, I was just as good if not better than some of the guys who played in front of me, but I don’t know if I didn’t know the system enough, or if he thought I was too short, or I never really picked a position. I’m not sure what it was, but, in high school, I never really saw the court. I was that – they always teased me – I was the token Mexican kid on the end of the bench. The student section would wear *sombreros* and they’d all yell, ‘Hey, Gonzalez! *Que paso!*’ because I was... even my senior year he brought up a bunch of kids to play in front of me. So in high school, while I was pretty decent, I never really got any looks to go play at college level because I never really the saw the court, to be honest.

Mr. Gonzalez continued his narration about his high school basketball coach, and the deep impression he left on Mr. Gonzalez:

That’s one thing I could say about my high school coach that I really remember – he wasn’t a very good people person. I would stay after practice. I would work really hard. I guess he just never really saw that. So, again, whenever I see kids in the class or on the court or on the field doing that, that’s one of the things I point out. The kid on the back, that’s real quiet and works hard. It’s one of the things I try to notice, or even to the whole

class not just individually, to say to them, ‘Hey, good job today! You worked really well!’ *That’s one of the things I think that gets forgotten. You carry it with you. You’re not going to be like that guy. So that’s one thing that my high school coach kind of left an impression on me.*

2) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Understandings and Perceptions

Mr. Gonzalez was then asked some questions about both his understanding and his perception of *culturally relevant curriculum*. I began by sharing that Ladson-Billings (1994) ideas on culturally relevant curriculum as “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.” I asked Mr. Gonzalez to share what that meant to him, and how it manifested itself in his job as a high school social studies teacher:

The most difficult thing with American history and world history a little bit is trying to relate things to them here in the Valley, especially with being ninety-nine percent Latino, trying to show them the issues that they’re talking about, especially politically, you can really see it. Anything that you can use, especially with history, because it’s so hard to get kids motivated about it. I always tell the kids, the one thing that’s hard about history is that it’s so easy to mess it up and have kids immediately fall asleep. So you have to get anything you can, especially like using things that relate to Latinos. That’ll get a kid interested in what they’re learning. It’s essential. To me it seems that without that you really don’t have anything. I remember one of the trainers we had saying that you want the kids not to remember the date of such and such happening, you want the kids to remember the activity that was describing it. So I think that without that connection, without those interpersonal skills, without those political games that they need to

understand how to use in order to do things, how are you going to get a kid to really learn it? I don't want to say it's easy, but I almost feel like it is easy to get a kid to simply regurgitate what you're trying to pour into him and simply get it back on a quiz. It seems to me that without that you're never really going to get a kid to recollect what he needs. And again with history it's a relatively big thing, and it seems that without that base it's hard to really impart anything that is really going to sink in.

3) Curriculum Policy Conversations

Mr. Gonzalez was asked to share the types of conversations he might have had that centered on *curriculum policy*. I asked Mr. Gonzalez to share if he was involved in formal or informal curriculum writing and conversations that might ensue in that setting. His simple answer was, "No, not really."

4) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Conversations

Mr. Gonzalez was asked to share the types of conversations he might have had that focused on *culturally relevant curriculum*. I first specifically asked Mr. Gonzalez if he ever had conversations about culturally relevant curriculum with the social studies colleagues in his department:

No, these are more general, more philosophical questions that aren't really talked about in the department meetings. In the department meetings, a lot of the time it's more logistical, talking about testing information and how many kids got this percentage of what questions right. At the beginning of the year there's a lot of sharing. Even then it's more about first we get to know each other. Then there are these huge binders that we have to know front and back. Sometimes we'll share ideas, like, 'What do you do to get

the kids involved?’ So, in that aspect, yeah, we do talk about that a little bit. I’ve brought up my fly game, and I use a quiz bowl expert with the kids.

When I asked Mr. Gonzalez if he had conversations with parents at Tuco Benedicto High school about curriculum and specifically culturally relevant curriculum he replied with a simple response. “Yeah, especially with the parents who are a little more involved. They want to know specifically what they're doing.” But other than that, Mr. Gonzalez said that parents in general do not ask about specific culturally relevant curriculum.

5) Understanding, Perception of Culturally Relevant Curriculum Policy

Mr. Gonzalez was asked to discuss what the seventeen words in the following Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) policy meant to him: “...implementing the district’s educational program by using *“resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community.”* Mr. Gonzalez stated the following:

Number one, of course, that it’s a great responsibility. In this day and age, *number two, that it’s got to be handled delicately.* You can’t force anything, especially with the religion thing. I always get, not nervous, but a little bit on edge with dealing with Christianity and so many different variations of it. That and ethnic and cultural groups, it’s the importance of getting the kids to understand that we live in a very big place.

Again, this idea always worries me, especially here in La Frontera and the Valley because the kids have a very limited view of it. *When I see this it reminds me how I guess how grave a responsibility the teachers have in order to give these kids a little bit of an idea of what’s out there.* I know for me personally, I always try to use as many different examples of as many different people. There is a big responsibility that comes with it.

You'd be surprised how many kids don't know anything but what's outside their door and their own school and their own street.

Mr. Gonzalez took a momentary pause and then he continued to elaborate a bit more on the theme:

You'd be surprised how many times you hear racist or derogatory comments about specific religions or people. I ask the kids, "Have you guys ever *really* met anyone who is actually Middle Eastern or who is a Muslim and who practices Ramadan?" It's one of the things I think that helps by going to the big colleges and I'm really glad I went to Up North State because you can start talking about Islam and I can say, "Hey, I have a friend that had to go through Ramadan and you're only allowed to eat from sundown to sunup." I'm hoping that the kids will learn to respect. Kids throw around religious terms around in my class, and I really don't think they have any idea of what it's like in the world. So, *with the seventeen words here, it just seems like it's such a large portion of what we do.* It strikes me as that. That it's something I have to make sure the kids understand before they walk out. *I have a last lecture at the end of every year that hits on not necessarily each of these, but it's important to have a belief in something, that you have to really understand who you are and where you came from, and that if you know these things you can contribute to the world as long as you really are okay with everyone.* That's my overall impression of what comes to mind with the seventeen words.

The researcher found Mr. Gonzalez to be an open, deliberate participant who was quite conversant. As such, Mr. Gonzalez's candid contributions to the research study were helpful to the researcher.

Interview Six: Herlinda Hernandez, Female Teacher, Tuco Benedicto High School

Herlinda Hernandez, female teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School, was interviewed sixth. The interview occurred November 1, 2012 at 4:00 PM in her classroom.

1) Personal and Educational Background

To commence the interview, I asked Ms. Herlinda Hernandez to please share about her background and her education, to establish a chronological perspective on her life and her education. She began her conversation with me in detailing her background:

My name is Herlinda Hernandez. I was born and raised here in La Frontera. I started off my early education at El Tio Chano Elementary through second grade, and from third to fifth grade I moved over to Fifirrucho Elementary because of rezoning. I had some excellent schooling there. I then went on to the sixth grade campus at that point, which is now the Soldado Middle School. Then I attended Directional Junior High, and went on to graduate from La Frontera High School back in 2003. As a student I was always very, of course, involved as I could be. I was in the student council, always in class representative running for historian or different clubs. Throughout school I was involved in choir. I did that from sixth grade through tenth grade. Then I just focused on getting a job.

Ms. Hernandez detailed her job experiences which started while she was in high school and continued on through college:

In my family we grew up very middle class, so if I wanted a cell phone I needed to pay for it. So as soon as I turned sixteen I got a job. At first I was working at a *raspa* stand here locally. I went on to work at TAD. And I feel that those experiences helped. That's what I encourage my students a lot to do, to work at a place like TAD. You make a lot of friends and you learn different people here locally. I went on to work for a law firm at the

law office of Bill Johnson here in Kingberry throughout college, and I graduated from Las Americas University here.

After describing her schooling and jobs as a young person, Ms. Hernandez stepped back in time and shared her family's history, and growing up:

I was raised and born here, but my parents were not from the Valley. My mom is from Seca Grande, and she was born and raised there. My father is from Vientoville, and of course, born and raised there. They moved for their early life part of their marriage over there. They moved here when my oldest sister was about to be born, so they've been here for about thirty years already. All my life has been here, but always going back and forth to Seca Grande and Vientoville, with the very different cultures. I always said that I got to see different sides. We weren't very wealthy at all, but in going to Seca Grande to see my family they lived very differently than us. They lived very poor lives. Of course, education was never a focus. They were always on welfare, and we never were on anything like that.

Ms. Hernandez paused very briefly, and then she proceeded to discuss her family's strong work ethic:

My parents worked real hard. My mother is a secretary and has been a secretary all her life for a law firm, different lawyers. And my father has been building homes in construction for also the last thirty years. He has had two different companies, but they were not successful, so he's had to go back and forth with different contractors. So right now currently that's what he does. He's sixty years old now, so he's had different health issues, on disability, but he still tries to be as productive as possible because he's still got a lot in him. My mom works very hard. She's been like I said a secretary her whole life.

I asked Ms. Hernandez to reflect briefly on what influence her parents had on her education:

My father, he was always just the type of man to say, 'Oh, whatever your mom says.' So, as long as my mom, my mom has been my angel. I really credit her with that. She did say, 'Go to school. Do your best.' I was always on them, 'Do your taxes early because I really need to do my FAFSA.' So a lot of it was self-motivation, but she always helped me in that way. She'd say, 'Okay, you say you need this. Let me do this real quick. Here you go.' So she encouraged me, and she trusted that I knew what I was doing. It was, 'We're here, if you need something.' But they didn't know anything college. They didn't know how or what was needed to get in or any requirements. Money always was, I was very fortunate at the time to get scholarships, a small scholarship to go to Las Americas University and after that I just kind of had to rely on the Texas grants. I had to maintain a 3.0 GPA on that, and I did. I did well in college and was able to maintain that so I didn't have to get any loans. I graduated in four and a half years. I think I graduated in the summer. I graduated on a Saturday and I literally started work that next Monday teaching. I already had a teaching job.

2) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Understandings and Perceptions

Ms. Hernandez was then asked some questions about both her understanding and his perception of *culturally relevant curriculum*. I began by stating that Ladson-Billings (1994) defined culturally relevant curriculum as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes." I asked Ms. Hernandez to share what that meant to her, and how it manifested itself in her job as a high school social studies teacher.

I think in college my eyes were really opened to this, and so teaching it has been really just an experience because you have to be careful especially with the different backgrounds that they do come from. In this school district it's been that the majority of the students are Hispanic, but in the previous campus that I came from I had such a diverse population. I was in Harvester. So, honestly, in my AP classes I had three languages going on. I had Korean, I had English, and I had Spanish, in different parts of the room. I had students in my regular classes from Brazil, and from different parts of Mexico. I was there for five years. I started there in 2007 and was there until last school year.

Ms. Hernandez reflected on how those multicultural demographics helped her connect to the importance of a culturally relevant curriculum. I next asked Ms. Hernandez to share more about that experience at Harvester High School at Harvester ISD:

Oh, it's very different. People think you go over there and they're all white. No, it's not like that anymore, in the cultural aspect that I have to touch on, because they all have different questions. My students from Brazil in particular is always like trying to get more out of that and so I'd have to make sure I knew my history and make sure I had my content and make sure I knew how to be sensitive, to hit it in a way that they felt we weren't trying to attack. A lot of times people get different perceptions on Americans, saying that Americans are full of themselves, and that Americans only stick to their perspective. I also had to teach a lot of Asian history. It was real uncomfortable because I really didn't take any in college. I focused a lot on American history, and a little on European history. But learning Asian history was something really good for me.

Ms. Hernandez was explaining that in order to use her Asian students' backgrounds as cultural referents that Ladson-Billings (1994) discussed in her definition of culturally relevant curriculum, Ms. Hernandez had to be knowledgeable of those Asian cultural referents. Ms. Hernandez further explained how her world history content allowed for cultural relevance to be explored via the studies of multiple religions:

Having to teach religion has been a big part of the cultural aspect. We teach all types of religions, from Confucianism to Buddhism, Daoism to Hinduism, Islam to Christianity, and you have to be sensitive. Of course, in teaching religion I am not teaching them to become a Muslim or to become a Buddhist. I have to teach basic tenets and beliefs and see how it was implemented in history and how it has affected and changed because so much of our history has been made because of our religions, and how people feel that what they're doing is right because of their religious beliefs. And then how it's been shaped here, being in our area it is predominantly Catholic, predominantly Christian, they need to see and focus and see different ways that people live. They get so amazed that there's so many similarities between Christians and Muslims and Jews, but they've been in conflict for thousands of years. The kids say, 'But don't they realize that you're not supposed to kill? Isn't that part of the ten commandments?' I tell them, yes, but *you also have to see it from this light. It's all part of culture, and I think this is why I really love these classes. It's shown them and I'm able to teach them there's not one way.*

Ms. Hernandez then summarized in her words what a culturally relevant curriculum means to her:

I would say that culturally relevant curriculum would have to be, not only sensitive but also accurate in teaching our content, in teaching the different parts of the world. In world

history we teach ten thousand years of information, so we have to teach all sorts of culture and the blending of culture and how it affects them socially, people that like each other and have made those connections, why cultures have developed the way they have. I tell them the Mexican culture in itself is a mixture. It wasn't Mexican. It was Spanish and the Natives. So that is a whole new culture that was developed here. So having to describe culturally relevant curriculum would just be the blending of how we've all come, and how even in the United States we can't say this is what an American looks like. An American can be all colors, any religion. You kind of have to focus on the broad aspects of what does an American want, or what does an American focus on, or what does an American have as goals in life?

Ms. Hernandez next shared how she personally feels about the topic of culturally relevant curriculum:

I really just feel that it's so important. I feel that we need to move beyond what we are comfortable with and what we know. As I said, we were raised and brought up, you know, it was very American, that you need to be *an* American, but our culture was so Hispanic. And so as a student I always love to learn where we're from, why people act the way they do here. But I am so interested about the world and so interested in how others view us and how we can make things better.

Ms. Hernandez spoke about how allowing students to bring in their own ideas and questions about cultural issues make the class relevant:

They bring in their own a lot. It's funny what they tell you. Some of them can be very open about their families and how their families feel about the different cultures and I always notice that there's a lot of racism in our culture. We are Hispanic, and we see how

a lot of them will say, ‘Oh, the Indians. Oh, the Muslims from the Middle East.’ They have this stereotype, and they really believe it’s us and them. They say, ‘They have different gods than we do.’ And I say, ‘Guys, you don’t understand. Look. Look at all the similarities.’ It really makes the classroom experience a culturally relevant one.

Ms. Hernandez then related an example of a recent classroom experience that demonstrated how students can connect their lives to the taught curriculum provided by La Frontera ISD:

We were talking about the Banshee migration in Africa. And I asked them, ‘What are the reasons people migrate?’ They’re telling me, ‘Jobs, weather, drought.’ We explained how the eastern portion of Africa developed, through trade with Arabs and how it evolved into the Indian Ocean trade. I tell them, ‘Okay, guys, think about it, locally. Why do people migrate? I mean, we have a big issue with immigration. People say that they come here and they are taking jobs, and they say they just want to be criminals. We know from a different aspect that that is not true.’ We saw a short episode of “Thirty Days” where a reporter meets illegal immigrants on the Mexican border who tell him, ‘You need to go see what we were living in in Mexico to understand why we would even think we came here.’ So when he goes there he sees the horrible conditions and the family there is saying they never wanted to leave. They didn’t want to go to the U.S. because this is their home, but it was just a reality that there was nothing left there for them. So my students are able to connect because they’re speaking Spanish and my students are so interested, saying, ‘Miss, this is so true. We know people don’t come to be bad. They come because in Mexico right now the reality is, yes, there are no jobs,’ but also because they’re very interested in the drug war. The students really connected – it is relevant.

3) Curriculum Policy Conversations

Ms. Hernandez was asked to share the types of conversations she might have had that centered on *curriculum policy*. I asked Ms. Hernandez to discuss any opportunities she may have had where curriculum policy and curriculum development were at the center:

Luckily I *have* had opportunities. I've been very fortunate. I have been working with Mrs. Pocosaco, the social studies head of instruction, out here in our district. She's been so nice and pleasant. They have had me review the benchmarks, you know, before they take them, and I guess me in particular because I'm new as a teacher, and I've taken a leadership role in world history to say, 'Look, this is not being hit on, and this needs to be changed, this portion is missing a map.' And so in that aspect, yes, I've been able to be involved. For next year, they've already told me, 'Next year, you're spearheading. You're going to be working on curriculum in the summer and help us develop more diagrams, charts, comparison graphs, whatever needs to be done to get these kids to the next level.' I'm trying to get things better because I feel I was very well-trained in Harvester ISD. I really feel lucky that the bar was always set very high, and I always had to fight to be the best. Here, it's more like people are *following* what I'm doing and I feel like that's very flattering and I'm very happy to be here to help my own kids and community, and that's the biggest thing. I'm happy to help out La Frontera.

4) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Conversations

Ms. Hernandez was asked to share the types of conversations she might have had that focused on *culturally relevant curriculum*. First I asked Ms. Hernandez if she's had a chance to discuss culturally relevant curriculum with upper administration, such as the assistant principal, the principal Ms. Cardenas, or the dean of instruction.

I've had more of a connection with Ms. Salva our dean of instruction, and recently with Mrs. Cardenas because we are working on a big project right now. And my project with my students is we're trying to get a city ordinance to ban texting and driving. Students need to try to be involved, even if it is on a small scale with the city, city-wide. And this is just a law in La Frontera that is going to ban texting and driving, but just to know that this is one way to start it so that way when they get up to being in college in more programs they can understand it. There's *always* a way to make a difference. So these are the conversations I've had that relate to the students and their background and their culture.

I then asked Ms. Hernandez to reflect on what value any conversations directly about culturally relevant curriculum might have:

Well, one thing is, the value would be immense, really, because sometimes I feel that even going into the central office level, they put a lot of pressure on us to, "Create this report. Get them to pass the benchmarks." Sometimes, as an administrator they forget what it's like to *be* in the classroom, and that's it just as easy as, "Well, here, have them do vocabulary, and then they're going to pass the benchmark and they're going to know everything." They, they're not. You know, there has to be the responsibility of the students to also go home, study or come in for tutoring. That always doesn't happen, and we have to also really understand that, it's not that it's impossible, but it's more difficult.

I then asked Ms. Hernandez if she had conversations about curriculum and culturally relevant curriculum within her social studies department:

I'm friends with the AP teacher, Mr. Chuparosa. He's my friend since we were in high school. When we both got assigned here, we were very excited. And he told me, "Hey, I

got AP human geography class,” and I said, “I got AP world history,” so we kind of go back and forth on what are the connections between geography and world history. He’s been one of the main people I do talk to since just because I’ve known him for so long. I asked Ms. Hernandez if she had had any conversations with parents or directly with students about culturally relevant curriculum:

No, not really. Meet the Teacher night came so early in the year, during the second week of school, that I did not really have the opportunity to discuss any detailed specifics about the curriculum the students are going to experience.

5) Understanding, Perception of Culturally Relevant Curriculum Policy

Ms. Hernandez was asked to discuss what the seventeen words in the following Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) policy meant to her: “...implementing the district’s educational program by using *“resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community.”* Ms. Hernandez shared this:

Gosh. I mean, in world history we just talk so much about it, right? And it’s just a focus of mine, I mean, I love, I tell them, you know, ‘We’re *always* going to talk about religion. We’re *always* going to talk about how we’ve become who we are, or how this group has become like *this* and the blending of cultures,’ especially in our own country because we’re just such a mixture of everything, right? I think that, personally, being able to see more than just what the Valley is *is* important. They’re so fixed with that ‘here it’s right... this is the *only* right way’ ... mentality. Their parents kind of encourage that sometimes. I try to tell them, ‘*It’s right to believe, to have a belief system, and don’t lose it. Don’t lose your beliefs. But you have to be accepting that there are going to be people*

that are not like you, and how are you going to interact with them, because you're going to find people in your job, in your future that you're not going to be like, and if you're not able to work with them then you're fired, or you're going to quit because you don't like it, and then what job are you going to have?' I tell them, 'Learn how it is. Don't say it's weird. Don't be rude. Accept it.' I tell them I love that they have beliefs, but I remind them to be responsible for what they say.

To close the interview I asked Ms. Hernandez what she may have learned from participating in the interview:

I think it's interesting that I was chosen for this because it's really just hit on something that I am passionate about. I focus my lessons on trying to get the kids to think more than just the Valley. Culturally relevant curriculum has been something that I really try to focus on. I'm really glad you're studying how it affects the kids and what we're doing here in the schools to try to open our minds.

Ms. Hernandez's interview proved to be an open, quite candid conversation that explored her values and beliefs about her background and culturally relevant curriculum. The discussion allowed the researcher an opportunity to uncover many salient points that Ms. Hernandez holds deeply.

Interview Seven: Bianca Benitez, Assistant Superintendent, La Frontera ISD

Bianca Benitez, female assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction at La Frontera ISD, was interviewed seventh. The interview occurred November 2, 2012 at 2:00 PM in her office.

1) Personal and Educational Background

To commence the interview, I asked Ms. Bianca Benitez to please share about her background and her education, to establish a chronological perspective on her life and her education. She began her conversation with me in detailing her background:

Alright, my name is Bianca Benitez, and I am the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for the La Frontera ISD. I actually took this position in January of 2008. Prior to coming to central office I had served for ten years as principal of La Frontera High School. Prior to that, I had served as elementary principal at Soldado Elementary here in La Frontera. Prior to my seven years at Soldado Elementary I spent about ten to fifteen years with the Bigside school district. The capacities that I had were seven years as assistant principal at Ramshackle Middle School and the remainders of the years were a combination of elementary teacher and as reading specialist in a federally funded reading lab. My experience overall bringing it up to the time I came here to central office encompasses having had experience working at the elementary level, working at the middle school level, and of course working at the high school level.

Ms. Benitez next spoke about her school experience growing up in the Ro Grande Valley area:

I'm a graduate of Quick Rise Slow Tumble (QRST) High School, and after graduating from high school I went on to receive my bachelor's degree from UT Las Americas and ever since then I really haven't stopped growing professionally. I continued my master's degree in curriculum and instruction in education at UT Central State, and continued to work on the mid-management and supervisory certificates. Most recently I am working on my doctoral degree at UT Las Americas in educational leadership.

I probed Ms. Benitez to share more about her early life and education at the QRST schools:

Actually my first nine years of school, kindergarten through eighth grade, I attended St. Pagano Catholic School. So I first went to a private school, my first nine years, which was at the time in Slow Tumble. So my first public years in education really were when I started ninth grade at QRST High School.

Ms. Benitez paused a few moments before proceeding to discuss her parents' background next:

My parents both came from Mexico. Both had very limited education. I think that my dad may have had a little bit more than my mother. I think he went up to the fifth grade, and through his choice he did not continue his education. My mother, on the other hand, her dad passed away and so being a female in the family was expected to be at home and take care of the house chores, so she ended up not being able to continue school. They both came to the United States, maybe about sixty to sixty-five years ago, and have been here ever since. My dad was really the first one from his side of the family that ever crossed into the United States, and so was my mother.

I asked Ms. Benitez to provide details on what influence her parents may have had on her education:

The influence that my dad had was that he would always instill in us that we needed to have an education going beyond what they had, and the reason they would always say was because we would be able to have a life that would be better in terms of sacrifices, and my dad always instilled in us the importance of study. As a matter of fact, even though he was limited in his education we learned our multiplications through our dad

teaching it to us. He would make sure that we were doing our homework. He would always make sure that we were actually sitting down physically and concentrating doing homework. That was something that I recall that my dad always made sure that we were doing. So besides having our chores that we were scheduled to do, my siblings and I were actually a family of eight siblings, but each one of us as we grew up we had chores, so chores were something that we always had. But what was most important was our school work and doing well. And attending college was something that was already instilled in me by my parents. As a matter of fact, I graduated from high school at the end of May, and then I was there at Las Americas registering for the first summer session soon after in June. *They were very encouraging. They just instilled that in all of us. High school was more like one step into the long process of our education.*

In reflecting about her father's work ethic which he instilled in his children, Ms. Benitez remembered the following:

My dad was a laborer. Actually, he worked in the gin. He was a ginner. They would make the cotton bales, and when that was not in season my dad would work at the plant in Quick that would have the vegetables that were in season. After that, like his last fifteen years before he retired, he worked for the QRST school district as a maintenance and facilities worker. So he was a blue collar worker pretty much all his life. So, yes, he had two jobs.

2) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Understandings and Perceptions

Ms. Benitez was then asked some questions about both her understanding and her perception of *culturally relevant curriculum*. I began by explaining that Ladson-Billings (1994) shared that culturally relevant curriculum is "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually,

socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.” I asked Ms. Benitez to share what that meant to her, and how it manifested itself in her job as the district’s assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction:

When I see this statement about culturally relevant social studies curriculum, to me it means that *when we’re studying social studies we take the perspective also of what is it that the students, their own cultural background brings to the learning and making it be relevant. That is determined by how the teacher goes about in integrating those experiences that the students bring because of their culture into what is being studied at that time.* The connection I see is that it’s very important that we keep in mind the student’s culture because that gives the students a sense of self-esteem and a sense of worthiness. I instill in principals and teachers and anybody that I get to talk to when it comes to this particular topic – students’ language and culture – that we should be looking at the students’ language that they bring to the school as an asset and not as deficits.

Ms. Benitez further elaborated on this topic about the students’ background language as an asset:

Quite often we hear or we read in the literature that teachers, for example, tend to perceive a student who is a primary Spanish speaker that that is a sign that they can’t learn, or that they won’t be able to do well in state accountability tests because they don’t know the language. And it really should not be perceived that way at all. It should be used as the vehicle to be able to learn the content, and that *language should never be looked at as a barrier but rather as a way for them to learn the concepts in the language that they’re learning*, which in this case would be English.

I probed into how she might connect to culturally relevant curriculum personally having had parents that both came from Mexico:

I connect very well because I get a sense of and I take pride in my culture. I try to be a role model for other people that may be ashamed, and I say ashamed because sometimes we get parents whose children qualify to be in the bilingual program when they get to where they're going to sign off on the letter that they're to receive bilingual instruction, and they have reservations, and they say, 'No, I don't want my child to be learning Spanish. I want my child to learn English.' It seems to me that the Hispanic culture is the only culture that does that because all other cultures take a lot of pride in their culture's first language. For some reason we don't. It seems to me that it's treated as something to be ashamed of. Or, the parents feel like it's going to interfere in learning in school. When I see that we are looking at Spanish, at the Spanish language, that it's not a barrier to have and to see that it's celebrated, then it gives me hope that not everyone thinks that way, in a negative way, of having, the culture, and having maybe the primary language as a young person that is other than English.

I then asked Ms. Benitez to discuss how she personally felt about cultural relevance in education:

It's very important in the education of the students of any culture. We're talking about our kids here in this area and they're primarily of Mexican descent, so that's why we talk about events from our culture. In another part of the country where it's another culture then it would be their own culture. That's very, very relevant.

3) Curriculum Policy Conversations

Ms. Benitez was asked to share the types of conversations she might have had that centered on *curriculum policy*. I asked Ms. Benitez if she had any conversations with principals about curricular policy, and if they were involved in curricular decision making:

Oh, yes. On the week when we do not have a board meeting, on Wednesday from three to five PM I meet with all thirty-one elementary principals. So I do that every two weeks. On the Thursday, the following day after I meet with the elementary principals, in the morning from nine-thirty to eleven-thirty I meet with high school principals, and this is also every two weeks. On that same Thursday afternoon from three to five I meet with the middle school principals. That's every two weeks. So, I have *a lot* of contact with the principals. We do have curricular discussions, because we have a district curriculum, which in this case is CSCAPE, but at the same time the principals have a lot of discretion on how they're going to integrate other kinds of resources, themes, or anything else that they want to do.

Ms. Benitez then gave me an example of how principals empower their teachers to integrate their own ideas into the district curriculum:

I'll give you an example. We were in a classroom at a campus where the teacher said, 'I have found that when I make things relevant to them, they master the content.' So, she then directed me to her bulletin board. I noticed that she had integrated writing and art. What she did was that she used *la loteria* as a way. She was using a concept of math, so the kids, in order to be able to call out that *loteria* card, they really had to know the math concept that was on the picture that they had actually colored. She gave them the picture, they colored it, and they named it. So they were writing the term, and she had already

also taught it to them. This was third grade. I really thought it was so good that I said to the principal that was with me in that classroom visit, ‘I’d like for your teacher to present to the principals this display when Dr. Arnoldo has his administrators’ meeting.’ Well, we did that about a month ago. *So, when you ask me when is it that I communicate with the principals about issues of curriculum and instruction, whenever I see something that is very relevant to how they incorporate the students’ culture, I take the opportunity.*

4) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Conversations

Ms. Benitez was asked to share the types of conversations she might have had that focused on *culturally relevant curriculum*. I asked Ms. Benitez if she had opportunity to discuss with Superintendent Dr. Arnoldo:

Yes, I do because in our district any activities that are going to be taking place even if they are during the school day or if they are going to be taking place after school or a weekend, they come through my office. So I know when we’re going to have activities such as *diezyseis de septiembre*, or an activity such as the activities that were held today in some of our schools for *dia de los muertos*. These activities, they have to come through me so I have an opportunity to discuss them with him. In that sense I would say that he’s aware of what is it that we’re doing in our school district at some of our campuses to celebrate these events. He’s supportive in the sense that he says, ‘That’s good,’ and signs off on them.

I asked Ms. Benitez to discuss any conversations with parents she may have where the importance of culture and relevance is brought up:

In my job here, we have the Saturday camps for middle school students, through the Texas Valley Connection Association partnership that we have with what we call the La

Frontera Camp. We have also what we call Family Connection nights, and I've attended some of those parent meetings, and that's when we talk to the parents. Last year we had an initiative for Pre-K parents called Read and Read Some More. It was a district-wide initiative where we talked to the parents about the importance of reading to their children and about attendance, because we had the problem of Pre-K parents not seeing the importance of Pre-K. Parents were saying, 'Well, it's only half a day. It's only two hours. *No, no se quizo levantar.*' [He didn't want to get up.] So we're teaching them the importance of them getting the head start that they need to be ready for Kindergarten. So we give them the value, because we model to the parents.

Ms. Benitez further elaborated the parental initiative on reading that she had just introduced:

We gave them a children's book that were donated by the South Texas Reading Club. It was an English book. We modeled. We told them, 'You can teach the colors, in Spanish. You can teach what you see in the pictures, so they can learn vocabulary because they will need that.' In other words we are telling the parents, 'It doesn't matter, if you're going to be teaching them in English or in Spanish. You can speak Spanish, if that's the language you know, then that's what you teach. The language is not important. It's what they're learning, the vocabulary that's important.' Later on they're going to transfer, but at least they understand and they know the name of that object in their primary language, which is what they talk about, *using their language, their experience into the new language.*

5) Understanding, Perception of Culturally Relevant Curriculum Policy

Ms. Benitez was asked to discuss what the seventeen words in the following Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) policy meant to her: "...implementing the district's educational program by using *"resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community."*" I asked Ms. Benitez how the seventeen word policy connected to what we had been discussing:

Sure. It connects. Let's say when they're selecting the children's library books at the schools, which is something that is done every year because the librarians get a budget and in our district our librarians have a lot of input. They select the company once they hear from the different vendors and their companies, *and one of the things that they focus on is what company has the most diversity, as far as the content of the books.* They include different ethnic groups, different cultures, so just by doing that already across the district I already know that we have to be making sure that they specifically have books on Hispanic leaders, that they are already looking for that. *Librarians are already cognizant of the fact that it is important to have children's literature books that have diverse cultures because in elementary you learn about the different cultures of the world.* So elementary teachers want to be sure that they have library books to support what they're studying. And I know that they do.

I next asked Ms. Benitez to reflect on how she felt about the culturally relevant curriculum policy such as the one that TASB sent to school boards across Texas to consider adopting:

It should be important. It should emphasize more. It should be more direct. It should say that the resources should reflect a combination of direct cultures. It needs to be very

deliberate, as opposed to, 'I hope it happens.' I just know that in our district that we do that because I supervise the person who is in charge of the library and so I make sure that she knows that she communicates to them that I want to make sure that in their selections that they're taking culture, in other words that they see Hispanic leaders and that they see brown faces, in other words that they don't just see white faces, or that there's nothing about the culture.

In closing, I asked Ms. Benitez what the biggest lesson was that she may have learned from participating in the interview:

It's interesting that you ask that because I can tell you that this whole interview is probably going to be already making an impact in one department in one high school. I was asking the science department head from La Frontera High School who was here just prior to you coming in to start the interview, and I asked her, 'What do you all do in science to make it culturally relevant?' And she really couldn't tell me, and I said, 'Have you ever thought, for example, in science, are there any scientists that have done anything that would be part of the concept that the children are learning or that they're tested in this STAAR exam that has contributions that were done by Hispanics?' She looked at me, and said, 'I don't know. I've never thought about that, but that's a good question.' I said, 'I'd like for you to have your students research that, and have them present in the class.' So she's going to do that, and I know Ms. Garcia, she's a top-notch teacher, and I have no doubt that she's going to follow through with that. So *I'm going to say that having just been here today you've already made an impact, on one teacher one department in one high school. And it will only grow from there.*

Interview Eight: Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo, Superintendent of Schools, La Frontera ISD

Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo, superintendent of schools at La Frontera ISD, was interviewed eighth. The interview occurred November 5, 2012 at 2:00 PM in his office.

1) Personal and Educational Background

To commence the interview, I asked Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo to please share about his background and his education, to establish a chronological perspective on his life and his education. Dr. Arnoldo began his conversation with me by detailing his background:

Okay, my name is Alvaro Arnoldo and I am the superintendent of schools for La Frontera ISD. I was born in Bakersfield, California, when my parents migrated during that time back in the 60s. Right after my birth, my parents moved back to Pueblote, Mexico. So then I spent from two years old till I was eight years old in Pueblote. I lived in Mexico and I attended schools there in Mexico for two or three years. After that my parents moved the family back to the United States, and so we settled in High Town, south High Town. By that time I was eight years old, so I was already behind in the language. The reason I'm saying this is because I went through the recent immigrant program, then I went through the limited English proficient because of having to learn a second language which was English. So I attended schools in High Town, went through the recent immigrant program, and then was mainstreamed after two years. Then I worked of course in developing my English skills, my English language learner type of skills that I needed to have to be successful. After that I went to schools in south High Town. If you're not familiar with south High Town, it is the barrios, the poverty area of High Town.

Dr. Arnoldo continued sharing about his early public schooling experiences in High Town.

For the recent immigrants I attended a school named Lenguaje Elementary. Then I went to Big Ruffian Elementary. Both of those were in south High Town, and both are closed now. Then I went to Peanuts Elementary and Bullet Elementary, and those were my home schools. Then I went to middle school at Desgracia Middle School, freshman campus which at that time was Huey Middle School, and then High Town High School. So that's been my upbringing.

I then asked Dr. Arnolito to share more about his family's background. "I came from a poor family, migrant parents, moved to Mexico, came back. My father was in the construction business. I went to High Town schools, graduated, and went to college."

Dr. Arnolito then narrated his extensive schooling and positions he has held over the years:

It was always my dream to go to college. I got a two-year degree in a medical-related field. That helped me get a job right away at a local hospital, and through that job I was able to work at nights, three to eleven or on weekends. So I did that part-time until I got my bachelor's degree in finance, and got my teaching certificate in mathematics because I had a math minor. I gave up working at the hospital because I used that to put me through school, and then I started teaching mathematics at Zopiloto High School in 1987. I taught for four years, then I got my masters in counseling, and I came to La Frontera Directional High School as a high school counselor, as what they called a crisis intervention counselor. From there I've gotten my certification not only in counseling but also in mid-management, so I went into administration. Then I became the test coordinator for La Frontera Directional High School. It was called the tutorial facilitator position but it was mainly about testing and organizing that at the high school. Then after

that I became the migrant coordinator for La Frontera ISD. I did that for two years and then I went back to Zopiloto as an elementary principal. I did that for five and a half years and then I became the federal programs director. I did that for about three years, and then I became the assistant superintendent for finance, and I did that for another three years. And then I'm here as superintendent of schools and this is my fourth year. So, total number of years that I have been in education – from classroom teacher, to counselor, to facilitator, to migrant coordinator, to principal, to director of federal programs, to assistant superintendent, *and* superintendent – is a total of twenty-six years.

Dr. Arnoldo next connected his life story to the relational factor he has when knowing about meeting the needs of all learners at La Frontera ISD:

That's basically my background. *I can familiarize myself with kids that we have in our district, as far as the limited English proficient kids, the recent immigrants, the ones that have migrant parents, the ones that have to learn a second language, the ones that are in poverty, because I can identify myself with those kids because my background is very similar to those kids of today that have all those obstacles. It's not impossible, but it's something you have to overcome.*

I probed Dr. Arnoldo to share what influence his parents might have had on his educational experiences:

Well, you know, my parents are like most parents because they did not have an education. I think my father had a third or fourth grade education, and my mama about the same. So *they wanted us the family to have an education but they didn't promote it because they didn't know any better. I wish they would have, but they didn't know any better.* They couldn't help us with homework, because they don't know the language. But

they wanted us to go to school, and finish school, and go to college, yes. But they were limited in what they could do as far as helping us. I must add *that my self-motivation was I didn't want to work. I didn't want to be poor. I didn't want to work out on the fields. I didn't want to work construction. That was rough, because I did that work with my dad, and that was not good.* We would work our butt off, in his construction projects, because he would have us work out there. So I got to know that kind of a lifestyle, and that I didn't want. I did *not* want to be in construction. That's not for me. It wasn't for me, and the only way to get out of it was through school.

2) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Understandings and Perceptions

Dr. Arnoldo was then asked some questions about both his understanding and his perception of *culturally relevant curriculum*. I began by sharing the definition that Ladson-Billings (1994) shared on culturally relevant curriculum being “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.” I asked Dr. Arnoldo to share what that meant to him, and how it manifested itself in his job as the district's superintendent of schools. Dr. Arnoldo connected it very personally:

Well, when I read that it is a ‘pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes,’ *I can relate to this myself, because I came from a different culture. I came from Mexico, I mean, and I came from an area, from a system, from a school system that is very different than we have here in the United States.* I do that I can compare that what I had here, the education I was getting here was a lot better, that people cared for me. I was in a place that had transportation. I had food. I had breakfast and lunch. And then I had

books and good teachers, and so I am able to think about that comparison where I didn't have it in Mexico. In Mexico I walked to school, you buy books, and you go to school, and there's no lunch and there's no breakfast. So, looking at it that way I felt that coming from that kind of an environment, today's environment, I felt that it helped me have that motivation and drive to be a more student because I appreciate everything that was being done for me. I was able to see that they wanted somehow to get me the help to be successful. It was now up to me to make it happen.

Dr. Arnoldo added some more personal perspective on the use of culturally relevant curriculum:

Looking at it, I also knew that working with the Hispanics of the Valley, they are not the same kids as the kids from Mexico, as far as the schools. Over there, if I can recall, we were more driven to do well in school. Those of us who went to school over there, we really had the drive. *Here, I've noticed that people take it for granted, but then again maybe they don't know any better.*

3) Curriculum Policy Conversations

Dr. Arnoldo was asked to share the types of conversations he might have had that centered on *curriculum policy*. I specifically first asked Dr. Arnoldo if he has conversations with his school board about curriculum in general and about culturally relevant curriculum:

Well, we always talk about opportunities for all of our kids, when we look at our subpopulations. We look at our migrants. We look at our special education students. We look at our limited English proficient kids, or recent immigrants. We always want to find ways and curriculum resources that reach out to all kids, so, yes, we do. And we are concerned that the subpopulations need more of our attention because that's what's

hurting us as a district, and we want to make sure that we have to find ways of improving, either through staff development, through curriculum resources, as well as technology resources we can utilize, obviously extended days through tutorials, teachers by finding the best qualified teachers – anything that we can possibly do to improve the instruction of the special populations is always something that we talk about because we know that if the special populations, our LEP, for example, if we can improve our scores there we can make tremendous gains as a district because we have so many LEP students in our district that we have to address their needs and we don't want them to fall behind and continue falling behind and then end up dropping out.

4) Culturally Relevant Curriculum Conversations

Dr. Arnoldo was asked to share the types of conversations he might have had that focused on *culturally relevant curriculum*. Next I asked Dr. Arnoldo about conversations about culturally relevant curriculum he may have with his assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, Ms. Bianca Benitez:

You know, we do talk about it, but we talk about it within our own kids because they are all Hispanic kids. We are practically all Hispanic, but should we ever become more multi-cultural then we definitely have to have more conversations regularly about addressing the cultural differences of kids and how we can impact them by knowing their culture and what their needs are. We are almost like ninety-eight percent Hispanic, so we take it for granted. But even within our own Hispanic culture we need to know their own needs because kids come from different parts of Latin America. They just don't come from Mexico, either. They come from South America. Yes, they know Spanish. They are

Hispanos or Latinos, but they have a different culture, and a different way of the way they grow up and the family values and the family beliefs that they bring.

I then asked Dr. Arnolando to reflect on opportunities he may have to visit schools and see culturally relevant curriculum in action, or engage in conversations about culturally relevant curriculum:

Well, I do visit the campuses a lot, and we do see that. We celebrate our own culture, but we recognize like, for example, we have the Hispanic month, we have Black month where we recognize and celebrate African Americans. Our principals do a good job on that. They are very involved in that, and they do recognize the cultural aspects for African Americans and Mexico, *el dia de la independencia*, *el cinco de mayo*, and those type of celebrations because their parents and their grandparents came from over there and, maybe the kids are not as involved but as far as how things work in Mexico, the parents sure are involved. They know about it as well as the grandparents.

I asked Dr. Arnolando if he engages parents and community members in these types of discussions about culturally relevant curriculum:

We could do more. We could do more. We take it for granted because we are all Hispanics, but we could do more. To say, to celebrate and respect and recognize other people's home countries, or heritage, we could do more as a district.

5) Understanding, Perception of Culturally Relevant Curriculum Policy

Dr. Arnolando was asked to discuss what the seventeen words in the following Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) policy meant to him: "...implementing the district's educational program by using *"resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural*

groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community.” I asked Dr. Arnoldo what came to his mind when he read those words.

To provide the resources to keep the culture of those kids as part of our district, as part of our community, and not to forget that when we have those kids that their ethnicities, their religions, their cultural backgrounds for us to find the resources that they also need in the instructional process in the classroom. I also want to add that the textbook is not enough. You know in this day and age that we live in now where everything is available, with the social media that we have, with the internet, and kids that are into iPads, cell phones, as well as laptops and all those kinds of things. I mean, the textbook is now kind of like old-fashioned, because you can get the latest through technology. *We should emphasize more of this representation of ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contribution the national heritage and world community by involving more technology into those classrooms to bring out that representation.*

I probed Dr. Arnoldo to share what his expectation would be about this specific TASB policy and its implementation in the La Frontera ISD:

I shouldn't be surprised that it is being implemented because we have it in policy, and plus I feel that teachers and *we are pretty well aware that the culture of a kid and their background is extremely important in the learning process in the classrooms. They learn from each other. I mean, the teachers can learn from the kids and the kids learn from the teachers. Now that we're so connected, we're so connected.* You can hook up to a classroom in China if you want to, or in some other part of the world. That enhances that cultural gap; it closes the gap, where we're more connected. But it's very important to

have that in the classrooms as part of it. *Once we understand the culture of our kids, and the kids understand the culture of other kids, there's more respect among each other.*

Dr. Arnoldo next shared his perspective that when students are encouraged to bring in their own voices and stories to the classroom, it enhances the relevance of the learning experience:

Well, I want to say that the teachers feel that the kids take a lot of ownership in the lesson because they connect. And *when you can connect, it enhances the learning and the interest of the kids into the instruction.* That's what I would say would happen. *The more the kids can connect to the book to the lesson from their own personal experience or from the family experience, it only enhances the learning and the interest of the child into the lesson.* So, therefore, *there's an intrinsic motivation from the child to be involved in the learning because of the connection they can make.* This type of learning should be happening. That is something important. That is what I would want because it would bring out more. *The kids become more articulate. They communicate better. They learn from each other. They know each other better. They connect better among each other, and they respect each other better when you have that type of a dynamics in the classroom.*

Dr. Arnoldo then thought on the opposite – when students *do not* find themselves and their own stories in the curricular experience in the classroom:

Well, it's very obvious that they'll be bored and one thing is for sure, that *if kids cannot identify themselves with our history, with the past – and there's ways you can connect kids, but if you don't connect them – then the lesson is not going to be productive.* Kids have to be able to identify what is the meaning and the purpose of this lesson. *The more*

you can identify it, that they can identify themselves in it or connect themselves in the event or that particular story, the more success you're going to have as a teacher. The farther away they are from connecting, the farther away they are from learning.

I closed the interview by asking Dr. Arnoldo to think about what the biggest lesson from participating in this interview might have been for him:

Emphasize more culturally relevant curriculum. It is something that needs to be discussed more, talked about more among our principals, and our principals with our teachers, because as you're interviewing me and we're talking during this interview we take it for granted that it's happening. But is it *really* happening?

As Dr. Arnoldo closed out my data gathering portion of my research as we concluded the final interview, it was quite fitting that we ended with one of the largest unanswered and most often unasked questions about this policy – “But is it *really* happening?”

Summary

This section discussed data presentation of the one-on-one interviews which were conducted with the superintendent of schools, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, a high school principal, a middle school principal, two high school teachers, and two middle school teachers from La Frontera ISD who agreed to be participants in the research study. To do that data presentation, the researcher presented each of the eight stories that emerged from those interviews using the following five topics, themes, and foci to organize, explore, and present the data from the interviews: 1) participant personal and educational background; 2) participant understanding and perception of *culturally relevant curriculum*; 3) *curriculum policy* conversations participant has had with people above and below her/him in the district's organizational chart; 4) conversations about *culturally relevant curriculum* participant has had

with people above and below her/him in the district's organizational chart and with students, parents, and community members; and, 5) participant understanding and perception of the research study's specific *culturally relevant curriculum* policy focus, the seventeen words – implementing the district's educational program by using “*resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community.*” The chapter was organized into eight separate stories, one story for each of the eight interviews that were conducted as part of the research study. Each story was framed around the five topics, themes, and foci previously mentioned. The next section, V DATA ANALYSIS, will detail the data analysis.

CHAPTER V

DATA ANALYSIS

The data that was gathered, which was presented in the last section is analyzed next. The purpose of the study was to explore how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas. The research question in the research study was “How and to what degree does educational leadership shape the implementation of a policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas?” The sub-questions for this research study were: 1) How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifest itself at the school and classroom levels? 2) How is implementation of policy of cultural relevance in curriculum shaped by school leadership? 3) How is the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translated into classroom practice? In order to answer these research questions, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with participants in this qualitative case study. The format used here to present the data analysis will be as follows. The researcher will first state the Research Questions that drove the research study. The researcher will next briefly discuss how the analysis using the Theoretical Framework – Knowing to Lead (KL) Model will be conducted. Then the researcher will describe in detail each of the eight components of the Theoretical Framework – Knowing to Lead (KL) Model, followed by an analysis of the data within each component. Once the data is analyzed using the

Knowing to Lead (KL) Model components, the researcher will summarize the process that transpired.

Research Questions

The overarching research question was: How and to what degree does educational leadership shape the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas? The research sub-questions were:

1. How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifest itself at the school and classroom levels?
2. How does school leadership shape the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum?
3. How does the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translate into classroom practice?

Analysis Using Theoretical Framework – Knowing to Lead (KL) Model

As was discussed previously, the research study was framed through the lens of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model which the researcher developed using the combination of two previously developed and published theoretical models. The first previously developed and published theoretical model is the Guajardo et al. (2013) “ecologies of knowing” model which has three levels, namely, the *self*, the *organization*, and the *community*. The second previously developed and published theoretical model is derived from the works of both Trueba (1999) and Mehan (2008) in which the authors discuss the *technical*, the *political*, and the *cultural* leadership skills that are necessary in curriculum development and implementation as well as in organizational change and reform. The researcher’s developed framework, the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model, was created by intersecting the levels of know (*self*, *organization*, and *community*) of the former model with the skills (*technical*, *political*, and *cultural*) of the latter model. The KL Model was then used as an organizing and analysis tool with which to organize and subsequently

analyze the data the researcher gathered in this research study. Figure 1 depicts a “3 X 3 table” that shows the KL Model’s resulting nine paired-combinations when each of the three ecologies of knowing (*self*, *organization*, and *community*) is paired with each of the leadership skills (*technical*, *political*, and *cultural*). This study used the KL Model in investigating how educational leadership shapes decisions about implementing policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in school districts in Texas. (See *Figure 1: The Knowing to Lead (KL) Model* for a visual depiction of the model.)

The KL Model was used to organize and analyze the qualitative research data that the one-on-one qualitative interview transcripts yielded. The first components that the KL Model uses are the Guajardo et al. (2013) “ecologies of knowing” model’s three levels of knowing, namely, the *self*, the *organization*, and the *community*. Guajardo et al. (2013) explained that interactions occur at these three levels to organize conversations, identify entry points, and find spaces for interventions; these ecologies of knowing start at the most intimate, inner part, the *self*, and then naturally flow out toward the immediate *organization* and subsequently the larger *community*, in a three-ringed concentric circle formation. At the *self* level of knowing, conversations and experiences are made personal and relevant at the most micro of levels, as it is an opportunity for the individual to own their learning and their teaching through story telling (Guajardo et al., 2013). Guajardo et al. (2013) detailed how every participant becomes owner of their learning and their teaching through story telling by making this process personal, as it reframes the learning of the self and the collective and helps participants develop the necessary agency to act on their knowledge. At the *organization* level, this space allows the learning to be couched within participants, families, schools, non-profit organization and/or their neighborhoods (Guajardo et al., 2013). The authors remind us that at the *organization* level the

environment for learning is a critical element to explore and discuss, for it is within this social context that we develop our values, habits, and views of the world, further stating that the *self* within the *organization* is a critical unit for analysis (Guajardo et al., 2013). At the third level, the *community* is critically important in mapping the learning; its economy, educational systems, housing, other elements of its infrastructure, and investment in its future are critical to account for when making sense of the learning and reconstruction of members' stories (Guajardo et al., 2013). Guajardo et al. (2013) stated that as participatory members of the *community*, we must learn the skills, build the awareness, and plan the actions to change the behaviors and narratives from an outdated political practice grounded and informed by a zero-sum concept, to a new politic informed by caring and sustaining the quality of life for every child and citizen in our communities. These three levels of knowing that encompass the Guajardo et al. (2013) "ecologies of knowing" model, the *self*, the *organization*, and the *community*, comprise one aspect of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model.

The other intersecting component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is comprised of the *technical*, the *political*, and the *cultural* leadership skills that are necessary in curriculum development and implementation as well as in organizational change and reform that Trueba (1999) and Mehan (2008) discuss. Mehan (2008) explained that *technical* leadership skills focus on supporting the development of new knowledge and skills and are used to add new resources, including such assets as equipment and curriculum. Leading with *political* skills involves working to build productive relationships and galvanizing important political constituencies (Mehan, 2008). Mehan (2008) further shared that *cultural* leadership skills help engage educator's values, belief systems, and norms, often about controversial topics (i.e., placement of teachers, the nature of intelligence and its distribution across race, ethnicity, class, and gender, as

well as school sorting or testing practices). Trueba (1999) addresses the *technical*, the *political*, and the *cultural* leadership skills as well. The author begins by stating that traditionally the art and science of teaching (students in general but more specifically Hispanic/Latino students) has focused on using methodological and mechanistic tools – *technical* skills – completely dislodged and divorced from the sociocultural and historical circumstances of students’ families and community (Trueba, 1999). Trueba (1999) describes this *technical* skills approach to teaching as the positivistic tradition in education that understands teaching as a precise scientific undertaking and that views teachers as *technicians* who implement predetermined and preselected skills and strategies. The author further added that these *technical* solutions assume that schools and teaching are *politically* neutral, ascribing responsibility of any necessary changes to students and their families and therefore not the schools, teachers, and the educational system in general (Trueba, 1999); these erroneous assumptions, believes Trueba (1999), free teachers from critically analyzing exemplary and effective teaching approaches and pushes them towards the act of simply grabbing and latching onto *technical* solutions. Trueba (1999) asserts that educators and educational leaders need to steer away from incorrect apolitical assumptions of educational reality and venture steadfastly toward the due critical assessment of the learning environments in their appropriate *political* contexts. The author adds that the challenge is to inculcate in educators a sophisticated understanding of the *political* nature of such environments (Trueba, 1999). Trueba (1999) then connects to the *cultural* skills in educational leadership by explaining that educational institutions in many ways mirror the greater society in which those institutions exist, including our *culture*, values, and norms. He challenges educators to consider addressing the larger society’s issues of asymmetrical power relationships among the various social and *cultural* strata which if not intentionally addressed in the classroom will replicate themselves there as

well (Trueba, 1999). Trueba (1999) thus contends that *technical* expertise and mastery of content and methodology are insufficient to ensure reflective and effective instruction and that it is only with *political* clarity that educators can then create, adapt, and reform teaching strategies and methodologies to actively engage children in the learning process while at the same time respecting their *cultural* capital and challenging them.

The Knowing to Learn (KL) Model is a cross-pollination result of the intersection of the components, levels, and theoretical underpinnings of both the “ecologies of knowing” (Guajardo et al., 2013) and the leadership skills (Mehan, 2008; Trueba, 1999) previously discussed. In developing the theoretical framework, the researcher contends that the KL Model serves as a dual-dimension organizing and analysis tool that can be used to organize and analyze the researcher’s qualitative case study’s one-on-one interview transcripts and experience. The researcher here further contends that the cross-pollination process occurs by overlaying a specific and unique leadership skill (Mehan, 2008; Trueba, 1999) onto a specific and unique “ecology of knowing” level (Guajardo et al., 2013), which then helps create a specific and unique “knowing to learn” framework component. When the three specific and unique leadership skills (Mehan, 2008; Trueba, 1999) are intersected or combined with the three specific and unique “ecology of knowing” levels (Guajardo et al., 2013), the results are nine specific and unique dual-dimension “knowing to lead” framework components. For example, overlaying or intersecting Mehan’s (2008) and Trueba’s (1999) *technical* skill onto Guajardo’s, Alvarez’s, and Guajardo’s (2013) *self* level “ecology of knowing” produces the dual-dimension *technical self* Knowing to Lead (KL) Model organizing and analyzing “knowing to lead” component. Thus, overlaying or intersecting Mehan’s (2008) and Trueba’s (1999) three specific and unique leadership skills onto Guajardo’s, Alvarez’s, and Guajardo’s (2013) three specific and unique “ecology of knowing”

levels produces the following nine specific and unique dual-dimension Knowing to Lead (KL) Model organizing and analyzing “knowing to learn” components: 1) technical self; 2) political self; 3) cultural self; 4) technical organization; 5) political organization; 6) cultural organization; 7) technical community; 8) political community; and 9) cultural community. Each of these nine specific and unique dual-dimension Knowing to Lead (KL) Model organizing and analyzing “knowing to lead” components are used here to initially organize and subsequently analyze the researcher’s qualitative case study’s one-on-one interview transcripts, thus producing themes and patterns of thick description (Geertz, 1973) in this part of the research study’s data analysis presented here in Chapter V (DATA ANALYSIS) and finally led to the research study’s findings and recommendations to be presented in Chapter VI (FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS).

The entire and complete case study qualitative research study’s one-on-one interview experience was analyzed using the theoretical framework – the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model – as an analysis lens and included the following aspects: 1) the physical experience of sitting with the participants to conduct each one-on-one interview while carefully observing and taking detailed notes; 2) listening to the participants discuss their lived experiences that emerged from the detailed discussions; 3) subsequently re-listening to the participants’ detailed answers on multiple opportunities to continue to listen for detailed responses and important nuances in the words chosen and the vocal inflections and intonations; 4) engaging in a “member checking” opportunity with each of the participants; and, 5) the continuous, on-going personal reflexive thinking opportunity the researcher was afforded in the research study’s one-on-one interview process.

The Guajardo et al. (2013) “ecologies of knowing” model would have been an excellent singular theoretical model to use as the only lens for the research study’s data analysis, as the three levels – the *self*, the *organization*, and the *community* – give appropriate and adequate data analysis depth and breadth of the one-on-one interview process. The theoretical framework model by itself would have allowed the researcher to focus on the levels of knowing – the *self*, the *organization*, and the *community* – that the participants’ responses were identifying as those being endemic, foundational and deeply meaningful in how their own personal educational leadership was shaped and how that educational leadership, in turn, helped shape the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in their district and school. Similarly, the Trueba (1999) and Mehan (2008) leadership skills model would have also been an excellent singular theoretical model to use as the only lens for the research study’s data analysis, as the three leadership skills – the *technical*, the *political*, and the *cultural* – also give appropriate and adequate data analysis depth and breadth of the one-on-one interview process. The model by itself would have allowed the researcher to focus on the leadership skills – the *self*, the *organization*, and the *community* – that the participants’ responses were identifying as those being also endemic, foundational and deeply meaningful in how their own personal educational leadership was shaped and how that educational leadership, in turn, helped shape the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in their district and school.

Rather than create a winner-take-all competition or argument over which one model’s components – the “levels of knowing” (Guajardo et al., 2013) versus the leadership skills (Trueba, 1999; Mehan, 2008) – would best serve the research study’s purpose here, the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model provides a better winner-take-all scenario by cross-pollinating both models,

combining the two models' foci and expanding the research study's analysis by adding depth and breadth.

As was previously discussed, the researcher used the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model to organize and analyze the data gathered via the one-on-one interviews. The data is analyzed here using the nine specific and unique dual-dimension Knowing to Lead (KL) Model organizing and analyzing "knowing to lead" components: 1) technical self; 2) political self; 3) cultural self; 4) technical organization; 5) political organization; 6) cultural organization; 7) technical community; 8) political community; and 9) cultural community. See *Figure 2: Knowing to Lead (KL) Model Components and Definitions* for a list of each of the nine Knowing to Lead (KL) Model organizing and analyzing "knowing to lead" components along with a short, succinct definition of each component.

These nine "knowing to lead" components are used next to both organize and analyze the data, one "knowing to lead" component at a time. Each "knowing to lead" component will be briefly discussed first, then data for each "knowing to lead" component from the data presentation section – Chapter IV DATA PRESENTATION – will be brought in next.

Technical Self

The "technical self" component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that gets at how first the educational leader digs deeply within the self to get to discover intimately those specific technical skills that facilitate the leadership role that the leader owns and therefore exerts at will, and subsequently allows the leader to take technical action within the leader's own personal space and realm in the leadership role. At this level, the leader leads the leader – and not the organization and not the community at large – to act within and about the self. It is at this "technical self" level that the leader agrees within the self to unpack the stories

that make up the leader's most inner self that point at how the leader is technically adept and savvy enough to use as the leadership role is executed. Because the leadership skill aspect of this "technical self" level is so focused on fixing things and addressing problems in a prescribed scientific mode, the leader uses the "technical self" knowing to lead aspect in machine-like fashion yet it connects to the stories that the leader's life has experienced; the "technical self" thus combines the human aspect of the self with the mechanical aspect of the technical realm.

The eight educational leader participants in this case study all spoke about their own "technical self" prowess throughout the interviews. This was one aspect that was not lacking in *any* of their stories. All interviewee participants freely discussed how they were adept technically at leading themselves in their own personal lives. The four teachers certainly painted such a picture.

Mr. Diego Duarte, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School, pointed at this aspect when he shared background stories about growing up. One of the stories that Mr. Duarte spoke about was how he dealt with racism in his previous job, before getting into teaching. Mr. Duarte shared the story. "At the time I was working with banks, and that's how I paid for my education, *but I realized that there were a lot of games being played, a lot of racism, a lot of prejudice even here in the Valley at that time.* I knew that I probably wouldn't get ahead, so I decided I'd find something else." This self-awareness technical skill that Mr. Duarte had, an ability that allowed him to know that staying in the banking industry was not going to be an option for him, speaks to me about Mr. Duarte's technical self being savvy enough to know what was good and right for him. If Mr. Duarte did not possess this technical self skill he may have remained in the banking industry, and suffered traumatically at the hands of racist colleagues and bosses.

Another story that Mr. Duarte shared that gets at his technical self aspect is his “baptism by fire” story about how he got hired, started working immediately, experienced some challenges, and persisted. Mr. Duarte shared the following:

I interviewed and got hired in December, and my first date of teaching was the first day after the Christmas holidays. That’s how I got into education. *I had no experience.*

Honestly, I almost quit two weeks into it. The kids were tough. You talk about baptism by fire. I think it was the pride in me that didn’t let me quit, and I went home and I said ‘I’m tougher than these guys, and I’m going to prove it to them.’ I made it that year, and the next year was a better year and I passed the tests that were required by the state. I guess like they say, the rest is history.

Actually, history would have been very different for Mr. Duarte had he *not* possessed the technical savvy to deal with the challenges of the new job in education.

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School, also spoke about her technical self in her interview. The specific technical self skill which Ms. Enriquez narrated was how her migrant experience taught her the work ethic that she still employs daily. Ms. Enriquez shared the following:

You worked during the day, you came home, you ate dinner, and then the bus would come pick you up to take you to night school. In the evenings it was the same routine.

You got home, you’d help Mom with chores because there were four girls, and then you’d help Mom with dinner, and then you would eat, clean up, and you would just relax, watch TV, getting ready for the next day to do it all over again.

In many ways, Ms. Enriquez’s work ethic defines her still to this day. It is that technical self aspect that has helped her succeed.

Ms. Enriquez also connected to this technical self work ethic in telling the story of the importance of earning her college degree, and posting a copy of her diploma on the wall behind her desk to let her students know how important it is to her.

I have my degree, because I'm very proud of my degree [pointing to a copy of her college degree on the wall behind her teacher's desk], and I make sure that they know it's there. I say, 'Look, I was able to accomplish it.' I want to be an example to them. I finished college in 2008. It took me a while but I did it. I started in '95 at University of Las Americas, and then, you know, things happened, I ended up getting married. And, so that kind of stopped, and then I divorced, and then I said, 'Well, I have to get back,' and my parents helped me, my sisters helped me with financially and everything, so I graduated with cum laude, with honors. It's a reminder to me [pointing at copy of degree] that this was hard work, and it's a reminder to them that they can do it, just like I did.

Ms. Enriquez's stories point at that technical self that exemplifies work ethic and perseverance.

Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School, also shared a technical self narrative when he spoke about his ability to speak both English and Spanish, and how it was that he actually learned, unlearned, and relearned Spanish:

My first language was Spanish. I find it interesting that it was my first language and then I had to learn English when I went over there to Up North at age three. So when I went over there I was saying *papa, amiga, mi abuelita, mi mama*, stuff like that. I mean, it changed to Aunty Gin, and Uncle Edward, and stuff. And so I had to kind of relearn over the years. I'm pretty decent now marrying a girl from Mexico, I mean, it helps a lot with my in-laws.

His ability to maneuver in both languages has had a technical self benefit in his personal life.

Tuco Benedicto High School teacher Ms. Herlinda Hernandez also spoke about her strong work ethic as a technical self aspect. Ms. Hernandez developed that as she was growing up, both in school and in the jobs she got in high school and beyond. Mr. Hernandez shared the following narrative about this technical self aspect:

As a student I was always very, of course, involved as I could be. I was in the student council, always in class representative running for historian or different clubs.

Throughout school I was involved in choir. I did that from sixth grade through tenth grade. Then I just focused on getting a job. As soon as I turned sixteen I got a job. At first I was working at a *raspa* [snow cone] stand here locally. I went on to work at TAD. And I feel that those experiences helped. I went on to work for a law firm at the law office of Bill Johnson here in Kingberry throughout college.

This focused work ethic continues to this day in Ms. Hernandez's career as a high school teacher.

The two principals – Mr. Fortunato Franco from Los Veteranos Middle School and Ms. Candi Cardenas from Tuco Benedicto High School – also shared stories where the “technical self” aspect of their leadership background emerged. Mr. Franco had discussed how growing up his parents had not really encouraged him to attend college, and only intervened in his early schooling “when it was deemed necessary,” and that was only when issues or problems arose. Mr. Franco also explained that attending college was just a thing to do, because a friend of his had looked into it, and not really because it was technical self activity for personal self growth

for him. Then, Mr. Franco reflected on how it was different when he went for his masters in educational leadership:

I got married and [entered] the educational leadership program. *The program itself to me was a very enjoyable thing because I was actually there to try and learn, and really challenge my beliefs and background about what I should be picking up to get ready for in this particular job. And it wasn't something to do just because everybody was else was doing it, you know, like everything else prior to that.*

Earning his masters in educational leadership proved to be an important activity that connected to Mr. Franco's "technical self" as it prepared him to "*really challenge [his] beliefs and background*" so he could better know himself, which eventually helped him execute his new job.

Ms. Candi Cardenas also shared about her "technical self" in her story about the characteristics of "empathy" and "concern and care for others" that she has developed, for those who had been marginalized, neglected, or were in need of a helping hand. Ms. Cardenas told about her father *always* being there to stand up for her and her brothers throughout their early childhood education in the racially divided town of Troncoso where she grew up. But in remembering how her father advocated for her and her brothers, Ms. Cardenas also reflected on the following. "Wow. How many *other* classmates did I have that *might've* done so much more had the expectation and support been there for them as well?" This important "technical self" aspect still drives Ms. Cardenas' personal nature.

The study's two central office participants – both Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Ms. Bianca Benitez and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo – also shared stories that connected to the "technical self" aspect. Ms. Bianca Benitez

narrated a story exemplifying her “technical self” aspect in sharing the following about the strong work ethic she learned growing up:

Besides having our chores that we were scheduled to do, my siblings and I were actually a family of eight siblings, but each one of us as we grew up we had chores, so chores were something that we always had. But what was most important was our school work and doing well.

Ms. Benitez added that “High school was more like one step into the long process of our education.” This focused work and study ethic obviously still drives Ms. Benitez as she is second in command of her school district as assistant superintendent at La Frontera ISD while also culminating her studies as a doctoral student at a university.

Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo also shared aspects of his “technical self” through his stories. Dr. Arnoldo’s main “technical self” story is that of his ability to set his career goal and achieve it. As Dr. Arnoldo explained it, it all started with his dream to attend college:

It was always my dream to go to college. My self-motivation was I didn’t want to work. I didn’t want to be poor. I didn’t want to work out on the fields. I didn’t want to work construction. That was rough, because I did that work with my dad, and that was not good.

Dr. Arnoldo made his dream to attend college come true, a direct correlation to his strengths in his technical self.

As can be noted in this data analysis of the “technical self”, all participants share the commonality that they are each owners of technical skills that lead the self in a very adept manner. None of the participants was void of this “technical self” component, but that is not surprising. What would have been surprising would have been to find that a participant who is a

successful educator – as all eight participants are – who would *not* have had some strong “technical self” aspects in his background. All are successful in large part due to their understanding and using their “technical self” aspects as they go about executing their professional roles and responsibilities in their chosen jobs.

Political Self

The “political self” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that gets at how the educational leader finds the stories deep within the self that intimate with clarity those important political skills about relationships that the leader has developed and can first use to establish and nurture within, with, and all about the leader. In essence, the “political self” allows the leader the space and forum to have positive agency within to know that the leader is operating affectively and cognitively in a constructive and productive way. More than a mere mental health and mental state issue about the leader’s mental state of being and inner psyche, the “political self” gives the leader the skills to know that all is well within relationship-wise to take the necessary self-action that the leader must first take before the leader can then interact with and lead the organization and community politically.

The eight educational leader participants in this case study all spoke briefly about their own “political self” aspects throughout the interviews.

Mr. Diego Duarte, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, alluded to this when he spoke of his personal inner discomfort with several projects at school: the development of a culturally relevant curriculum in his first teaching job and his latest curriculum writing venture last summer. When Mr. Duarte shared that while he was at El Huarache ISD he worked on a culturally relevant curriculum project with Rama Chica Project, he expressed grave reservations about how it all occurred and ended up. This is the story he shared about it:

We ended up throwing out the textbook out and we concentrated on nothing but the history of the Valley, which is fine, but in the process we left out the bigger picture. We did the kids a disservice because they left there that two years that we did that, all our lessons, everything, all our curriculum was the Hispanics here in the Valley, but there were other things happening around the world and the kids never got to see that because we didn't share it with them. All of a sudden one day we were there, and we're not doing that anymore. We're like, 'Wait a minute! We threw out the baby with the bath water!' We stopped teaching American history and did nothing but the history of the Valley, and then we stopped doing that and we went back to doing American history, about two years later.

It is this inner discussion that Mr. Duarte experienced that gets at the "political self" aspect – he felt incertitude between simply following orders in implementing the curriculum plan dictates from his superiors unquestioningly and speaking up with his own professional concerns. Mr. Duarte chose, for political expediency, to say nothing and follow the plan, and in the process, he was able to get along with himself about it. The "political self" was at peace, for now.

Mr. Duarte's second "political self" story was that about his curriculum writing experience in the summer of 2012 at La Frontera ISD. This is the story he narrated:

This year for the first time I actually got hired to do curriculum. I had always been against it, and I probably won't do it again next year because I don't feel that I – I left there with not a very positive experience because it was, the curriculum we wrote was too fast-paced. We were going to delve deeply into these issues, and topics, and concepts. That's not true. I don't see it.

In being honest with himself, Mr. Duarte has come to the realization that to remain true to himself on this issue, Mr. Duarte most probably will not want to engage in any curriculum writing project anytime soon. This is the “political self” negotiating the space within – in order to participate and get along with others in the political process that working in groups calls for, the self must first be at peace with its own inner workings. Working with both the Rama Chica curriculum and with the La Frontera ISD curriculum has left Mr. Duarte’s “political self” only one option when it came to curriculum development – do not participate anymore or he will most likely be miserable.

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, also shared a story that pointed at the “political self” inner workings she had to have engaged in as she reflected on her upbringing. In telling her story about her parents’ influence on her education, and especially on her going to college after high school, Ms. Enriquez discussed the struggles within as she realized that her mother and father were not enthusiastically supportive of the idea. This is the narrative she shared:

My parents didn’t help us with work, homework, so we had to do all of our learning in the classroom. So I picked up very early in life, as far as I can remember, that I had to get as much education as I could from the teachers. My parents were very reluctant in us getting college-educated, because we were four girls and one boy. My oldest sister got a full scholarship to Baylor – yes, very smart – but my dad didn’t let her go. He didn’t let her, so she ended up going to cosmetology. And then she got married. We all got married very young, and that’s when we got educated, when we got married.

For political expediency within the self, Ms. Enriquez learned early on that she was going to have to accept that her fate was to wait for fulfillment of her college education plans and

dreams at a later time, when she got married. Ms. Enriquez's "political self" within could have chosen to battle it out, to fight with herself and her parents about this, but she chose to wait. For all to be at peace within, Ms. Enriquez's "political self" negotiated to be at a good place, good enough that the deferred dream of college was still within reach, only deferred and not terminated.

Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, also shared stories that connected to his "political self" at work within. The first "political self" story Mr. Gonzalez alluded to was that of attending schools at Entryway at Up North, and being confronted with the fact that he was part of a very small minority. He had to learn to live with it, in his "political self". He shared this narrative about it:

My sister and I were the lone minorities there in Entryway in school. It was very, very, very, *very* Anglo. It was, I think, probably 97%. There were very few Latinos. Initially we fit in pretty well, my sister and I, because we're both very *guero* [fair skinned]. There was never really that big of an issue, race, but eventually, you know, kids will become meaner and stuff as time goes on.

When Mr. Gonzalez shared that "kids will become meaner and stuff as time goes on," he did not follow up with any indication that he melted down completely about that racial meanness in others that he spoke about. His "political self" learned to cope with it, and get along well enough that he negotiated inner peace enough to get him through it.

A second narrative that Mr. Gonzalez shared about his "political self" was the story of how the experience of playing – or not – for his high school basketball coach taught him and helped him develop his own teaching and coaching perspective and approach. He shared the following story.

My high school coach, I would never say he was a *racist* guy, but I thought he knew who he wanted to play and he never really gave me a shot. That's one thing I could say about my high school coach that I really remember – he wasn't a very good people person. I would stay after practice. I would work really hard. I guess he just never really saw that. So, again, whenever I see kids in the class or on the court or on the field doing that try hard, that's one of the things I point out. That's one of the things I think that doesn't get forgotten. You carry it with you. You're not going to be like that guy. So that's one thing that my high school coach kind of left an impression on me.

Obviously, Mr. Gonzalez went on to be successful in high school and in college, as well as now in the classroom, on the court, and out in the field. Mr. Gonzalez must have had deep reflections about how this coach never gave him an opportunity, and he chose to find that negotiated “political self” calmness he needed in order to be able to function in the *other* non-basketball realms he participated in as a student. But, while he negotiated that space in such a way that he went on to be successful in spite of the terrible ordeal he experienced at not being given an opportunity, he still to this day says “You're not going to be like that guy.” Mr. Gonzalez was very intentional as he developed into a young adult about ensuring that his “political self” was able to understand that as a human being, as a teacher, as a coach, he was *not* going to be like that guy.

Ms. Herlinda Hernandez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, also shared stories about her “political self” aspect. Being raised by a father that deferred to her mother in his “whatever your mother says” attitude, Ms. Hernandez realized early on that her “political self” was going to have to rely on her mother (whom she described as her “angel”) for facilitation in her fulfillment of her dream to go to college. If Ms. Hernandez had tried to involve

both her mother and her father in arranging the steps along the way to college, her “political self” could have been negatively affected. Ms. Hernandez could have potentially set up a series of “political self” inner-struggles.

This is Ms. Hernandez’s story about her reliance on her mother to establish that inner “political self” peace about college:

I was always on my mom about the taxes, ‘Do your taxes early because I really need to do my FAFSA.’ So a lot of it was self-motivation, but she always helped me in that way. She’d say, ‘Okay, you say you need this. Let me do this real quick. Here you go.’ So she encouraged me, and she trusted that I knew what I was doing. It was, ‘I’m here, if you need something.’ But they didn’t know anything college. They didn’t know how or what was needed to get in or any requirements.

But even if *they* didn’t know “anything about college,” and even though *they* didn’t know “how or what was needed to get in or any requirements,” Ms. Hernandez knew enough to know that for her own sake she was most probably going to have go straight to her mother for her help in taxes, in preparing the background paperwork Ms. Hernandez would need for her FAFSA. Ms. Hernandez’s “political self” was in tune with what needed to get done inside so that she could then be successful on the outside.

The two principals also shared narratives about the “political self” aspect of their personal lives. The one part in the narrative told by Mr. Fortunato Franco, Principal at Los Veteranos Middle school at La Frontera ISD, that really showcases his “political self” came early in his discussion about growing up in the barrios in south Trueblue. This is the narrative Mr. Franco shared.

I did the gang thing for a little bit, there, just because of where I lived. I think a lot of our students don't have a choice about some of the things that they're exposed to, and being exposed to those experiences doesn't give them an insight that they don't believe they have a choice. So they're kind of led and they follow, wherever it takes them. Sometimes they're poor decisions...

What Mr. Franco was saying here is that while he was fortunate enough to get *in to* and then *out of* gang activity having participated "for a little bit," many of his students get in and don't get out. Something in Mr. Franco's young experience clicked inside, in his "political self", which told him to get out of that activity. That saved him, for it would have been very difficult for Mr. Franco to continue in gang activity *and* go on to college and eventually become a teacher and principal. His "political self" realized that there were other more positive ways to get his basic needs for freedom, fun, power, and belonging met.

Ms. Candi Cardenas, Principal at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, also shared her stories that showed her "political self" at work. One interesting "political self" story is the one Ms. Cardenas shared about growing up in Troncoso, Texas, a central Texas town of 15,000:

I went to elementary school there in Troncoso. I want to say demographically maybe 70% Anglo, something to that effect, I'm not sure exactly, at the time I really didn't pay attention to that, in terms of demographically, but I do know that we were definitely the minority as the Mexican-Americans. We were truly in the minority. I think that was something that really pretty much hit me in the face like a culture shock when I came to La Frontera schools to see the majority totally being of my own ethnic background. It was

amazing. I had not had that experience before. So in my own elementary years, and my high school, as I grew up in Troncoso, totally we were the minority.

When Ms. Cardenas recalled, “... *demographically maybe 70% Anglo, something to that effect, I’m not sure exactly, at the time I really didn’t pay attention to that, in terms of demographically, but I do know that we were definitely the minority as the Mexican-Americans,*” it is interesting that as young as she was and even though she “really didn’t pay attention to that, in terms of demographically,” she still *knew* that they were the minority. Of course, she describes in detail how the system was separated into two pieces, one for Anglos and the *other* for the Mexican-Americans. That experience does *not* escape her, even though she “really didn’t pay attention to that, in terms of demographically.” This is a young child whose “political self” was quite aware that such a separation existed and things were really different for both contingencies. And, as we now know because of whom she is and what she has accomplished, Ms. Cardenas was able to get to a good enough place within her “political self” to survive those years of racial discrimination in her early years. Yes, she had Chevo Salinas, her father, who *also* wielded his political savvy around town in defense of himself and his children; however, no fighting father can fight it all and all the time. Young Candi must have learned early on that she was going to have her own opportunity to stand on her own two feet eventually, and when she did, she was ready, because of the “political self” she had prepared.

La Frontera ISD Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Ms. Bianca Benitez, shared her own stories that pointed at her “political self.” When Ms. Benitez recalled her father explaining that an education was important for her and her seven siblings because through an education they “would be able to have a life that would be better in terms of sacrifices,” she was learning the “political self” lesson that one must be able to cope now for the

benefit of the future. Ms. Benitez understood at an early age that a better life was ahead for her and her seven siblings, if they persisted at that time in attending to their studies in earnest. The amount of “sacrifices” would be less, her “political self” understood from her father, but only if education was valued and pursued.

As can be noted in this data analysis of the “political self” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model, the study’s participants were able to be at a calm, focused place within themselves where they were able to adjust and cope with life’s situations. None of the participants lacked this positive, productive “political self” component, which is not surprising. This allowed the participants to have an inner sane and healthy enough mental capacity and state of mind to be able to then go outside the self and have the necessary political relationships to lead in the organization and the community, the next level of knowing.

Cultural Self

The “cultural self” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that gets at how the educational leader identifies, celebrates, and builds upon the stories deep within the self that exemplify and further encourage the development of self-values, self-belief systems, and self-norms. It is at this “cultural self” level that leader finds the innermost motivation to take action; the leader takes action about the life of the leader because the action fits within the moral trajectory within the leader’s life course that the leader has set. The “cultural self” speaks to the leader in terms of taking action because it is the right thing to do for the leader – at this level, the leader is not thinking about nor acting upon issues that are necessarily about the organization or the community. The “cultural self” is the ethical compass within that leads the leader to take action about and for the leader’s own sake.

The eight educational leader participants in this case study all spoke about their own “cultural self” aspects throughout the interviews. Mr. Diego Duarte, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “cultural self” in the stories he shared during the interview. One of the personal values that Mr. Duarte mentioned in his story which pointed at his “cultural self” was that of culture being important to him. He values culture, and it was apparent when he shared this narrative. “I think it’s important. I think it’s needed.” Those two statements help us understand the foundational beliefs that constitute Mr. Duarte as a personal cultural worker.

It was just as important in understanding his “cultural self” to hear Mr. Duarte explain how the parents of his students were not able to help their children. It was a different perspective and belief system about the students’ parents that Mr. Duarte alluded to when he shared this narrative that began with his stating that most parents do not attend PTO meetings or Open House activities at the school:

I’m finding that most parents even today have that kind of mentality, where you’re the professional. ‘*Usted es el maestro. Usted enseña.* [You’re the teacher. You teach them.]’ What I find out, though, is that a lot of these parents want us to support them when they tell their kids that education is important. They also feel like, in fact, powerless, that they can’t make their kids understand that education is important.

This discussion about parents in essence asking the schools to please help with their message of advocacy to the importance of school to their children pointed at a deep-seated belief Mr. Duarte has in his “cultural self” that impacts how he sees the parents of his students.

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “cultural self” in the stories she shared during her interview. A very important “cultural

self” component for Ms. Enriquez in her narrative is that of family. Mr. Enriquez over and over kept coming back to the significant role that family played and still play is her “cultural self” realm. These are the narratives she shared about the importance of family, especially as she recalled her migrant experience:

We were a family. It would take us three days to get to Idaho, and we bonded, and we needed each other because we didn’t know anybody. We were so united, even today. We do everything together. If something happens to one everyone comes to the rescue. That’s the way we are. We bonded so much that we live here in La Frontera. I wouldn’t want to live anywhere else. Even thinking about it makes me cry. I don’t want to live far away from my brothers and sisters. I want to be close. We all live very, within a mile or two of each other.

Ms. Enriquez’s emotional outpouring as she shared, using words and phrases like *united*, *bonded*, and *it makes me cry*, all attest to the strong emotional connection family has to her values, beliefs, and norms all within her “cultural self” component.

Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “cultural self” in the stories he shared during the interview. It was obvious that Mr. Gonzalez felt he had a very positive, privileged upbringing and that was all due to his very stable home and family upbringing. His “cultural self” component spoke of family values, beliefs, and norms as he shared his story:

My parents? They set up a real good goal [about going to college]. They’re both really well-read people. My parents were big readers, so, just seeing them every night, both of them would be there reading. I know that when we were young my mother would always be reading to us.

I can picture Mr. Gonzalez sitting there as a young boy, with his mother reading to him, creating that family sense of belonging in his “cultural self” realm.

Mr. Gonzalez’s bad experience with his high school basketball coach, already discussed previously, also developed in him the “cultural self” perspective of looking out for the marginalized children in his classroom. That value can only come from that “cultural self” within. Mr. Gonzalez detailed how he looks out for those children in his school experiences:

Whenever I see kids in the class or on the court or on the field doing that [working hard], that’s one of the things I point out. The kid on the back, that’s real quiet and works hard. It’s one of the things I try to notice, or even to the whole class not just individually, to say to them, ‘Hey, good job today! You worked really well!’ That’s one of the things I think that doesn’t get forgotten. You carry it with you.

Yes, it was very obvious with his inflections and his body language as he was recalling this story that Mr. Gonzalez carries it with him, in his “cultural self” realm.

Additionally, in his narrative Mr. Gonzalez identified the importance of the use of cultural stories to connect to students. That portion of his narrative is also connected to the “cultural self” component in Mr. Gonzalez’s life. If Mr. Gonzalez did not have that “cultural self” narrative as part of his values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008), he would not be able to translate it into his work in the classroom with his students. This is what Mr. Gonzalez shared about connecting to cultural stories:

You have to get anything you can, especially like using things that relate to Latinos.

That’ll get a kid interested in what they’re learning. It’s essential. To me it seems that without that you really don’t have anything relevant in the classroom.

When Mr. Gonzalez said “without that you really don’t have anything relevant in the classroom,” his “cultural self” was speaking.

Another story that Mr. Gonzalez shared that connects to his values, belief system, and norms (Mehan, 2008) was his discussion of what the seventeen words in the TASB Update 93 mean to him. He shared this perspective on them. “Number one, of course, that it’s a great responsibility. In this day and age, number two, that it’s got to be handled delicately. You can’t force anything.” When Mr. Gonzalez spoke of responsibility and respect for his students in how he approached implementing culturally relevant curriculum, it verified that his “cultural self” component is attuned to valuing his students.

Ms. Herlinda Hernandez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “cultural self” in the stories she shared during the interview. One “cultural self” aspect Ms. Hernandez pointed to was that of her deep value for being an active participatory member in her education. She shared this story about it:

As a student I was always very, of course, involved as I could be. I was in the student council, always in class representative running for historian or different clubs.

Throughout school I was involved in choir. I did that from sixth grade through tenth grade. Then I just focused on getting a job.

This speaks to her values, beliefs, and norms about education. She applied her energies to being very involved in school, and when it came time to transition that energy to “getting a job” in high school, her “cultural self” values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) about education easily transferred to the work setting.

Another “cultural self” component about her values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) that Ms. Hernandez discussed in her narrative was that about the importance of establishing and nurturing relationships through jobs:

At first I was working at a *raspa* stand here locally. I went on to work at TAD. And I feel that those experiences helped. That’s what I encourage my students a lot to do, to work at a place like TAD. You make a lot of friends and you learn different people here locally.

She appears to value the relationships that she made working, and she believes it made a difference in her “cultural self” component in her life as it helped make her whom she is, so she encourages her students to follow in her footsteps.

Maybe it was the capitalist side of Ms. Hernandez that encouraged her to seek out jobs and nurture relationships there, but this positive view about work and relationships is juxtaposed within her in her extremely negative perspective of society’s assistance for those in need of social welfare. Ms. Hernandez shared about the challenging life for those on government welfare assistance when she spoke of her relatives that lived in Seca Grande and Vientoville:

All my life has been here [in La Frontera], but always going back and forth to Seca Grande and Vientoville, with the very different cultures. I always said that I got to see different sides. We weren’t very wealthy at all, but in going to Seca Grande to see my family they lived very differently than us. They lived very poor lives. Of course, education was never a focus. They were always on welfare, and we never were on anything like that.

When Ms. Hernandez spoke that last statement, “we never were on anything like that,” I noted a somber tone in her voice. The seriousness of her “we never were on anything like *that*,” was punctuated by the quieting ending emphasis on the “*that*” in the statement.

This dualism of Ms. Hernandez's "cultural self" changed once more when she shared about delicately treating the cultural issues that arose in her class. She shared this story:

I'd make sure I knew my history and I made sure I had my content and made sure I knew how to be sensitive, to hit it in a way that they [foreign students] felt we weren't trying to attack. A lot of times people get different perceptions on Americans, saying that Americans are full of themselves, and that Americans only stick to their perspective.

It is interesting that when she planned for her students from out of the country she made sure that she did all she intentionally could not to offend them.

The two principals that participated in the research study also shared stories about the "cultural self" in their interviews. Mr. Fortunato Franco, Principal at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his "cultural self" in the stories he shared during the interview. When Mr. Franco was discussing his frustration with the Texas Education Agency's testing system, it spoke to me about his desire for an open, transparent system – Mr. Franco is a frank, honest, open-minded individual. When Mr. Franco detailed how the agency gives the schools the standards that will be taught, a timeline in which to teach the standards, the rigor levels that the standards must be taught at, but then won't prescribe the exact type of curricular experience that would lead the schools to know for sure what would be tested and how, he ended with these two statements that spoke to his frustration with the system's lack of openness. "At the end they give you assessments to see if you accomplished enough throughout the year for your kids to be successful. Now, what kind of a system is that, sir?" This last statement – what kind of a system is that, sir? – speaks volumes about his moral compass that seeks fairness and justice.

The other story that Mr. Franco shared that also is very telling about the things Mr. Franco values (Mehan, 2008) in his personal life is the story he shared about the veterans that are honored at his school. Mr. Franco honors and respects service, life experiences, and sacrifice. He shared the following story that exemplifies that about his morals and ethics:

When we celebrate Veterans Day at Los Veteranos Middle School, we ask our community to come in and we sit our veterans in front of our children. I give them a moment, and we hand them the mike. We hand the microphone to the veterans themselves to say a few words, and let me tell you, those words were just powerful. Powerful from an emotional standpoint. Powerful with regards to respect. Powerful with who they really are and what they experienced out there to some degree.

However, Mr. Franco also made some statements that spoke about his concern about parents and the community. Rather than focus on what assets the parents might bring to the experience at school, Mr. Franco chose to focus on stating that parents could not participate in conversations about culturally relevant curriculum due to financial situations. This is the story that Mr. Franco shared:

No, at our side of town we struggle with parental involvement to a large degree. And it goes back to the, it's always about the money. So when we try and incorporate the importance of learning and the importance of concepts, it's difficult to make them make time away from their schedules to come and listen to something that the relevance may not quite make a connection to them.

Mr. Franco's statements brought to light his deep-rooted beliefs that parents find it a struggle to dialogue about curriculum in general and about culturally relevant curriculum specifically.

Ms. Candi Cardenas, Principal at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “cultural self” in the stories she shared during the interview. When Ms. Cardenas stated “I’ve been teaching for 35 years and all 35 years have been part of La Frontera ISD schools,” it demonstrated that education – the art of teaching – is something that forms part of her “cultural self.” She is not now in the classroom teaching students directly. She is in fact a principal. But she chose to very intentionally describe her job as that of a “teacher,” for all thirty-five years. This, again, speaks to her deep value (Mehan, 2008) she has for the teaching profession.

Another statement that Ms. Cardenas shared that goes to the heart of her values, belief system, and norms (Mehan, 2008) came when she spoke about the importance of parents as role models:

If parents can be an active part, even whether they understand what all of the different intricacies of the curriculum, even if they don’t understand, like my dad did not understand that. All he knew was that we’ve got to have something there where you’re going to be giving my daughter, my son the best possible that you’ve got.

When Ms. Cardenas envisions parents saying “you’re going to be giving my daughter, my son the *best possible that you’ve got*,” this is her “cultural self” speaking about the importance of parents being advocates. Part of Ms. Cardenas’ moral compass is concerned about doing what’s right for children. That is why she sees herself as a teacher, and not an administrator.

Ms. Bianca Benitez, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “cultural self” in the stories she shared during the interview. Ms. Benitez shared a story about valuing students’ background, particularly language and culture,

which spoke about her “cultural self” values, belief systems, and norms (Mehan, 2008). She told this narrative:

It’s very important that we keep in mind the student’s culture because that gives the students a sense of self-esteem and a sense of worthiness. I instill in principals and teachers and anybody that I get to talk to when it comes to this particular topic – students’ language and culture – that we should be looking at the students’ language that they bring to the school as an asset and not as deficits.

Although Ms. Benitez referred to students and conversations with principals, this story she shared spoke about her own values, belief system, and norms (Mehan, 2008).

Ms. Benitez further developed this theme about the importance of language as part of her own “cultural self” values, belief systems, and norms (Mehan, 2008) in sharing this story:

It [language] should be used as the vehicle to be able to learn the content, and that language should never be looked at as a barrier but rather as a way for them to learn the concepts in the language that they’re learning, which in this case would be English.

Again, while Ms. Benitez is using a storyline about students and their home language, Ms. Benitez’s discussion on the topic could potentially be speaking about her own inner moral compass that drives whom she is.

An interesting conversation line Ms. Benitez delved into in her interview narrative was that of the Hispanics as a group of people, and her statement that many Hispanics do not take pride in their culture. This is the story that Ms. Benitez shared:

I try to be a role model for other people that may be ashamed, and I say ashamed because sometimes we get parents whose children qualify to be in the bilingual program when they get to where they’re going to sign off on the letter that they’re to receive bilingual

instruction, and they have reservations, and they say, ‘No, I don’t want my child to be learning Spanish. I want my child to learn English.’ It seems to me that the Hispanic culture is the only culture that does that because all other cultures take a lot of pride in their culture’s first language. For some reason we don’t. It seems to me that it’s treated as something to be ashamed of.

She chose to make this statement, placing a perception on Hispanics, that they as a people could potentially be viewed as being “ashamed” of their Spanish language and they don’t “take a lot of pride in their culture’s first language.”

Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo, Superintendent of Schools at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “cultural self” in the stories he shared during the interview. Dr. Arnoldo’s narrative first pointed out his empathetic perspective he has for the marginalized students that La Frontera ISD is home to, because of the background he grew up in. Dr. Arnoldo’s “cultural self” values, belief system, and norms (Mehan, 2008) framed this story:

I can familiarize myself with kids that we have in our district, as far as the limited English proficient kids, the recent immigrants, the ones that have migrant parents, the ones that have to learn a second language, the ones that are in poverty, because I can identify myself with those kids because my background is very similar to those kids of today that have all those obstacles. It’s not impossible, but it’s something you have to overcome.

Dr. Arnoldo’s background – second language learner, immigrant, migrant, poverty – all helped shaped this empathetic perspective that helps drive the work he does at superintendent of schools.

Another aspect about the “cultural self” values, belief system, and norms (Mehan, 2008) in Dr. Arnoldo’s story was his discussion about privilege. Dr. Arnoldo realizes that although he grew up as a poor, second language learner, immigrant, migrant, he fared much better than the children he left behind in Mexico, just across the border. He shared this story:

I came from Mexico, from a school system that is very different than we have here in the United States. The education I was getting here was a lot better, people cared for me. I was in a place that had transportation. I had food. I had breakfast and lunch. I had books and good teachers, and so I am able to think about that comparison where I didn’t have it in Mexico. In Mexico I walked to school, you buy books, and you go to school, and there’s no lunch and there’s no breakfast. I felt that it helped me have that motivation and drive to be a better student because I appreciated everything that was being done for me. I was able to see that they wanted somehow to get me the help to be successful. It was now up to me to make it happen.

Dr. Arnoldo understood and appreciated privileges that an American education provided him. This became part of Dr. Arnoldo’s “cultural self” values, belief system, and norms (Mehan, 2008).

Dr. Arnoldo also made a statement in which he seemed to possibly affix a value (Mehan, 2008) judgment about people today, here in the Rio Grande Valley, who may not understand and may not appreciate the privileges afforded to them. “Here [today], I’ve noticed that people take it [education] for granted, but then again maybe they don’t know any better.” The statement is a two-part message. Dr. Arnoldo first states that people in the Valley take educational opportunities for granted, and secondly he justifies his statement by adding that “maybe they don’t know any better.” The “maybe” aspect to his statement does soften the value he may have

placed on Hispanics in the Rio Grande Valley. This also forms part of Dr. Arnoldo's "cultural self" values, belief system, and norms (Mehan, 2008).

These first three components of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model – the "technical self," the "political self," and the "cultural self" – that these three sections of this chapter delved into all dealt with aspects about the "self" level, the inner workings that the educational leader must first develop before the educational leader can begin the work at the next two levels, the "organization" and the "community" levels. The next three sections of this chapter address the next level, the "organization" level. It is at that level that the educational leader first begins to venture outside the self to begin to impact the work to which the educational leader has committed. It is at the organizational level that the educational leader makes the most direct contact with those whom he tries to affect in his work. The next three sections in this chapter will analyze the data that will explain how these eight educational leaders at La Frontera ISD work at the "organization" level – whether it is at the more specific district, school, or classroom level – in the "technical organization," the "political organization," and the "cultural organization" aspects of their educational leadership work.

Technical Organization

The "technical organization" component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that allows the leader the knowledge, platform, and permission to take precise, prescribed, and predetermined action within the leader's role within the organization in addressing issues and problems that need to be addressed. The leader is able to act in a leadership role within the organization in this "technical organization" level because the leader has developed the technical ability – the "how-to" capacity – to work within organizations through practical experiences within organizations, and understands that organizations need to be

technically adroit at finding and implementing solutions. At this “technical organization” level of knowing to lead, the leader is fully cognizant that there are agreed-to precise, prescribed, and predetermined technical actions and solutions within the organization as well as from other organizations outside the leader’s own organization that may either facilitate or further complicate the efforts which the leader and the leader’s own organization take in addressing issues and problems. In the case of this particular qualitative case study, those organizations may include, but may not necessarily be limited to, the following: the district’s school board; the district’s central office structures; the district’s school organization; the Texas Education Agency (TEA); the Texas State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC); the U.S. Department of Education; and, the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). The leader therefore understands that the leader’s technical impact and influence upon the organization through the leader’s actions is contingent upon the shared technical abilities and technical collective wills that any and all organizations connected to the leader’s own organization allow. At this the “technical organization” level, the leader, in many ways, *does not* take technical action alone and independently, because the leader *cannot* act alone and independent of others.

The eight educational leader participants in this case study all spoke about the “technical organization” aspect of their leadership experiences throughout the interviews. Mr. Diego Duarte, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “technical organization” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Mr. Duarte narrated the strength of his “technical organization” skills he employs in the classroom:

I teach American history, and it’s about mostly the history of our country. Unfortunately a lot of the contributions that minority groups make are not found in our history books. Students will ask you, why do I have to learn about George Washington, and these guys

that are white and are dead? It's a valid question, and I think if they learn about Washington and they can bring in their own experiences into the mix, I think they'll be richer for it, and they have a better understanding than if we just teach them one or the other. I think if you mix these two, in the right balance.

This simple explanation by Mr. Duarte points out that he is adept at speaking about the technical aspects of teaching the subject matter he teaches. Mr. Duarte spoke about American history, George Washington, and looking for the right balance between textbook knowledge and the students' own knowledge and experiences. Mr. Duarte's narrative shows savvy perspective and facilitation in his "technical organization" aspect of educational leadership.

Later on, Mr. Duarte narrated other aspects that clearly show his strength in his "technical organization" skills. He shared these thoughts:

We made TAKS-like questions... That was the main curriculum... Everyone talked about how the STAAR or how the old TAKS was... When we do the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, we start talking about the personal freedoms and rights, and then we get into the amendments, the fourth amendment, illegal searches and seizures... We talk about George Washington in Philadelphia, writing the Declaration with Jefferson... It can't be just me pushing American history and the TEKS and the STAAR objectives that need to be covered...

When Mr. Duarte spoke about all this technical content (Constitution, Bill of Rights, personal freedoms and rights, fourth amendment, George Washington, writing the Declaration with Jefferson) that must be taught within the organization, the classroom level at which he works, it confirms that Mr. Duarte is an astute "technical organization" team player. All these thoughts sprayed out throughout the interview verify the Mr. Diego Duarte, the "technical

organization” worker, is sound in his technical aspects in his work at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD.

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “technical organization” aspect in the stories she shared during her interview. Ms. Enriquez described what the next day’s lessons would be able, and that got exactly at how technically savvy she is within her job at the organization as a Texas history teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School:

Tomorrow we’re going to be talking about Mexico’s independence, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla... What I also do is I try to do pictures. When I do vocabulary – and I think vocabulary is essential. If they don’t know vocabulary then they’re not going to comprehend what they’re reading. So when I implement vocabulary I like to implement pictures related to them... I’ll do a PowerPoint and share it... In Texas history we do cover these types of topics... stories about the Apache Indians, about the Indian heritage... Texas history has so many TEKS that we have to teach throughout the year. We’re on a timeline... you see my bulletin board [pointing at her bulletin board]. We did the Columbian Exchange, and the kids didn’t know ‘Columbian’. I said, ‘This is the Columbian Exchange. *Entrecambio* of goods, what the Europeans took from this new world and what they brought from the old world to the new world.’ So they understand the concept of the old world and the new world, and that’s what I wanted because that they have to understand...

Just as with Duarte in the previous example, Ms. Enriquez’s strong content mastery (Mexico’s independence, Mexico’s independence, vocabulary, Texas history, Apache Indians, Indian heritage, Columbian Exchange, old world, new world) support the indication that Ms.

Enriquez is a “technical organization” school and classroom leader. All these ideas that Ms. Enriquez discussed in her interview prove that Ms. Enriquez knows curriculum strategies, and the standards she is expected to teach in her Texas history classroom. Her “technical organization” aspects are strong.

Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “technical organization” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Part of Mr. Gonzalez’s expertise at the “technical organization” aspect – the precise, prescribed, and predetermined technical actions and solutions that form part of his job repertoire – were shared in his narrative:

In the department meetings, a lot of the time it’s more logistical, talking about testing information and how many kids got this percentage of what questions right. At the beginning of the year there’s a lot of sharing. There are these huge binders that we have to know front and back. Sometimes we’ll share ideas, like, I’ve brought up my fly game, and I use a quiz bowl expert with the kids.

Mr. Gonzalez is obviously an expert at the technical aspects of being an effective, successful classroom teacher.

Ms. Herlinda Hernandez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “technical organization” aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. Ms. Hernandez explained that her technical experience made her a qualified effective teacher:

In my AP classes... in my regular classes... I’d have to make sure I knew my history and make sure I had my content... I also had to teach a lot of Asian history... American history, and a little on European history... Having to teach religion... all types of religions, from Confucianism to Buddhism, Daoism to Hinduism, Islam to Christianity...

teach basic tenets and beliefs and see how it was implemented in history and how it has affected and changed because so much of our history has been made because of our religions, and how people feel that what they're doing is right because of their religious beliefs... In world history we teach ten thousand years of information, so we have to teach all sorts of culture and the blending of culture and how it affects them socially, people that like each other and have made those connections, why cultures have developed the way they have...

Ms. Hernandez's discussion proves that her content knowledge and her ability to impart that knowledge to her student affirms she is a "technical organization" leader at Tuco Benedicto High School. It was obvious from Ms. Hernandez that she has developed the technical ability – the "how-to" capacity – to work as a very successful and caring world history teacher.

The two principals that participated in the research study also shared stories about the "technical organization" aspect in their interviews. As building principals, their primary technical focus is on both the daily and long-term operations of their school. Mr. Fortunato Franco, Principal at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his "technical organization" aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. In his narrative, Mr. Franco discussed actions that clearly are "technical organization" components:

I had a very intense conversation with my social studies department chair, and one of his colleagues, that's one of our 8th grade teachers... directly connected to historical events just in this area... I really believe that a lot of times what TEA [the Texas Education Agency] and what the state wants for our students may not necessarily be in line with what we perceive to be what's best for our children... Don't even get me started with the federal government. The federal government is even worse with regards to their

particular standards... There are, I believe, conflicts... opposites to what I feel we really should be doing that we still have to conform to what the state requires because they want results...

Mr. Franco's discussion about the technical, bureaucratic precise, prescribed, and predetermined (Trueba, 1999) technical actions and solutions that he is confronted with in his daily and long-term operations as school leader continued. Mr. Franco continued his story:

I'll take it a step further, STAAR, End-of-Course, anything that has to do with our most recent assessment... They tell you teach the TEKS, but you need to teach them at three different levels. Now, we're not going to tell you what level this particular TEKS is going to be tested at. That's something for you to decide. We know what we're going to test them on, but we're not going to let you know... So, they give us the TEKS for all our content areas, they ask us to put a timeline together or a scope and sequence, teach it at a rigor that may be at a level of 1, 2, or 3, because they need to be ready for 1, 2, or 3, because we're not going to tell you what it's going to be. We want you to create your own curriculum as well, okay, around these TEKS. We're not going to tell you what to do. That's up to you. And then we're going to give you assessments to see if you accomplished enough throughout the year for your kids to be successful...

It was quite obvious that Mr. Franco was quite adept at the academic and instructional "technical organization" aspects of his job as principal.

Ms. Candi Cardenas, Principal at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her "technical organization" aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. The following portions of Ms. Cardenas' story point at the technical expertise with which she leads her organization, Tuco Benedicto High School.

When you look at any curriculum, one of the major things is to make it relevant. There of course is the basic framework and the parameters within which we work, the district prescribed curriculum that our own teachers from across the district got together to work on, and we had quite a few of our own Tuco Benedicto High School teachers involved in that. We had teachers in every subject area that represented our school in the curriculum writing section... giving them opportunities and voices in what they're going to bring in as extra resources... Our curriculum is pretty much designed already... I'm very much for the empowerment of teachers. I involve them in every possible way that I can.

In sharing these thoughts about how she leads Tuco Benedicto High School with a sound “technical organization” vision in mind, Ms. Cardenas discussed her evidence that she is technically sound.

Ms. Bianca Benitez, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “technical organization” aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. Ms. Benitez’s shared the following comments about her precise, prescribed, and predetermined (Trueba, 1999) technical actions in her job as assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in her story:

I instill in principals and teachers and anybody that I get to talk to when it comes to this particular topic – students’ language and culture – that we should be looking at the students’ language that they bring to the school as an asset and not as deficits... On the week when we do not have a board meeting, on Wednesday from three to five PM I meet with all thirty-one elementary principals. So I do that every two weeks. On the Thursday, the following day after I meet with the elementary principals, in the morning from nine-thirty to eleven-thirty I meet with high school principals, and this is also every two

weeks. On that same Thursday afternoon from three to five I meet with the middle school principals. That's every two weeks. So, I have *a lot* of contact with the principals. We do have curricular discussions, because we have a district curriculum, which in this case is CSCOPE...

As the district leader in the department that is directly responsible for implementing and overseeing the district's curriculum, Ms. Benitez is technically astute at directing resources – both human and non-human – to ensure that the district teachers are taking the precise, prescribed, and predetermined (Trueba, 1999) technical actions that she is taking herself in this realm.

Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo, Superintendent of Schools at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “technical organization” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. I asked Dr. Arnoldo to narrate his story that might shed light on his precise, prescribed, and predetermined (Trueba, 1999) technical actions as the “technical organization” leader at La Frontera ISD. This is the story he shared:

We always talk about opportunities for all of our kids, when we look at our subpopulations. We look at our migrants. We look at our special education students. We look at our limited English proficient kids, or recent immigrants. We always want to find ways and curriculum resources that reach out to all kids... we are concerned that the subpopulations need more of our attention because that's what's hurting us as a district, and we want to make sure that we have to find ways of improving, either through staff development, through curriculum resources, as well as technology resources we can utilize, obviously extended days through tutorials, teachers by finding the best qualified teachers – anything that we can possibly do to improve the instruction of the special

populations is always something that we talk about because we know that if the special populations, our LEP, for example, if we can improve our scores there we can make tremendous gains as a district because we have so many LEP students in our district that we have to address their needs and we don't want them to fall behind and continue falling behind and then end up dropping out...

When Dr. Arnoldo narrates these phrases – “our subpopulations,” “our migrants,” “our special education students,” “our limited English proficient kids,” “recent immigrants,” and “find ways and curriculum resources that reach out to all kids” – it draws an empathetic connection to the listener. The listener immediately knows by hearing these phrases – these lists of different groups of students – that the superintendent of schools Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo genuinely cares, for he knows the very populations of students at La Frontera ISD. The “find ways and curriculum resources that reach out to all kids” seals the deal, for it gets at the core of what should be expected of any and all districts – that the district meets the needs of *all* students by finding “ways and curriculum resources that reach out” to them.

Also telling in a very “technical organization” manner is the following statement Dr. Arnoldo made: “we are concerned that the subpopulations need more of our attention because that's what's hurting us as a district.” Two aspects about this statement draw attention to it. One, in his statement Dr. Arnoldo refers back to the subpopulations more as an inanimate thing, but this is probably because he is referring to the subpopulations' assessment scores, graduation rates, and dropout rates. These scores and rates bottom line are all clearly inanimate objects in the form of statistics. Dr. Arnoldo states that he and his leadership team are concerned that the subpopulations need more attention because “that's what's” hurting the district. Actually the use of the more businesslike, technical “that's what's hurting us as a district” reference is better

aligned with this technical aspect perspective of leadership at the school organization level. The leader deals more directly with technical things at the “technical organization” level, and not necessarily human things – that happens mostly at the political and cultural levels. Two, in his statement Dr. Arnoldo is asserting that there is concern with the subpopulations needing more attention because these subpopulations are “hurting the district.” Dr. Arnoldo probably made this statement because of the stark “technical” realities that both state and federal accountability systems through the Texas Education Agency’s School Success Initiative (SSI) and the U.S. Department of Education’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) bring to school districts. These SSI and AYP “technical” realities come in the form of “technical” report cards on districts’ assessment scores, graduation rates, and dropout rates that bring either accolades or monetary and other difficult negative punitive measures as consequences.

As Dr. Arnoldo’s technical response continues, he creates a long list of possible technical fixes (Trueba, 1999) to this “subpopulation” technical problem by stating that the potential technical fixes – “staff development,” “curriculum resources,” “technology resources,” “extended days,” “tutorials,” “qualified teachers” – can lead to La Frontera ISD’s ultimate technical goal: “improve our scores” and “make tremendous gains as a district.” It is not surprising that such a technical organization perspective was taken by the superintendent of schools when asked to reflect on curricular issues and conversations being held at the district. The district, after all, is driven in many ways towards this numbers perspective by the very agencies it works with and reports to: the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC), and the U.S. Department of Education. This entire technical discussion in Dr. Arnoldo’s story he narrated ends with a reference to human agency in the midst of this organizational technicality. Dr. Arnoldo states the following. “We have so many LEP

students in our district that we have to address their needs and we don't want them to fall behind and continue falling behind and then end up dropping out.”

Political Organization

The “political organization” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that allows the leader to use any and all relationships the leader had made, developed, and cultivated both within and outside the leader’s immediate organization to harness both human and non-human resources to lead the organization as effectively and efficiently within the leader’s role in the organization. The scope of both the platform within which the leader leads and the level at which the leader makes impact and has influence is greater exponentially than when the leader leads at the “political self” level because the amount of human capital involved increases from leading and thus influencing one – the self – to leading and thus influencing many within and outside the immediate organization. It is at this the “political organization” level that the leader is able to use the professional relationships the leader has fostered due in large part to being a leader within the organization to lead, influence, and thereby continue to increase the leader’s political capital; the more the leader leads at the “political organization” level, the more the leader will be able to potentially lead because of the professional relationships that will continue to grow and develop.

Mr. Diego Duarte, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “political organization” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Mr. Duarte’s first mention of establishing relationships at his organization – the school – was his mention of getting hired. Mr. Duarte shared this. “I interviewed and got hired in December, and my first date of teaching was the first day after the Christmas holidays. That’s how I got into education.” This first narrative from Mr. Duarte points at how immediately he was able to

harness his resources, his interview skills, to get a job in which he was not only hired on the spot, he was asked to report very soon thereafter. Mr. Duarte could not have done that without realizing the power of relationships in the organization.

Mr. Duarte also related the political dynamics he experienced in working with El Huarache ISD administrators. In explaining how El Huarache ISD worked on a culturally relevant curriculum project and then made several large abrupt changes, Mr. Duarte shared this story:

We stopped teaching American history and did nothing but the history of the Valley, and then we stopped doing that and we went back to doing American history, about two years later. There was a loss of interest. Administrators no longer bought into that, and so it was, ‘Go back and do what you were doing.’ We went back and forth on what we were doing.

This story from Mr. Duarte shows how the political organization aspect of leadership is dynamic, ever-fluid, and interactive. Obviously Mr. Duarte’s administrators made decisions that affected what he was doing the classroom, and as a politically savvy worker within the organization, Mr. Duarte understood his role to be that of a team player. Mr. Duarte describes the move from the original standard curriculum to one that was locally based and then *back* to the original standard curriculum in a span of several years. Mr. Duarte’s reflections that a hybrid version of both curricula might have been a better compromise gets at the notion that often in the political organization aspect of leadership, sometimes solutions that spring up from the level closest to the implementation of policy are often not heard and thus not attempted. Mr. Duarte’s “Wait a minute! We threw out the baby with the bath water!” commentary identifies a sense of political frustration he recalled. Mr. Duarte, however, knew that the opportunity to confront this

issue again would more than likely resurface later; therefore, for the time being, he watched, waited, and taught the curriculum he was told to teach.

Mr. Duarte also shared another interesting narrative that revealed the political organization aspect. He spoke about the political dynamics at the district level when he was asked to participate in a curriculum writing endeavor:

Everyone talked about how the STAAR or how the old TAKS was, we were teaching an inch deep but a mile wide, and that the STAAR was going to be depth and rigor, that we were going to delve deeply into these issues, and topics, and concepts. That's not true. I don't see it... I probably won't do it again next year.

Working at the organizational level in the political realm challenged Mr. Duarte to consider whether he wanted to get involved with that activity again, as he sensed that while he was told that one thing would occur in the end another actually transpired.

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “political organization” aspect in the stories she shared during her interview. Ms. Enriquez discussed her relationship with the other Texas history teachers at Los Veteranos Middle school:

We all mentor each other. I'll do a PowerPoint and share it. I have the least experience. I guess I see things different because I just started five years ago in 2008. I send them the PowerPoints and I tell them, 'If you guys want me to change anything let me know, but this is what I'm doing.' Sometimes they'll do a PowerPoint and I'll go, 'Oh, I'm changing it. Look, what do you think if I add this?' So I share these ideas when I talk with the other Texas history teachers.

Ms. Enriquez’s description of her political relationships within her organization – using the words “mentor” and “share” – show that Ms. Enriquez approaches the political aspect of her job in an open mutual manner. Actions like mentoring and sharing are clearly “political organization” aspects at their best. It is also interesting that Ms. Enriquez asserts that she sees things “different” because of her youth and lack of experience compared to her Texas history colleagues.

Ms. Enriquez also shared a narrative about the political aspect of implementing a district-issued timeline and curriculum which she felt often does not emanate from a collaborative effort between central office and the schools:

I am on a timeline. And sometimes I say, ‘Who is doing this timeline? How long have they been out of the classroom?’ But then I come to my... I vent, and then I say, ‘Well, they know that. They do this because they have to go from here to here, and we have this much of time...’ But we vent. Teachers do vent. ‘Look at this! They were crazy when they were thinking!’ Many times it is obvious that they are out of touch with what the students could bring in to the classroom learning.

Ms. Enriquez’s apparent frustration points out the nature of the “political organization” aspect of leadership, where those at the implementation stage of policy often believe that they are not being consulted for important input that they believe provides valuable insight that is thus ignored or missed completely.

Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “political organization” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. One of the first mentions by Mr. Gonzalez about the importance of developing and fostering

relationship at the organization level in his interview spoke about both a trainer he had teaching him teaching strategies and how he saw his relationship with students. He narrated this story:

I remember one of the trainers we had saying that you want the kids not to remember the date of such and such happening, you want the kids to remember the activity that was describing it. So I think that without that connection, without those interpersonal skills, without those political games that they need to understand how to use in order to do things, how are you going to get a kid to really learn it?

This describes the political organization aspect, first, because it shows how Mr. Gonzalez values and understands that staff development can have a positive impact. All Mr. Gonzalez had to do was participate in this professional development endeavor and listen for a golden kernel that spoke to him, and it did. Mr. Gonzalez still remembers it. Secondly, this story speaks to the political organization because establishing and fostering relationships within the organization to get the work done by harnessing resources and negotiating space, is not only about and between adults – it is also quite importantly about the relationship between adults and students. When Mr. Gonzalez states that “without those political games that they [students] need to understand how to use in order to do things” Mr. Gonzalez is referencing that delicate political dance between students and the curriculum they are expected to embrace. Mr. Gonzalez rightly associates that important “political” aspect to “connections” and “interpersonal skills” that are vital in the student-teacher political organization relationship.

Mr. Gonzalez also shared that when he first met with his social studies department at Tuco Benedicto High School this year, it was an opportunity to dialog as a team and begin to create bonds among the teachers.

At the beginning of the year there's a lot of sharing. Even then it's more about first we get to know each other. Sometimes we'll share ideas, like, 'What do you do to get the kids involved?' So, in that aspect, yeah, we do talk about that a little bit and share.

Again, the aspect of sharing and getting to know one another surfaced as it did with previous teachers in the study. It is obvious that Mr. Gonzalez is not acting as an independent agent at his school, but rather, as an important member of a team that understands that the political organization aspect of leadership depends on individuals cooperating with one another. This learning to cooperate with other team members and develop those leadership collaborative skills is part of the "political organization" aspect of educational leadership.

Ms. Herlinda Hernandez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her "political organization" aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. Ms. Hernandez discussed her role working with La Frontera ISD central office staff in reviewing district-developed benchmark assessments. Ms. Hernandez related the political organization nature of that opportunity:

I've been very fortunate. I have been working with Mrs. Pocosaco, the social studies head of instruction, out here in our district. They have had me review the benchmarks, you know, before they take them, and I guess me in particular because I'm new as a teacher, and I've taken a leadership role in world history. I'm trying to get things better because I feel I was very well-trained in Harvester ISD. I really feel lucky that the bar was always set very high, and I always had to fight to be the best. Here, it's more like people are *following* what I'm doing.

Ms. Hernandez's story suggests that she understands, values, and appreciates – "I've been very fortunate" – the fact that she has been afforded certain privilege in a political sense to

harness the resources to accomplish the work she needs to get done. Ms. Hernandez clearly understands that the political organization aspect of this endeavor is a two-way street, where she benefits not only financially (by having a job that pays her an additional stipend) but in relationship-building as well, *and* La Frontera ISD benefits from her efforts and expertise she has developed both at Harvester ISD previously and now here at La Frontera ISD. Ms. Hernandez also correctly understands the dual reciprocity nature of the political organization aspect of leadership when she asserts “I was very well-trained in Harvester ISD” where she learned to follow and “here, it’s more like people are *following* what I’m doing” at La Frontera ISD – at the former site she learned by following and at the latter site she is learning by leading.

However, even in light of her positive report about how fortunate Ms. Hernandez feels about central office offering her privilege and opportunity to participate in assessment review, Ms. Hernandez also feels the negative tug from central office at times. Ms. Hernandez narrated this story:

I feel that even going into the central office level, they put a lot of pressure on us to, ‘Create this report. Get them to pass the benchmarks.’ Sometimes, as an administrator they forget what it’s like to *be* in the classroom, and that’s it just as easy as, ‘Well, here, have them do vocabulary, and then they’re going to pass the benchmark and they’re going to know everything.’ They’re not.

Such is the nature of the relationship between administrators and teachers, where often the teacher feels that “sometimes, as an administrator they forget what it’s like to *be* in the classroom.” This political organization aspect of leadership – the tug-of-war, give-and-take, political dance – cannot be ignored and must be placed in proper balanced perspective where neither the high times are celebrated too much nor the low tides are lamented excessively.

For a teacher nothing can go farther in creating a solid political organization aspect to educational leadership than building relationships with other teachers. Ms. Hernandez is aware of that, and a story she shared excitedly about it proves that:

I'm friends with the AP teacher, Mr. Chuparosa. He's my friend since we were in high school. When we both got assigned here, we were very excited. And he told me, "Hey, I got AP human geography class," and I said, "I got AP world history," so we kind of go back and forth on what are the connections between geography and world history. He's been one of the main people I do talk to since just because I've known him for so long.

Ms. Hernandez's disposition in sharing her story seemed both animated and enthusiastic. Being able to plan, share, vent, compare, whine and all the other normal actions that come from being in *any* political organization work environment is extremely important and quite valuable. Being able to do that with someone you have known for a long time and whom you trust deeply could be considered almost priceless. Ms. Hernandez and Mr. Chuparosa seem to have that in their "political organization" relationship with one another.

The two principals that participated in the research study also shared stories about the "political organization" aspect in their interviews. Mr. Fortunato Franco, Principal at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his "political organization" aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Within two minutes of starting his interview, Mr. Franco included an interesting political organization allusion in his first story he shared:

Initially I was getting into education to become a coach... and a situation in my life allowed me to look at things in a different way so then I went into the educational leadership program... I joined the dark side, if you will, and became an assistant principal...

Mr. Franco's description of leaving the teaching and coaching ranks in education and joining "the dark side" of educational leadership or administration is most probably Mr. Franco's light-hearted spirited attempt at describing the push-pull, tug-of-war, us-and-them, light-and-dark perspective that teachers and administrators often have of their dual-natured relationship. That dual nature is part of the important relationship-driven "political organization" aspect in educational leadership that calls for tempered composure amongst all participants in the organization, where things need to be viewed as business and not personal. Mr. Franco's quick aside to this perspective did not seem serious at all. It just may have been a lively stab at fun, referring to the employee-boss dance as more like a lively salsa or tango and not as a lamenting funeral dirge.

Mr. Franco next described a discussion he had with some teachers on cultural relevance which he expects to be taught in the classroom. He shared the narrative as follows. "I had a very intense conversation with my social studies department chair, and one of his colleagues, that's one of our 8th grade teachers, and the conversation was exactly that [cultural relevance]." Mr. Franco's ability to move the conversation from the silly almost flippant "dark side" metaphor to the dead serious "I had a very intense conversation" representation is a good example of the necessity at times to use multiple platforms to navigate within the political organization realms. It is the political self at work knowing both when and how to work inside the political organization.

Mr. Franco also shared quite extensively about his deep concern that the political organization relationship between his school and district with the Texas Education Agency and the U.S. Department of Education was very much at odds many times. These statements by Mr.

Franco point at that strained political organization relationship with those agencies that he perceives exists:

I really believe that a lot of times is that what TEA [the Texas Education Agency] and what the state wants for our students may not necessarily be in line with what we perceive to be what's best for our children... and, don't even get me started with the federal government. The federal government is even worse with regards to their particular standards...

Mr. Franco not say that he was going to either sabotage or completely ignore directives coming from the Texas Education Agency and the U.S. Department of Education. Mr. Franco was frankly stating that at times the political organization relationship between the state and federal educational agencies and the local district and school was at times difficult, and it could even be described as maybe being very awkward at best and extremely painful at worst. In voicing these concerns, Mr. Franco was openly advocating for more local control of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment, something with which his teachers most probably would agree with him.

As the facilitator administrator between his teachers and central office, Mr. Franco discussed the nature of *that* tri-level political organization relationship in sharing this narrative:

The conversations I think are in the trenches with our teachers, but really when you climb the ladder and you get closer to the central office area it's more about results, and how your kids are doing with the district-made benchmarks that we give every six-weeks and what we need to do, the plan of action, to make things a little better with regards to results. So, everything that we do is not necessarily whether it's the right thing or the wrong thing to do... It's based on how the results are showing that our children are being

successful on those standards, not necessarily are they grasping the full extent of a particular content.

The “in the trenches with our teachers” and “climb the ladder and you get closer to the central office” dual visual serves as an appropriate symbol of stratification in the political organization aspect of educational leadership. Mr. Franco’s “everything that we do is not necessarily whether it’s the right thing or the wrong thing to do” portion of his narrative is also enlightening in the political organizational aspect. That statement almost seems to point at the results-at-any-cost, ends-justify-the-means mentality.

Ms. Candi Cardenas, Principal at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “political organization” aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. Ms. Cardenas’ shared her narrative on how she works the political organization relationship with her teachers in the following story:

I’m very much for the empowerment of teachers. I involve them in every possible way that I can. There of course is the basic framework and the parameters within which we work, the district prescribed curriculum that our own teachers from across the district got together to work on, and we had quite a few of our own Tuco Benedicto High School teachers involved in that. That was something we made sure even before we opened the doors of Tuco Benedicto High School, that our teachers were involved.

This team approach by Ms. Cardenas in developing and nurturing the political organization skills and relationship at the school between her administration staff and her teachers addresses the need to establish a single-minded common group effort. Ms. Cardenas’ use of the words “empowerment” and involve” speaks volumes to the relational methods that drive her daily work. Ms. Cardenas perceives her teachers to be members of a group that is using

their political relationships in the political organization which school is. This action helps Ms. Cardenas as the educational leader to foster that relationship growth in her teachers as she shepherds them as their leader.

Ms. Bianca Benitez, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “political organization” aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. When I asked Ms. Benitez to share about her discussions and inner workings with principals and her supervisor Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo superintendent of schools, Ms. Benitez first detailed how she holds meetings with principals every two weeks in a certain schedule built around board meetings, and previously discussed here, and then she followed up with this very telling single-sentence narrative:

We do have curricular discussions [with principals], because we have a district curriculum, which in this case is CSCOPE, but at the same time the principals have a lot of discretion on how they’re going to integrate other kinds of resources, themes, or anything else that they want to do.

The political dance that Ms. Benitez discussed here alludes to the district-wide curricular parameters and framework – CSCOPE – that set the tone and the stage upon which that dance will occur, and the schools each being allowed to bring their own “resources, themes, or anything else that they want” to that dance with which to dance. Ms. Benitez’s perception that schools actually *do* have much flexibility in the “resources, themes, or anything else that they want” to use with that district-mandated curriculum CSCOPE is part of her educational leadership political organization activity he needs to portray to school principals so that they *do* believe that and act accordingly. This would then allow teacher leaders at the schools to bring in their own

resources and ideas to the district CSCOPE framework, thus becoming a true political organization experience for all.

Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo, Superintendent of Schools at La Frontera ISD, also spoke about his “political organization” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Dr. Arnoldo’s narrative on the political organization realm was somewhat limited to the discussion previously highlighted where he mentioned the subpopulations. In that discussion, the “we” that connected him to the political organization nature of working with others came in these pronoun “we” and action verb combinations: we always talk; we look; we always want; we are concerned; we want; *if* we can improve; we can make; we have to address; we don’t want them to fail. While Dr. Arnoldo did not provide extensive detail in his discussion on exactly *how* he does the important political organization work as superintendent of schools with the school board above him and all the constituencies under him in the organizational chart (with his central office staff; school principals and administration; classroom teachers; students; parents; and, the community at large), his simple yet powerful use of the team-referencing two-letter pronoun “we” as he listed the talking, looking, wanting, being concerned, improving, making, addressing, and not wanting them to fail action verbs provides sufficient details that verify Dr. Arnoldo’s belief in the importance of fostering political organization relationships.

Cultural Organization

The “cultural organization” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is the level at which the leader’s leadership actions are helping develop and foster the organization’s values, belief systems, and norms. The leader working at this the “cultural organization” level of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model has moved beyond and outside the moral self in taking action in the organization. The leader is also moving beyond and outside the scope of mere and pure

technical and political activity within the organization in which the leader leads. When the leader is able and willing to work at the “cultural organization” level, the scope of what and how the leader influences the organization takes on such a public persona that the leader’s work will not go unnoticed. Other leaders within and outside the leader’s organization, and other organizations, will take notice of the leader’s “cultural organization” actions; thus, when the leader is able and willing to work at the “cultural organization” level of leading, the leader’s moral influence is potentially manifest in multiple organizational circles.

Mr. Diego Duarte, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “cultural organization” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. The story that Mr. Duarte shared that connected to the cultural organization aspect of leadership was in reference to his El Huarache culturally relevant curriculum project experience. When Mr. Duarte told that narrative, he made a value statement on the project that spoke about the value, belief system and norms (Mehan, 2008) that as a teacher at El Huarache he was hoping to foster at the organization level:

I think we did the kids a disservice because they left there that two years that we did that, all our lessons, everything, all our curriculum was the Hispanics here in the Valley, but there were other things happening around the world and the kids never got to see that because we didn’t share it with them.

Mr. Duarte’s mention of the experience possibly being a “disservice” to the students shows that Mr. Duarte was disappointed in that aspect, and it tells of how he expected so much more for El Huarache to offer the students. As an educational leader, Mr. Duarte wanted his school at El Huarache ISD, the organization, to serve the students in a cultural manner, providing a curricular experience founded on values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008).

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “cultural organization” aspect in the stories she shared during her interview. Ms. Enriquez shared how she wants the organization, the school, to help instill local cultural value and pride via its taught curricula. Ms. Enriquez told this story about using local connections to develop and foster values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) in the school experience:

I want them included. I want them to feel included into my presentations, into my vocabulary, so I bring in the pictures. I just want the kids to feel comfortable. I want them to feel part of it. I want them to know that the area was part of it, because that pulls them in into history. It pulls them in, we *were* part of this, or our ancestors were, maybe not us, but our ancestors.

This narrative that Ms. Enriquez shared clearly explains that Ms. Enriquez wants the students to see that school is an organization that is helping address the cultural organization aspects of values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan 2005). Ms. Enriquez’s calls for wanting the students to feel included in the presentations and with the vocabulary activities show her moral and ethical concern for the students.

Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “cultural organization” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Mr. Gonzalez shared a story about he deals with racist remarks in the high school world history classroom. Mr. Gonzalez uses this as an opportunity to teach about how school, the organization, can help develop and implement cultural values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008). This is the narrative Mr. Gonzalez told:

You’d be surprised how many times you hear racist or derogatory comments about specific religions or people. I ask the kids, ‘Have you guys ever *really* met anyone who is

actually Middle Eastern or who is a Muslim and who practices Ramadan?’ I’m really glad I went to Up North State because you can start talking about Islam and I can say, ‘Hey, I have a friend that had to go through Ramadan and you’re only allowed to eat from sundown to sunup.’ I’m hoping that the kids will learn to respect. Kids throw around religious terms around in my class, and I really don’t think they have any idea of what it’s like in the world.

Mr. Gonzalez talks about his hope that “the kids will learn to respect.” That can only happen if it is intentionally taught. By sharing stories of his cultural self, his own values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) cultivated through his own experiences growing up and attending a university that *did* have a diverse ethnic, racial, and religious population, Mr. Gonzalez as an educational leader can begin to model and transfer those cultural self attributes to students as cultural organization attributes the organizational ought to aspire to instill in the students.

Ms. Herlinda Hernandez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “cultural organization” aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. Similar to the cultural organizational values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) that Mr. Gonzalez shared about his experiences with his students at Tuco Benedicto High School, Ms. Hernandez told her story that connected to those same cultural organization aspects as well:

I think that, personally, being able to see more than just what the Valley is *is* important. They’re so fixed with that “here it’s right... this is the right way”... mentality. I try to tell them, ‘It’s right to believe, to have a belief system, and don’t lose it. Don’t lose your beliefs. But you have to be accepting that there are going to be people that are not like you, and how are you going to interact with them, because you’re going to find people in your job, in your future that you’re not going to be like, and if you’re not able to work

with them then you're fired, or you're going to quit because you don't like it, and then what job are you going to have?' I tell them, 'Learn how it is. Don't say it's weird. Don't be rude. Accept it.' I tell them I love that they have beliefs, but I remind them to be responsible for what they say.

Ms. Hernandez is using the organization, her classroom, to model for her students at a smaller scale how societies, cultures meet up and have to learn to either cooperate with or confront one another. This is the cultural dance where societies either adjust to one another or engage in conflict about their differences. The organization as a mini-society is a perfect laboratory in which to explore and learn about the cultural organization aspects of values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008).

The two principals that participated in the research study also shared stories about the "cultural organization" aspect in their interviews. Mr. Fortunato Franco, Principal at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his "cultural organization" aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Mr. Franco spoke from an administrator perspective about the school and district developing and implementing its own cultural organizational values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) as a school system. He shared this story:

Who's to say that the state can't allow us to create our own assessments based on our culture that parallels the same thing that in north Texas or in Dallas or Houston they create their particular assessment with some connect to reliability, and we'll all be very happy, sir. We'll all be very happy, because, again, being an American doesn't totally mean that you have to conform to everything that is right by certain standards, by certain cultures, or the leaders that we have leading us.

In his narrative, Mr. Franco addressed the issue of state testing, and how local values, beliefs, and norms are often ignored and bypassed when high-stakes state assessments are developed and implemented. Mr. Franco calls for the value of fairness *both* to the “reliability” of a locally-developed assessment and the American belief that one doesn’t have to “conform to everything that is right by certain... leaders that we have leading us.” Mr. Franco is advocating for the organization to be allowed to define its own cultural organization values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) within certain fair, equitable parameters.

Ms. Candi Cardenas, Principal at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “cultural organization” aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. The cultural organizational value that Ms. Cardenas shared in her narrative centered on developing a sense of shared responsibility amongst all parties, starting with her teachers. “I’m very much for the empowerment of teachers. I involve them in every possible way that I can.” These two statements by Ms. Cardenas identify how she is developing the cultural organization values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) that begin with empowerment through involvement. When Ms. Cardenas involves her teachers in the decision-making, in the development of curriculum, in the day-to-day planning that must occur in any organization, Ms. Cardenas in essence is building her team around the cultural organization values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) that make up Tuco Benedicto High School’s inner core.

Ms. Bianca Benitez, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “cultural organization” aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. As a central office person working at the more macro-level of the organization, as opposed to working at the more micro-levels of schools and classrooms that principals and teachers work at, Ms. Benitez’s perspective on addressing the cultural organization needs of

values, belief systems, and norms focused on that macro-level platform she works on at La Frontera ISD. Ms. Benitez shared two separate almost contrasting juxtaposition stories. First Ms. Benitez told *this* story:

We have a district curriculum, which in this case is CSCOPE, but at the same time the principals have a lot of discretion on how they're going to integrate other kinds of resources, themes, or anything else that they want to do.

This first story describes the development of a culturally cohesive organization, one that respects those at the school sites to have the power to make curricular decisions. Minutes later Ms. Benitez told *this* story:

In our school district any activities that are going to be taking place even if they are during the school day or if they are going to be taking place after school or a weekend, they all come through my office.

Both stories combined speak about the dual nature of the culture organization – possibly in conflict with itself – that a central office can operate under as it develops and lives out its organizational values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008). The former story shared by Ms. Benitez, that of school principals and by extension classroom teachers having “a lot of discretion on how they're going to integrate other kinds of resources, themes, or anything else,” talks about the desire to be an open system that is willing to review itself and adjust and accommodate as needed. An open system values flexibility and the empowerment of its participants, and that is what Ms. Benitez alludes to in her first remarks here. The latter story speaks about the perceived necessity for the organization to also control the parameters in which that open system operates. When Ms. Benitez states that “any activities... come through my office,” Ms. Benitez seems to be connecting to that governing, controlling mechanism that kicks in at central offices at school

districts. The system wants its participants to fully participate openly, but it also wants the participants to adhere to certain closed system parameters. Otherwise, if each school within the school district was truly free to have full discretion on curricular activities and materials, quite possibly the need for a central office at all would appropriately come into question. Thus, Ms. Benitez's two stories tell the one story of how a district pushes and pulls, and gives and takes, as it creates the cultural organization in which its values, belief systems, and norms (Mehan, 2008) are generated and implemented.

Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo, Superintendent of Schools at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his "cultural organization" aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Just as Ms. Benitez, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction at La Frontera ISD, had previously shared about the central office macro-level perspective of the cultural organization, Dr. Arnoldo as superintendent of schools for the district reflected on that same perspective. Dr. Arnoldo told this narrative. "We always talk about opportunities for all of our kids... We always want to find ways and curriculum resources that reach out to all kids... I do visit the campuses a lot..." Dr. Arnoldo's perspective coincides with that of Ms. Benitez in the sense that Dr. Arnoldo is also a central office top-tier organizational player as she is; Dr. Arnoldo, of course, is the *very* top-tier person in the system as superintendent of schools. Other than these references to opportunities for all students, ways and resources to reach all students, and visiting the schools "a lot," Dr. Arnoldo did not really discuss how exactly he is helping develop and implement any cultural organization values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008).

This second trio of components of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model – the "technical organization," the "political organization," and the "cultural organization" – that these three sections of this chapter delved into all dealt with aspects about the "organization" level, the level

in which the educational leader first begins to venture outside the self to begin to impact the work that the educational leader has committed to, and the level in which the educational leader makes the most direct contact with those whom he tries to affect in his work. The educational leader is able to work at this organization level after developing his work within the self. The next three sections of this chapter address the next level, the “community” level. It is at the community level that the educational leader now works in the community at large, going outside the self and the beyond the boundaries of immediate organization, whether that organization is the classroom, the school, or the school district. The next three sections in this chapter will analyze the data that will explain how these eight educational leaders at La Frontera ISD work at the “community” level in the “technical community,” the “political community,” and the “cultural community” aspects of their educational leadership work.

Technical Community

The “technical community” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that allows the leader to practice those technical skills in helping the community at large address issues that it faces. As in the self and organization realms, the technical aspect of this leadership aspect within this specific realm – the community – is also defined and informed by primarily those precise, prescribed, preselected, mechanical, technical strategic actions void of the relational connections that working at the self and organization levels entails. In this “technical community” aspect of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model the leader leads at the community level for the sake of solving community problems and addressing community issues and not necessarily building the self or the organization through relationship and stories of interconnectedness.

Mr. Diego Duarte, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “technical community” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Mr. Duarte first spoke of the technical community aspect of his educational leadership when he shared a narrative of the history of how he got into education and how he has now served the community at large in the capacity as a teacher:

I interviewed and got hired in December, and my first date of teaching was the first day after the Christmas holidays... Honestly, I almost quit two weeks into it. The kids were tough. You talk about baptism by fire... I made it that year, and the next year was a better year and I passed the tests that were required by the state. I guess like they say, the rest is history. And I’m here twenty-four years later – twelve in El Huarache ISD and twelve here at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD.

Mr. Duarte’s reference to the very technical community aspect of being a certified teacher in the community is almost lost within this story of survival he shared. The technical community angle here is the “I passed the tests that were required by the state” statement. If Mr. Duarte does *not* pass “the tests that were required by the state,” Mr. Duarte would not have been technically in compliance with the large educational organization which would not have allowed him to teach at *any* community, El Huarache, La Frontera, or elsewhere. It is important to note that juggling the additional technical community aspect of becoming a fully certified teacher in the middle of starting your teaching career, *and* in mid-year, *and* with students quite adept at training new teachers in baptism by fire mode, can all be even the more challenging. Mr. Duarte’s technical community accomplishment of becoming a fully certified teacher that first half-year was no small feat.

A second story that Mr. Duarte shared that connects to the very technical community aspect of educational leadership dealt with the very precise, prescribed, and predetermined technical (Trueba, 1999) immigration status issue that many parents in the Rio Grande Valley community face. This is how Mr. Duarte connected his narrative to the technical community legal status of immigration:

We have a lot of immigrants here, a lot of parents that were, are from Mexico and they are here whether it be legal or illegal it doesn't matter. They understand that life is difficult, even more difficult because they don't have that education that they want for these kids...

Mr. Duarte's "whether it be legal or illegal it doesn't matter" phrase is the community part to the very technical aspect of immigration status. Mr. Duarte further connects it to community in stating that these immigrant parents have a life that is "even more difficult because they don't have that education that they want for these kids." This is community building at its best for Mr. Duarte the classroom teacher, as it has to begin with an understanding of the parental constituency. If Mr. Duarte was either ignorant of this fact that many parents *are* immigrants lacking the English language, or if Mr. Duarte was tainted against parents that may be here with an illegal immigration status, then the technicality of immigration status would keep Mr. Duarte from moving forward as an organization *and* subsequently community worker. Mr. Duarte is able to address the technical community issue of immigration status of parents to make a difference in his students' lives.

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her "technical community" aspect in the stories she shared during her interview. Ms. Enriquez bridged the technical aspect of her students' age to their being their parents' teachers in

her narrative with her students by encouraging her students to be community minded and community involved. Ms. Enriquez wanted the students to watch the upcoming presidential debates, and she used the technicality of age in framing the importance of this historical event, and connected it to their parents. This is the technical community story Ms. Enrique told her students:

Look guys. You have to listen to what they're talking about because you're not going to see another presidential debate until four years from now, and you'll be, what, seventeen? So you have to, see what they have to say. How is this going to affect you? Tell your parents. If your parents don't understand, tell your parents. Educate your parents. You're your parents' teachers. Teach your parents. You're the teacher.

In making her case that it was important for them to watch the upcoming presidential debates, Ms. Enriquez used the fact that these important political events only come around every four years, reminding them that four years from now they would "be, what, seventeen?" She took it a step further and connected it to community, by challenging them to be active members of community, of society: "Tell your parents. If your parents don't understand, tell your parents. Educate your parents. You're your parents' teachers. Teach your parents. You're the teacher." The poignant, powerful "you're the teacher" comment from Ms. Enriquez erased the technical aspect of the youth factor, and thus age becomes a mere technicality that their actions could overcome. "You're the teacher."

Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, did not directly address the "technical community" aspect in any stories he shared during the interview. Ms. Herlinda Hernandez, also a teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, did speak about her "technical community" aspect in the narratives that framed her

interview. As a potential role model to her students in the technical community aspect, Ms. Hernandez demonstrated that she was well-versed in the educational technical community at large – the federal and state government education university funding mechanisms in place – to such degree that she was able to fund her schooling quite inexpensively and on time. This is the narrative she shared about it:

I was very fortunate at the time to get scholarships, a small scholarship to go to Las Americas University and after that I just kind of had to rely on the Texas grants. I had to maintain a 3.0 GPA on that, and I did. I did well in college and was able to maintain that so I didn't have to get any loans. I graduated in four and a half years.

Ms. Hernandez's story showed that she was aware of several technical aspects to this issue: 1) there apparently was "a small scholarship to go to Las Americas University" available to her; 2) if she navigated the precise, prescribed, predetermined, technical waters along the way, she could "rely on the Texas grants" for subsequent funding; 3) if she could "maintain a 3.0 GPA" she could continue to access the Texas grants; and, 4) if she "did well in college and was able to maintain that," she "didn't have to get any loans." Ms. Hernandez negotiated all these technical funding options that the educational community at large had made available to her in order to make it possible for her to attend college. Ms. Hernandez had mastered this technical community opportunity, one that many of her students could certainly benefit from because they too have college funding issues just as she did.

The two principals that participated in the research study also shared stories about the "technical community" aspect in their interviews. Mr. Fortunato Franco, Principal at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his "technical community" aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. The technical community aspect that Mr. Franco

connected to dealt with the impact of state-developed assessments on the community at large. Mr. Franco questioned the legitimacy of how one assessment can be used as *the* single precise, prescribed, predetermined, technical (Trueba, 1999) measuring stick that determines children's futures. This is the story Mr. Franco shared:

They [the Texas Education Agency] hide the test from us, sir. They hide the test and they do everything in regard to making decisions about schools, about ethnicities, about populations, about college, based on that one assessment... What is the result of that? Well, can you honestly prove to me that every child that passes the STAAR test is going to be successful in society? I would beg to differ, you know.

Mr. Franco's narrative shows his concern about how one technical measure can make or break a student's prospects in and beyond public school, and that has implications for the community at large. When Mr. Franco asks, challenges the system to "honestly prove to me that every child that passes the STAAR test is going to be successful in society" Mr. Franco is basically asserting that it is questionable as to whether such a single precise, prescribed, predetermined, technical (Trueba, 1999) statistical measure ought to be used to fairly gauge and predict if a student will be a productive member of the community. When Mr. Franco links the test to the society at large, it becomes a technical community aspect.

Ms. Candi Cardenas, Principal at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her "technical community" aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. Ms. Cardenas focused her technical community discussion on the establishment of a specific, precise, prescribed, predetermined, technical (Trueba, 1999) organization that has links to the community – the parent teacher organization. Ms. Cardenas made mention of this in a single statement in her narrative. "We've established the first PTO organization in a high school in La Frontera ISD,

here at Tuco Benedicto High School.” This statement states the importance of establishing a formal technical entity that has deep connections to the community. The fact that the Tuco Benedicto High School PTO is the *first* La Frontera ISD high school to establish a PTO cannot be ignored. Tuco Benedicto High School is La Frontera ISD’s fourth high school, and for the fourth high school to be the first high school to establish this type of formal institutional connection directly to the community speaks volumes to the educational leadership Ms. Cardenas immediately brought to the principalship table at La Frontera ISD. Ms. Cardenas intends to use this technical community outreach vehicle for very specific purposes. “The first meeting was just basic introductions and letting them know the purpose of the PTO which is to bring the program, in terms of the curriculum, the instruction, the relevance to the parents.” Obviously, Ms. Cardenas understands that part of educational leadership is using any and all technical opportunities, such as creating a formalized community organizational structure, to solidify connections between schools, teachers, administrators, parents, *and* the community at large.

Ms. Bianca Benitez, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “technical community” aspect in a story she shared during the interview. Ms. Benitez mentioned that La Frontera ISD had developed a very specific alliance with a Valley organization that provided technical community linkages and expertise for the district. Ms. Benitez stated that this was done “through the Texas Valley Connection Association partnership that we have with what we call the La Frontera Camp.” This camp is specifically to assist middle school students. Obviously, the Texas Valley Connection Association sees mutual technical community value in partnering with La Frontera ISD in bringing technical support for the middle school students.

Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo, Superintendent of Schools at La Frontera ISD, did not specifically speak about “technical community” aspect in any of the stories he shared during the interview.

Political Community

The “political community” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is that component that allows the leader to lead while building relationships at the community level at the realm beyond the self and beyond the organization, all with the goal of harnessing the resources needed to effect change. At the “political community” level of leadership, the leader is intentionally stepping outside the boundaries that encapsulate the leader’s influence only upon building stories and relationships at the self and at the organization levels. As a community builder, the “political community” leader realizes that the power to “get things done” at the community level rely heavily upon the leader’s skills and prowess to tap into the politic that gives the community its special identity.

Mr. Diego Duarte, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “political community” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. The one narrative that Mr. Duarte shared that connected to the political aspect of the community was his very brief discussion about his workings with the district assistant in curriculum. This is what Mr. Duarte shared:

The district’s curriculum assistant is Anglo. She’s from Iowa or Indiana or somewhere, and so even though she married a Hispanic man here from the Valley, she’s not quite there yet as far as she doesn’t know all our culture yet... For her it’s more of a learning experience, but it’s not something that we discuss as part of the curriculum...

This story confirms how Mr. Duarte perceives the relationships that the Anglo district curriculum assistant “from Iowa or Indiana or somewhere” is beginning to forge in the

community. Mr. Duarte sees her as “she’s not quite there yet as far as she doesn’t know all our culture yet,” and while this is not about any political relationships in the community that Mr. Duarte himself may or may be establishing and using, it is important to see how he perceives outsiders to the community in the process of using relationships in becoming community insiders – after all, “she married a Hispanic man here from the Valley.”

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, did not speak about any “political community” aspect in the stories she shared during her interview. Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, did speak about his “political community” aspect in a story he shared during the interview. Mr. Gonzalez was discussing how important he felt the seventeen words in the TASB policy about culturally relevant curriculum was, and he delved into the sensitive issue of discussing religion with high school students in a world history classroom. He framed his story in the following way:

I always get, not nervous, but a little bit on edge with dealing with Christianity and so many different variations of it... this idea always worries me, especially here in La Frontera and the Valley because the kids have a very limited view of it...

Mr. Gonzalez’s comments speak about the political nature of religion in the community, especially in a close-knit type of community like the Rio Grande Valley which is a monotheistic area that is slowly expanding its religious horizons. When Mr. Gonzalez stated that “the kids have a very limited view of it,” he is by extension also stating that the parents of these children have a limited view of it as well – and Mr. Gonzalez feels the political community pressure of being at least politically sensitive if not politically correct as he deals with the community at large.

Ms. Herlinda Hernandez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “political community” aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. Ms. Hernandez shared a story that addressed community engagement by her students which also dealt with local politics; so her connection to political community literally dealt with her students influencing the community’s politics. This is the narrative Ms. Hernandez shared:

We are working on a big project right now... trying to get a city ordinance to ban texting and driving. Students need to try to be involved, even if it is on a small scale with the city, city-wide. And this is just a law in La Frontera that is going to ban texting and driving, but just to know that this is one way to start... There’s *always* a way to make a difference.

Ms. Hernandez is showing her students in her high school classes that as community members they too can strive to make a difference politically. This one school exercise in the community is a good first political community step for many of the students which will help them become politically active, engaged community members.

The two principals that participated in the research study also shared stories about the “political community” aspect in their interviews. Mr. Fortunato Franco, Principal at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “political community” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Mr. Franco’s story connected to the political relationship between the school and the community at large dealt with using the political structures at his school to try to bridge with parents and community. The following is the narrative Mr. Franco told.

We have a PIA, a parental involvement assistant, and we have parent volunteers. We do those things, but I can safely say our parents are nowhere near where we are now where we're trying to get their kids with regards to the actual content.

While Mr. Franco was speaking specifically about a parental involvement issue here, by extension this also speaks to the nature of the school having an established formal structured link – the PIA, a parental involvement assistant – to politically bridge the school to the community. The school obviously sees value in these political ties to parents and the community, as it has to fund this specific position. When Mr. Franco states that “our parents are nowhere near where we are” Mr. Franco is sharing that there is room for more relationship building that could potentially occur between his school and the community.

Ms. Candi Cardenas, Principal at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “political community” aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. In the previous section the “technical community” aspects of educational leadership that surfaced in the interviews was discussed, and Ms. Cardenas’ story about Tuco Benedicto High School establishing La Frontera ISD’s first high school PTO was shown to be a technical community story. Ms. Cardenas’ narrative about that event, establishing and using the PTO at her high school, also has political community connections. Other than that, Ms. Cardenas’ interview did not yield any other political community connections in any explicit manner.

It was interesting that *neither* Ms. Bianca Benitez, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at La Frontera ISD, *nor* Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo, Superintendent of Schools at La Frontera ISD, spoke about any specific “political community” aspect in the stories they both shared during their interviews. Both opted to steer away from any political community statements, whether by intentional design or otherwise.

Cultural Community

The “cultural community” component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is the level at which the leader is engaging in leadership actions that help define and create the community’s unique values, belief systems, and norms. At “cultural community” level, the leader no longer acts to help create and develop values, belief systems, and norms (Mehan, 2008) within the leader or within the leader’s immediate organization. The leader is now operating as a community builder of ethics and morality (Mehan, 2008), helping define the ways in which the community establishes its rules and regulations on how to create a community conscience. Actions taken by the leader are not mere technical fixes (Trueba, 1999), nor are they for pure political and relationship gain. Similarly, actions taken by the leader are also not about developing only the self or the immediate organization. In many ways, in order for the leader to act effectively and efficiently at the “cultural community” level, the leader *has to be* technically savvy and politically sound, and the leader *has to* understand the leader’s own stories of the self and be able to wield political muster at will as well – and the leader must do all these all at once.

Mr. Diego Duarte, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “cultural community” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. The one story that Mr. Duarte shared that most connected to cultural community values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) was his recounting one particular aspect of the experience at El Huarache ISD with the Rama Chica Project. Mr. Duarte told the narrative in this manner. “We went out and did oral interviews with people that were some of the founders of the Valley, who’d been here forever, and we interviewed them, and then we took those interviews and made them into stories...” Mr. Duarte’s subsequent portion of his retelling spoke of disappointment in the project next creating state-assessment-like test items followed by complete abandonment of the new

locally developed culturally relevant curriculum. However, the most important cultural community aspect in this one statement by Mr. Duarte that stands out and cannot be ignored was the reference to elders in the community that were interviewed and whose stories were captured. That is one method that cultural community values, beliefs, and norms are established and passed on, through the honoring activities to which projects such as this one – interviewing community-founding elders in the community – can connect. Although El Huarache ISD did desert the culturally relevant local curriculum it created, it must exist somewhere in some semblance, and the fact that it exists means that it can be re-accessed. It most probably has not been lost forever; therefore, its cultural community value (Mehan, 2008) still exists, waiting to be resurrected.

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “cultural community” aspect in the stories she shared during her interview. At the end of the interview, Ms. Enriquez reflected on the importance of the seventeen words in the TASB policy that called for a culturally relevant curriculum to be implemented in school districts in Texas. In her reflection, Ms. Enriquez made this cultural community connection:

The seventeen words... It's a necessity, because history is not only about Mexican Americans, or Europeans, or, it's about a lot, everybody. Everything is connected. It's a kind of web. Everything is included there. Everything that defines the social studies is there... heritage, religious, culture, groups and how they contribute to culture... Stories.

Ms. Enriquez's final thoughts described what she saw as culturally valuable to the community in that policy. Her final interview word – “stories” – links to the heart of what cultures use to document and pass on to their communities. It is through a people's collection of community stories that a community creates its values, belief systems, and norms (Mehan, 2008), and that is what Ms. Enriquez concluded at the end of her interview.

Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “cultural community” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Mr. Gonzalez spoke about the responsibility he felt he had as a classroom teacher to help his students be more aware of real-world issues, and how his role as a teacher included helping his students learn cultural community values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008). Mr. Gonzalez shared this narrative:

When I see this [the seventeen words] it reminds me how I guess how grave a responsibility the teachers have in order to give these kids a little bit of an idea of what’s out there. I know for me personally, I always try to use as many different examples of as many different people. There is a big responsibility that comes with it. You’d be surprised how many kids don’t know anything but what’s outside their door and their own school and their own street... That it’s something I have to make sure the kids understand before they walk out. I have a last lecture at the end of every year that hits on not necessarily each of these, but it’s important to have a belief in something, that you have to really understand who you are and where you came from, and that if you know these things you can contribute to the world as long as you really are okay with everyone.

When Mr. Gonzalez’s shares that he has a grave responsibility as teacher to open his students’ worlds to what out there beyond “what’s outside their door and their own school and their own street,” Mr. Gonzalez’s story connects to the cultural community idea of fostering community values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008). Mr. Gonzalez’s “last lecture at the end of every year” is a worthy endeavor, for it draws on these values he seeks to instill. Such a discussion could also potentially be an introductory tone-setting welcome discussion at the beginning of the year, which could be used as a launching pad to begin to use the entire

forthcoming year to “really understand who you are and where you came from, and that if you know these things you can contribute to the world.”

Ms. Herlinda Hernandez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “cultural community” aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. Ms. Hernandez ended the interview by telling a story about the importance of culturally relevant curriculum in her classroom and how it is connected to the cultural community responsibility to help students learn values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008):

I focus my lessons on trying to get the kids to think more than just the Valley. Culturally relevant curriculum has been something that I really try to focus on. I’m really glad you’re studying how it affects the kids and what we’re doing here in the schools to try to open our minds.

When Ms. Hernandez spoke about culturally relevant curriculum affecting students and about researchers studying the implementation of such a curriculum in schools was possibly an opportunity to “open our minds,” Ms. Hernandez might potentially be seeing cultural community value both in the use of culturally relevant curriculum and in studying how it impacts the cultural community.

The two principals that participated in the research study also shared stories about the “cultural community” aspect in their interviews. Mr. Fortunato Franco, Principal at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “cultural community” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Mr. Franco discussed how helping students develop a sense of culture is part of the cultural community values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) that schools have a responsibility to do in their work.

The cultural skills we are trying to impart on our particular students that come in with really a *tabula rasa*, they come in with no experience with politics, with social events, with government events, and the background and the people that make up those events, and why they mold what we are this very day... our system does not allow our children to celebrate our own experiences... I don't believe we celebrate our culture in its true essence... that can be an area of specialty for your particular culture that allows you to celebrate your culture without imposing someone else's culture or someone else's beliefs...

When Mr. Franco shared that students come in with a clean cultural slate, and that the school system then struggles to really impart an experience rich in the students' own culture, Mr. Franco is potentially assessing that schools might be failing to develop the cultural community values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) that schools ought to be responsible to do in their task to develop the community's next generation.

Ms. Candi Cardenas, Principal at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her "cultural community" aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. Ms. Cardenas told a narrative that discussed the importance of cultural community values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) that students can learn via the curricular experiences the students are exposed to. This is the story she shared:

What is important to us is closely tied to the culture and the way that we grew up, and our families and those things we value. How are students going to retain this and how are they going to actually use it in more strategically and meaningful ways later on as they go into problem-solving in the community and anywhere? When students get into a situation they can use that information to make a difference, to be significant in the community, in

their career... there's got to be something that pulls at the heart strings. There's got to be something that makes them passionate about it, so that they can actually make a difference.

When Ms. Cardenas connected the importance of growing up, families, and the things we value, she was discussing the cultural community values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008). In her narrative, Ms. Cardenas also tied in the students' problem-solving in the community to being significant in the community and being passionate about it. Ms. Cardenas seems to understand that deep-rooted cultural values, belief systems, and norms (Mehan, 2008) in the community can potentially inspire passion in its constituents, something she could have as a goal for her school's students.

Ms. Bianca Benitez, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her "cultural community" aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. Ms. Benitez shared a cultural community narrative that focused on engaging community and parents in developing lifelong skills and love for reading, as a way to develop and promote cultural community values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) centered on literacy. Ms. Benitez shared this story:

We have Saturday La Frontera Camps through the Texas Valley Connection Association partnership. We have also Family Connection nights, and that's when we talk to the parents. Last year we had an initiative for Pre-K parents called Read and Read Some More. It was a district-wide initiative where we talked to the parents about the importance of reading to their children. We gave them a children's book that were donated by the South Texas Reading Club. It was an English book. We modeled. We told them to use the home language, Spanish or English, to teach the colors, and to teach what

is in the pictures, so they can learn vocabulary because they will need that. The language is not important. It's what they're learning, the vocabulary that's important. Later on they're going to transfer, but at least they understand and they know the name of that object in their primary language, which is what they talk about, using their language, their experience into the new language. When I see that we are looking at Spanish, at the Spanish language, that it's not a barrier to have and to see that it's celebrated, then it gives me hope that not everyone thinks in a negative way, of having the culture and the primary language as a young person that is other than English.

Ms. Benitez was probably speaking from a school district administrator perspective, as one who is concerned that students in that district become readers who can successfully negotiate all spaces within the school system, and do well in state assessments, etc. However, Ms. Benitez could also have been speaking from a community member perspective that has lived the bilingual model in her lived experience in that same community. Ms. Benitez probably knows the cultural community value, belief, and norm (Mehan, 2008) benefits of having a literate community constituency. Ms. Benitez possibly realizes that it takes the community, and it takes funding, time resources, and efforts to work with parents outside the traditional "8 AM to 4 PM" school day to get it done. Ms. Benitez might also know that it takes community organization and advocacy groups such as the Texas Valley Connection Association and the South Texas Reading Club to partner with parents and the schools to bring the cultural community values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) associated with community literacy to existence.

Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo, Superintendent of Schools at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his "cultural community" aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Dr. Arnoldo first shared a cultural community story which addressed the mostly mono-cultural aspect of the

community, and the preparations that must be in place when the community does become more multicultural in nature:

We are practically all Hispanic, but should we ever become more multicultural then we definitely have to have more conversations regularly about addressing the cultural differences of kids and how we can impact them by knowing their culture and what their needs are. We are almost like ninety-eight percent Hispanic, so we take it for granted.

Dr. Arnoldo's "we take it for granted" statement is interesting, given the statistical fact that the Rio Grande Valley community at this point in history at large is a very Hispanic mono-cultural populace. Dr. Arnoldo's anticipatory statement here about "addressing the cultural differences of kids and how we can impact them by knowing their culture and what their needs are" when cultures other than Hispanics begin to make a presence in the Rio Grande Valley, and at his community and schools, connects to how an educational leader could benefit from possibly thinking in advance of the cultural community values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) that a probable multicultural population influx into a previously only mono-cultural community could potentially bring.

The second story that Dr. Arnoldo shared which dealt directly with parental and community engagement, which also connected to the cultural community values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008), was his response to my asking him if and how he engaged parents and community members in discussions about culturally relevant curriculum. Dr. Arnoldo said this:

We could do more. We could do more. We take it for granted because we are all Hispanics, but we could do more. To say, to celebrate and respect and recognize other people's home countries, or heritage, we could do more as a district.

The first thing to note here in Dr. Arnoldo's reply was his iteration and immediate reiteration of his "we could do more" statement. It was as if he was possibly being deeply and reflectively pensive in his reply. "We could do more." The second thing to note from Dr. Arnoldo's story was his choice of the four verbs he used – say, celebrate, respect, and recognize – as he spoke about his community members' backgrounds, home countries, and heritage. Dr. Arnoldo's comments here at the end might be viewed as an appropriate end to this data analysis section. Those words potentially connect to how public and respectful celebration in a culture could be honored and brought in to the community membership.

Summary

The data that was gathered in the research study was analyzed here in the section. The format used here to present the data analysis was as follows. The Researcher first stated the Research Questions that drove the research study. The researcher next briefly discussed how the analysis using the Theoretical Framework – Knowing to Lead (KL) Model was conducted. Then the researcher described in detail each of the eight components of the Theoretical Framework – Knowing to Lead (KL) Model, followed by an analysis of the data within each component. The next section is the FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS of the research study.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings and recommendations are presented here in this chapter. The purpose of the study was to explore how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas. The research question in the research study was “How and to what degree does educational leadership shape the implementation of a policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas?” The sub-questions for this research study were: 1) How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifest itself at the school and classroom levels? 2) How is implementation of policy of cultural relevance in curriculum shaped by school leadership? 3) How is the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translated into classroom practice? In order to answer these research questions, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with participants in this qualitative case study.

The organization of the chapter is as follows. The researcher will: present the culturally relevant curriculum board policy that spurred the research; present the research questions and sub-questions; discuss the qualitative research case study approach as the research design used in this research study; use the data analysis from the previous chapter to present the research findings and establish the foundation for answering the research question and research sub-questions; and, make recommendations based on the research study’s findings.

La Frontera ISD Culturally Relevant Curriculum Board Policy

On March 1, 2012, the La Frontera ISD School Board officially took action to approve the Texas Association of School Boards' (TASB) four-page *Update 93, EFA(LOCAL)-A policy* (Texas Association of School Boards, 2012). This TASB policy that the La Frontera ISD School Board approved makes four separate, subsequent statements that together clearly dictate that a culturally relevant curriculum should be implemented. First, the approved policy initially states the mandated use of instructional resources that present varying levels of difficulty, diversity of appeal, and a variety of points of view, for students and faculty. Second, the policy then defines instructional resources as textbooks, library acquisitions, supplemental materials, and other instructional materials used for formal teaching and learning purposes. Third, the policy next states that the primary objectives of instructional resources are to deliver, support, enrich, and assist in implementing the school district's educational program. Fourth and finally, objective number four of five in the *Update 93, EFA(LOCAL)-A policy* then specifically states that the local school board shall rely on the school district professional staff to select and acquire instructional resources that "represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community" (Texas Association of School Boards, 2012, p. 1). The policy's four statements clearly combine to spell out the policy's full intent to dictate that a culturally relevant curriculum ought to be implemented at La Frontera ISD.

Because the content of the study of ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community most naturally occurs in social studies classrooms, it should be expected that the implementation of *Update 93, EFA(LOCAL)-A policy* should definitely be occurring via a culturally relevant curriculum in social studies

classrooms at La Frontera ISD. Therefore, rather than attempt to study all classrooms at La Frontera ISD, or a sampling of classrooms of all subjects at La Frontera ISD, the researcher chose to narrow the scope of the study and the scope of the site and participant selection to four levels of personnel that in some form or fashion and to some degree or other in the specific subject area of social studies are responsible at La Frontera ISD to implement this policy that was approved on March 1, 2012, by the La Frontera ISD School Board. Those four levels of personnel are: La Frontera ISD superintendent of schools; La Frontera ISD assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction; La Frontera ISD secondary school principals; and, La Frontera ISD secondary school social studies teachers.

Research Question and Sub-Questions

The research question in the research study was “How and to what degree does educational leadership shape the implementation of a policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas?” The sub-questions for this research study were: 1) How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifest itself at the school and classroom levels? 2) How is implementation of policy of cultural relevance in curriculum shaped by school leadership? 3) How is the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translated into classroom practice?

Research Design

This research study used qualitative methodology, with a case study approach (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). Creswell (2012) stated that a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection; the term “bounded” referred to fact that the case is separated out for research in time, place, or some physical barriers (Creswell, 2012). Data was collected

from district and school leaders (whose responsibilities include making and implementing decisions about Social Studies curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices) and classroom teachers from one district in Texas. The data gathered from multiple sources of information (individual follow-up interviews) at the multiple sites generated the basis for case description and case themes to emerge (Creswell, 2013). A case study approach was appropriate in studying the research problem previously identified in the dissertation's introduction – namely the uncertainty of knowing 1) how having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifests itself at the school and classroom levels; 2) how the implementation of policy of cultural relevance in curriculum is shaped by school leadership; and, 3) how the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translates into classroom practice – because the research study had a clearly identifiable case with boundaries and aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the case (Creswell, 2013).

Research Findings

The research findings will be presented here next. The following is the format the researcher will use in presenting the research study's findings with each of the three sub-questions along with the overarching research question.

Finding 1

Educational leaders' "cultural organization" backgrounds play an important role in how having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifests itself at the district, school, and classroom levels.

As was shared earlier, the "cultural organization" component of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model is the level at which the leader's leadership actions are helping develop and foster the organization's values, belief systems, and norms. The leader working at this the "cultural

organization” level of the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model has moved beyond and outside the moral self in taking action in the organization. The leader is also moving beyond and outside the scope of mere and pure technical and political activity within the organization in which the leader leads. When the leader is able and willing to work at the “cultural organization” level, the scope of what and how the leader influences the organization takes on such a public persona that the leader’s work will not go unnoticed. Other leaders within and outside the leader’s organization, and other organizations, will take notice of the leader’s “cultural organization” actions; thus, when the leader is able and willing to work at the “cultural organization” level of leading, the leader’s moral influence is potentially manifest in multiple organizational circles.

Mr. Diego Duarte, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “cultural organization” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. The story that Mr. Duarte shared that connected to the cultural organization aspect of leadership was in reference to his El Huarache culturally relevant curriculum project experience. When Mr. Duarte told that narrative, he made a value statement on the project that spoke about the value, belief system and norms (Mehan, 2008) that as a teacher at El Huarache he was hoping to foster at the organization level:

I think we did the kids a disservice because they left there that two years that we did that, all our lessons, everything, all our curriculum was the Hispanics here in the Valley, but there were other things happening around the world and the kids never got to see that because we didn’t share it with them.

Mr. Duarte’s mention of the experience possibly being a “disservice” to the students shows that Mr. Duarte was disappointed in that aspect, and it tells of how he expected so much more for El Huarache to offer the students. Mr. Duarte’s social justice theme exposed here in this

story connects to Billot, Goddard, and Cranston (2007) when they assert that educational leaders need to possess strongly articulated notions of social justice. While social justice is not the framework that the researcher used as the lens through which to frame the research study, the literature review did surface a connection between educational leadership and the social justice theme, and it is thus verified here by Mr. Duarte's story. As an educational leader, Mr. Duarte wanted El Huarache, the organization, to serve the students in a cultural manner, providing a curricular experience founded on values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008). This is an example of how a classroom teacher's "cultural organization" background plays an important role in how having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifests itself at the classroom level.

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her "cultural organization" aspect in the stories she shared during her interview. Ms. Enriquez shared how she wants the organization, the school, to help instill local cultural value (Mehan, 2008) and pride via its taught curricula. Ms. Enriquez told this story about using local connections to develop and foster values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) in the school experience:

I want them included. I want them to feel included into my presentations, into my vocabulary, so I bring in the pictures. I just want the kids to feel comfortable. I want them to feel part of it. I want them to know that the area was part of it, because that pulls them in into history. It pulls them in, we *were* part of this, or our ancestors were, maybe not us, but our ancestors.

Connecting to this type of relevant local culture aligns to what Ford (2005) discussed when she said that meaningful culturally relevant materials such as students' backgrounds and

experiences should be used. It also connects to Arce's (2004) determination that the development of identity and voice for both teachers and students is an extremely important aspect of culturally relevant curriculum. This narrative that Ms. Enriquez shared clearly explains that Ms. Enriquez wants the students to see that school is an organization that is helping address the cultural organization aspects of values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008). Ms. Enriquez's story is another example of how a classroom teacher's "cultural organization" background plays an important role in how having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifests itself at the classroom level.

Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his "cultural organization" aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Mr. Gonzalez shared a story about he deals with racist remarks in the high school world history classroom. Mr. Gonzalez uses this as an opportunity to teach about how school, the organization, can help develop and implement cultural values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008). This is the narrative Mr. Gonzalez told:

You'd be surprised how many times you hear racist or derogatory comments about specific religions or people. I ask the kids, "Have you guys ever *really* met anyone who is actually Middle Eastern or who is a Muslim and who practices Ramadan?" I'm really glad I went to Up North State because you can start talking about Islam and I can say, "Hey, I have a friend that had to go through Ramadan and you're only allowed to eat from sundown to sunup." I'm hoping that the kids will learn to respect. Kids throw around religious terms around in my class, and I really don't think they have any idea of what it's like in the world." Mr. Gonzalez talks about his hope that "the kids will learn to respect.

That can only happen if it is intentionally taught. When Mr. Gonzalez shares this story about countering racism exuding from his students with his own stories, Mr. Gonzalez is addressing the very nature of what Ladson-Billings (1999) discussed in her discourse on critical race theory (CRT) where she shared that CRT employs storytelling to analyze myths and presuppositions that invariably attempt to put and keep minorities down. It also is in line with what Solorzano and Yosso (2001) claimed in stating that counter-stories challenge so-called “perceived wisdom” that society’s center often erroneously espouses. By sharing stories of his cultural self, his own values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) cultivated through his own experiences growing up and attending a university that *did* have a diverse ethnic, racial, and religious population, Mr. Gonzalez as an educational leader can begin to model and transfer those cultural self attributes to students as cultural organization attributes the organizational ought to aspire to instill in the students. Mr. Gonzalez’s story is another example of how a classroom teacher’s “cultural organization” background plays an important role in how having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifests itself at the classroom level.

Ms. Herlinda Hernandez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “cultural organization” aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. Similar to the cultural organizational values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) that Mr. Gonzalez shared about his experiences with his students at Tuco Benedicto High School, Ms. Hernandez told her story that connected to those same cultural organization aspects as well:

I think that, personally, being able to see more than just what the Valley is *is* important. They’re so fixed with that “here it’s right... this is the right way”... mentality. I try to tell them, ‘It’s right to believe, to have a belief system, and don’t lose it. Don’t lose your

beliefs. But you have to be accepting that there are going to be people that are not like you, and how are you going to interact with them, because you're going to find people in your job, in your future that you're not going to be like, and if you're not able to work with them then you're fired, or you're going to quit because you don't like it, and then what job are you going to have?' I tell them, 'Learn how it is. Don't say it's weird. Don't be rude. Accept it.' I tell them I love that they have beliefs, but I remind them to be responsible for what they say.

Ms. Hernandez is also connecting to Ladson-Billings' (1999) findings on critical race theory (CRT) where she stated that CRT employs storytelling to analyze myths and presuppositions that invariably attempt to put and keep minorities down. Ms. Hernandez is also in line with what Solorzano and Yosso (2001) claimed in stating that counter-stories challenge so-called "perceived wisdom" that society's center often erroneously espouses.

Ms. Hernandez is using the organization, her classroom, to model for her students at a smaller scale how societies, cultures meet up and have to learn to either cooperate with or confront one another. This is the cultural dance where societies either adjust to one another or engage in conflict about their differences. The organization as a mini-society is a perfect laboratory in which to explore and learn about the cultural organization aspects of values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008). Ms. Hernandez's story is another example of how a classroom teacher's "cultural organization" background plays an important role in how having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifests itself at the classroom level.

Mr. Fortunato Franco, Principal at Los Veteranos Middle School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his "cultural organization" aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Mr.

Franco spoke from an administrator perspective about the school and district developing and implementing its own cultural organizational values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) as a school system. He shared this story:

Who's to say that the state can't allow us to create our own assessments based on our culture that parallels the same thing that in north Texas or in Dallas or Houston they create their particular assessment with some connect to reliability, and we'll all be very happy, sir. We'll all be very happy, because, again, being an American doesn't totally mean that you have to conform to everything that is right by certain standards, by certain cultures, or the leaders that we have leading us.

In his narrative, Mr. Franco addressed the issue of state testing, and how local values, beliefs, and norms are often ignored and bypassed when high-stakes state assessments are developed and implemented. Mr. Franco calls for the value of fairness *both* to the "reliability" of a locally-developed assessment and the American belief that one doesn't have to "conform to everything that is right by certain... leaders that we have leading us." This unfair treatment of the La Frontera students by systematic assessment efforts from the Texas Education Agency that Mr. Franco is bringing to light here goes along with what Volante (2008) and Durden(2008) found in their research. Mr. Franco is advocating for the organization to be allowed to define its own cultural organization values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) within certain fair, equitable parameters.

Ms. Candi Cardenas, Principal at Tuco Benedicto High School at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her "cultural organization" aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. The cultural organizational value that Ms. Cardenas shared in her narrative centered on developing a sense of shared responsibility amongst all parties, starting with her teachers. "I'm very much for

the empowerment of teachers. I involve them in every possible way that I can.” These two statements by Ms. Cardenas identify how she is developing the cultural organization values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) that begin with empowerment through involvement. Aligned to what Ms. Cardenas is sharing here, Walker and Riordan (2010) explained that leadership should be about building the capacity of the collective. Additionally, Ottesen (2011) found that through a culturally relevant educational perspective, a school worked to develop common values and attitudes, and also to promote respect and recognition of others. When Ms. Cardenas involves her teachers in the decision-making, in the development of curriculum, in the day-to-day planning that must occur in any organization, Ms. Cardenas in essence is building her team around the cultural organization values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) that make up Tuco Benedicto High School’s inner core.

Ms. Bianca Benitez, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at La Frontera ISD, spoke about her “cultural organization” aspect in the stories she shared during the interview. As a central office person working at the more macro-level of the organization, as opposed to working at the more micro-levels of schools and classrooms that principals and teachers work at, Ms. Benitez’s perspective on addressing the cultural organization needs of values, belief systems, and norms focused on that macro-level platform she works on at La Frontera ISD. Ms. Benitez shared two separate almost contrasting juxtaposition stories. First Ms. Benitez shared *this* story:

We have a district curriculum, which in this case is CSCAPE, but at the same time the principals have a lot of discretion on how they’re going to integrate other kinds of resources, themes, or anything else that they want to do.

Ms. Benitez next told *this* following story.

In our school district any activities that are going to be taking place even if they are during the school day or if they are going to be taking place after school or a weekend, they all come through my office.

Both stories combined speak about the dual nature of the culture organization – possibly in conflict with itself – that a central office can operate under as it develops and lives out its organizational values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008). The former story shared by Ms. Benitez, that of school principals and by extension classroom teachers having “a lot of discretion on how they’re going to integrate other kinds of resources, themes, or anything else,” talks about the desire to be an open system that is willing to review itself and adjust and accommodate as needed. An open system values flexibility and the empowerment of its players, and that is what Ms. Benitez alludes to in her first remarks here. The latter story speaks about the perceived necessity for the organization to also control the parameters in which that open system operates. When Ms. Benitez states that “any activities... come through my office,” Ms. Benitez is connecting to that governing, controlling mechanism that kicks in at central offices at school districts. The system wants its participants to fully participate openly, but it also wants the participants to adhere to certain closed system parameters. Otherwise, if each school within the school district was truly free to have full discretion on curricular activities and materials, quite possibly the need for a central office at all would appropriately come into question. Thus, Ms. Benitez’s two stories tell the one story of how a district pushes and pulls, and gives and takes, as it creates the cultural organization in which its values, belief systems, and norms (Mehan, 2008) are generated and implemented.

Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo, Superintendent of Schools at La Frontera ISD, spoke about his “cultural organization” aspect in the stories he shared during the interview. Just as Ms. Benitez,

the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction at La Frontera ISD, had previously shared about the central office macro-level perspective of the cultural organization (Ramirez, 2013), Dr. Arnoldo as superintendent of schools for the district reflected on that same perspective. Dr. Arnoldo told this narrative. “We always talk about opportunities for all of our kids... We always want to find ways and curriculum resources that reach out to all kids... I do visit the campuses a lot...” Dr. Arnoldo’s perspective coincides with that of Ms. Benitez in the sense that Dr. Arnoldo is also a central office top-tier organizational player as she is. Dr. Arnoldo, of course, is the *very* top-tier person in the system as superintendent of schools. Other than these references to opportunities for all students, ways and resources to reach all students, and visiting the schools “a lot,” Dr. Arnoldo did not really discuss how exactly he is helping develop and implement any cultural organization values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008).

As was noted, all eight participants in the study – the four classroom teachers, the two principals, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and the superintendent of schools – shared stories that supported the premise that “cultural organization” backgrounds play an important role in how having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifests itself at the district, school, and classroom levels.

Finding 2

Teachers at the classroom level see the official district-mandated curriculum as a barrier rather than as a bridge towards implementation of a culturally relevant social studies curriculum.

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School, expressed concern and frustration at the district-mandated CSCOPE curriculum that she said was not culturally relevant and was a rigid timeline that did not give students much of a chance to bring in their own stories.

I am on a timeline. *And sometimes I say, 'Who is doing this timeline? How long have they been out of the classroom?' But then I come to my... I vent, and then I say, "Well, they know that. They do this because they have to go from here to here, and we have this much of time..." But we vent. Teachers do vent. 'Look at this! They were crazy when they were thinking!' Maybe times it is obvious that they are out of touch with what the students could bring in to the classroom learning.*

This statement from Ms. Enriquez clearly attests to her believing that CSCOPE is a barrier and not a bridge. Interestingly, and quite conversely, when Ms. Enriquez was reflecting on the seventeen word policy calling for a culturally relevant curriculum from TASB that La Frontera ISD adopted on March 1, 2012, Ms. Enriquez felt differently:

The seventeen words. I think about it because what it says, that the board shall rely on us to select, so in reality they're signing off on something but they're not getting... It falls back on us as a professional. It's a necessity, because history is not only about Mexican Americans, or Europeans, or, it's about a lot, everybody. And you have to do it. That's why I say, when I tell them, "We're talking about Texas, guys, but this is not the only thing that was going on. There were many other things going on. That's why we refer back to Europe." I say, "Look, in France. France was in war with Spain back home, and it affected the Nueva Espana." So, of course, you have to. Everything is connected. It's a kind of web. It's connected... This is an eye-opener, the seventeen words, because, ah, you put more pressure on me... Everything is included there. Everything that defines the social studies is there... heritage, religious, culture, groups and how they contribute to culture... Stories. That's not in CSCOPE...

Ms. Enriquez's final "that's not in CSCOPE" comment attests, again, to the importance of stories as a base for culturally relevant curriculum, and stories are not the base for the CSCOPE curriculum. Ms. Enriquez calling for using students' own stories as the basis of relevant local cultural curriculum aligns to what Ford (2005) discussed when she said that meaningful culturally relevant materials such as students' backgrounds and experiences should be used. Ms. Enriquez also connects to Arce's (2004) findings that the development of identity and voice for both teachers and students is an extremely important aspect of culturally relevant curriculum.

Finding 3

Despite teachers' perspective that the official district-mandated curriculum does not easily allow for implementation of culturally relevant curriculum in their classrooms, teachers still found ways to incorporate culturally relevant curriculum.

In spite of teacher criticism of how the district-mandated CSCOPE curriculum makes it difficult to implement culturally relevant curriculum in La Frontera ISD classrooms, teachers shared stories which confirmed that teachers at La Frontera ISD often still find ways to implement lessons based on culturally relevant curriculum. All teachers shared narratives that spoke to how whenever possible they would bring in culturally relevant opportunities in the classroom.

Mr. Diego Duarte, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School, discussed how certain topics in his 8th grade American history class spur culturally relevant connections in this story he shared:

When we were doing the British Acts that were imposed by the King on the colonies, the kids quickly made the connection almost before I got it out of my mouth, 'Oh, when we

bring stuff, you know, the smuggling? *Ah, cuando traemos cosas de Mexico, verdad*, sir, *que las escondemos?*’ [Oh, when we bring things from Mexico, right, sir, that we hide them?]. And human smuggling, and drug smuggling. They hear that a lot in the – believe it or not, these kids do watch the news. And they see stuff, but then when I bring it up, they make the connection. Or a teacher – not only me – or other teachers when they bring it up, they make the connection. So we were talking about smuggling, and some of these kids were saying, ‘Hey, sir, I’ve heard that word, ‘human smuggling,’ ‘human trafficking,’ I said, ‘Alright. There we go. Same concepts.’ So, yes, it does come up.

When Mr. Duarte allows for students to in essence negotiate with him the teacher the curricular connections, his model is very much in tune with Freire’s (1970) model for teaching and learning. In the reconfigured problem-posing education system that Freire (1970) proposed in which the teacher of the students and the students of the teacher merge into collaborative co-teachers of and co-learners with one another, a culturally relevant curriculum design implementation would be a negotiated education in which both parties teach and learn about culture and cultural relevance. Mr. Duarte is describing one such opportunity in this example here.

Mr. Duarte further elaborated:

My experience has been that when we do the Constitution and the Bill of Rights... when we start talking about the personal freedoms and rights, and then we get into the amendments, the fourth amendment, illegal searches and seizures, you’d be surprised how all these guys want to share stories about, cop stories, where they, ‘Sir, uh, my dad, this happened to him, and we got stopped, and they forced us to get out, and they searched our vehicle,’ and stuff, and then we get into the racial profiling, and they’ll say,

‘Well, yeah, *pos somos Mexicanos*. [We are Mexicans.] You know it was some white guy that stopped us, you know,’ especially when they travel up-state. Some of these kids I’ve had in the past their parents are truckers, their dad is a trucker, and they say they go into these states, like Mississippi and they say they get stopped consistently, because they see you’re from Texas, so automatically *dicen* [they say] drug dealers. And so they make that, and so we start talking about the rights that we have. And that always, their interest is always heightened by that. They love the fourth amendment. Those illegal searches and seizures, they like that, so I always find that they have personal stories to share with us about what happened to them.

It was obvious from Mr. Duarte that he saw value in allowing students to connect the content that he, as the teacher, was exposing the students to with the content in their lives, their personal connections, their own life stories. These were culturally relevant curricular conversations with students in the classroom. In spite of CSCAPE, Mr. Duarte found a way to allow the culturally relevant curriculum to flow from the students’ connections themselves.

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School, also shared how even though CSCAPE did not have much room to introduce culturally relevant curriculum at will, she still found a way. Ms. Enriquez shared this story:

In Texas history we do cover these types of [culturally relevant] topics. Even in Reading they have some of the stories about the Apache Indians, about the Indian heritage which kind of relates to our area, so I think that their resources are very well-connected to *our* ethnic, *our* religious, and *our* culture, especially our culture. I have seen some of their passages that they do in Reading. It’s kind of related somehow to the Indians and our culture, not that much as social studies and Texas history, basically, everything that is

here in these seventeen words, but I would say that Reading when they do their essays also. In writing, they write essays and sometimes they ask questions like that, history-related questions.

This culturally relevant connection that Ms. Enriquez is making to reading aligns with what Feger (2006) found in challenging students with opportunities to both explore their bicultural identities and read culturally relevant literature and non-fiction as effective ways to implement a culturally relevant experience for students.

Ms. Enriquez continued her explanation:

When we do vocabulary I give them the vocabulary picture and I then give them the correct definition and I say, 'Now you summarize that. How would you want it that, write it down like if when you're texting. When you're texting somebody you don't tell them word by word. You say the most important things. Write it down, like that.' At first it was very hard. 'Well, how much?' 'Well, write enough so that *you* understand it, because that's what you're going to be studying. That's how you're going to understand. And maybe not words. Maybe you just want to draw a picture, then go ahead and draw a picture.' So I try to get their learning style because not everybody is, you don't have your cookie cut student. You have students that learn different ways. Like I'm a visual person, as you can see. I'm very visual. I like colors. I like pictures. That's my word wall. Look, for *alcalde*. I have the one from the Simpsons. I try to use something related to what they're doing right now so that they'll understand the word.

Ms. Enriquez added more examples of her culturally relevant teaching in her Texas history classroom.

The word “council,” I used the city of Edinburg. I said, ‘Look, look, these are our councilmen.’ And I said to them, this is how we got the concept of a city, a city council. They used to call it *ayuntamiento*. And *ayuntamiento* was the city council. When the missions were done, and they started the priest would elect city councils, but Indians, from the community, and they called it *ayuntamiento*. If you go to Mexico right now they are using *ayuntamiento*. They use it. We don’t use it. We call it the city council, but it’s same thing. We got the concept from them. So, I do that a lot. But this, Texas history, you *can* do that. It lends itself to it. *Se presta, verdad?* [It lends itself, right?]

Ms. Enriquez’s final question of “*Se presta, verdad?* [It lends itself, right?]” is so fitting in this discussion, because it *is* fitting that in spite of Ms. Enriquez herself previously complaining that CSCOE does *not* lend itself to implementing culturally relevant curriculum, she still finds ways to do so. Just like Mr. Duarte in the example previously shared, Ms. Enriquez’s students themselves are quite often the catalysts for these culturally relevant connections and opportunities.

The same can be said for teachers at the high school level. Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School, shared that the seventeen words in the district-adopted culturally relevant curriculum policy made him feel a sense of urgency that had to be balanced with great sensitivity and care. He shared these thoughts about the policy:

Number one, of course, that it’s a great responsibility. In this day and age, number two, that it’s got to be handled delicately. You can’t force anything, especially with the religion thing. I always get, not nervous, but a little bit on edge with dealing with Christianity and so many different variations of it. That and ethnic and cultural groups, it’s the importance of getting the kids to understand that we live in a very big place.

Again, this idea always worries me, especially here in La Frontera and the Valley because the kids have a very limited view of it. When I see this it reminds me how I guess how grave a responsibility the teachers have in order to give these kids a little bit of an idea of what's out there. I know for me personally, I always try to use as many different examples of as many different people. There is a big responsibility that comes with it. You'd be surprised how many kids don't know anything but what's outside their door and their own school and their own street.

While Mr. Gonzalez's example is not as explicit as Mr. Duarte's and Ms. Enriquez's, it does connect to the core of it when Mr. Gonzalez speaks about "the importance of getting the kids to understand that we live in a very big place" and "I always try to use as many different examples of as many different people" as ways to make sure that the culturally relevant curriculum is implemented. Mr. Gonzalez's depiction of the importance of giving his students "a little bit of what's out there" is connecting directly to Solorzano's and Yosso's (2001) explanation for one of the functions that counter-stories serve, namely that counter-stories can open new windows into the realities of those at the margins of society by showing the possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position. Mr. Gonzalez is providing such open windows to his students.

Ms. Herlinda Hernandez, also a teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School, also discussed how she allows the students to connect the curriculum to their lives:

They bring in their own ideas a lot. It's funny what they tell you. Some of them can be very open about their families and how their families feel about the different cultures and I always notice that there's a lot of racism in our culture. We are Hispanic, and we see how a lot of them will say, 'Oh, the Indians. Oh, the Muslims from the Middle East.' They have this

stereotype, and they really believe it's us and them. They say, 'They have different gods than we do.' And I say, 'Guys, you don't understand. Look. Look at all the similarities.' It really makes the classroom experience a culturally relevant one.

When Ms. Hernandez takes the time and effort to address the issue of racism in her class, she is using her own story-telling to shatter complacency and challenge the status quo that the racism is a product of, just as Bernal (2011) explained.

Ms. Hernandez then related an example of a recent classroom experience that demonstrated how students can connect their lives to the taught curriculum provided by La Frontera ISD:

We were talking about the Banshee migration in Africa. And I asked them, "What are the reasons people migrate?" They're telling me, "Jobs, weather, drought." We explained how the eastern portion of Africa developed, through trade with Arabs and how it evolved into the Indian Ocean trade. I tell them, "Okay, guys, think about it, locally. Why do people migrate? I mean, we have a big issue with immigration. People say that they come here and they are taking jobs, and they say they just want to be criminals. We know from a different aspect that that is not true." We saw a short episode of "Thirty Days" where a reporter meets illegal immigrants on the Mexican border who tell him, "You need to go see what we were living in in Mexico to understand why we would even think we came here." So when he goes there he sees the horrible conditions and the family there is saying they never wanted to leave. They didn't want to go to the U.S. because this is their home, but it was just a reality that there was nothing left there for them. So my students are able to connect because they're speaking Spanish and my students are so interested, saying, "Miss, this is so true. We know people don't come to be bad. They

come because in Mexico right now the reality is, yes, there are no jobs,” but also because they’re very interested in the drug war. The students really connected – it is relevant.

Medina’s (2002) findings that the students’ identities, histories, and imaginations are at the core of how they understand events which resulted in deeper engagement and a sense of belonging in school contexts is clearly visible here in Ms. Hernandez’s culturally relevant curricular connections. This is a perfect example of how implementing a culturally relevant curricular experience for students often has to come from the students themselves, and not the district-developed CSCOPE curriculum.

All four of these teachers demonstrated that with a little creativity, and with the perspective that allowing students themselves to call for tweaking the district-mandated curriculum and timeline by bringing in their own ideas, issues, and examples, there are ways to address culturally relevant topics even though the district-mandated curriculum does not have it. Of course, having to find ways “around” the mandated curriculum is neither the best possible scenario nor is it truly fair to the board-approved policy itself.

Finding 4

Educational leaders are committed to exploring ways to better implement a culturally relevant social studies curriculum at the district, school, and classroom levels.

All four teachers that participated in the research study shared a common commitment to be open to finding more avenues and better opportunities both within themselves and at the organizational level to better implement a culturally relevant social studies curriculum at classroom level. Each teacher shared reflective thoughts that connected to this finding. Mr. Diego Duarte, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School, shared this reflection.

Man, I've got to be more aware of the kids, too, and their ethnicity, and their cultural background, and what they bring to the table here. It can't be just me pushing American history and the TEKS and the STAAR objectives that need to be covered. I think we need to let them [the students] speak, and maybe writing some activities here, let them understand that their ethnicity and their culture is nothing to be ashamed of, and that what they have to say is important.

Being able to let the students speak, such as Mr. Duarte is sharing here, aligns with one of Arce's (2004) central themes from her research, namely the importance of the use of a culturally bound pedagogy.

Ms. Eliana Enriquez, teacher at Los Veteranos Middle School, shared these thoughts about it:

The seventeen words. I think about it because... it falls back on *us* as a professional. It's a necessity, because history is not only about Mexican Americans, or Europeans, or, it's about a lot, everybody. And you *have* to do it. This is an eye-opener, the seventeen words, because, ah, you put more pressure on me... Everything is included there. Everything that defines the social studies is there... heritage, religious, culture, groups and how they contribute to culture... Stories.

When Ms. Enriquez discusses the openness and inclusiveness of a policy such as the seventeen words by stating that "everything is included there," Ms. Enriquez verifies what Helfenbein (2006) found in sharing that culture, seen as an open system, continually in flux serves to create the space for new possibilities, better truths. Ms. Enriquez is willing to allow the seventeen word policy to encourage her and her students to find better truths.

Mr. Gracielo Gonzalez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School, reflected with these thoughts:

The seventeen words here, it just seems like it's such a large portion of what we do. It strikes me as that. That it's something I have to make sure the kids understand before they walk out. I have a last lecture at the end of every year that hits on not necessarily each of these, but it's important to have a belief in something, that you have to really understand who you are and where you came from, and that if you know these things you can contribute to the world as long as you really are okay with everyone. That's my overall impression of what comes to mind with the seventeen words... it's a great responsibility...

The development of values, beliefs, and norms in the students that Mr. Gonzalez here alludes to connects to what Mehan (2008) found.

Ms. Herlinda Hernandez, teacher at Tuco Benedicto High School, made the following reflective comments:

It's really just hit on something that I am passionate about. I focus my lessons on trying to get the kids to think more than just the Valley. Culturally relevant curriculum has been something that I really try to focus on. I'm really glad you're studying how it affects the kids and what we're doing here in the schools to try to open our minds. We can always do more...

Again, just as with what Ms. Enriquez had previously shared about open systems of learning, when Ms. Hernandez stated this about "opening minds," she is also connecting to Helfenbein (2006) who found that when culture is seen as an open system which is continually in

flux, it serves to create the space for new possibilities, better truths. Those new possibilities and better truths is what improving the delivery of culturally relevant curriculum aims at as well.

The two principals also shared their commitment to be finding more avenues and better opportunities to better implement a culturally relevant social studies curriculum at the school level. Each principal shared reflective thoughts that connected to this finding.

Mr. Francisco Franco, Principal at Los Veteranos Middle School, shared the following thoughts about improving the implementation of a culturally relevant curriculum at the school:

So, do we teach about different religions? Do we teach about different cultural groups?

We teach about all those things. But do we celebrate *our own*? Very minimally within the curriculum. Very minimally. We might when we look at the Battle of the Alamo and all the characters involved in there. We might hear a name in there that we've heard, you know, because our parents said it, or because our uncle said it. But when we celebrate all of these other things that aren't common or are things that aren't spoken either in the household or amongst your relatives, I don't believe we celebrate our culture in its true essence because again we're conforming to something that the state wants our children to learn... That's probably one of many areas that I think are contradictions with what we are doing with our kids, that I still believe can be fixed. It's something that can be an area of specialty for your particular culture that allows you to celebrate your culture without imposing someone else's culture or someone else's beliefs... Are they easy to align? I think it's doable. I think it's doable. Would we be doing our kids justice? Yeah, I think they'd benefit tremendously...

Mr. Franco here connects to Gay (2002) who found that the use of multicultural curriculum via the use of students' own counter-stories in battling or at least balancing what Mr.

Franco describes as “conforming to something that the state wants our children to learn,” is one solid way that culturally relevant curriculum can flourish.

Ms. Candi Cardenas, Principal at Tuco Pacifico High School, also shared thoughts about improving the implementation of a culturally relevant curriculum at the school. First she discussed what obstacles may have been temporarily impeding her Tuco Benedicto students from experiencing a more culturally relevant curricular experience:

Almost immediately I would say two things... Number one, it’s all within the teachers.

It’s the instructional leaders in the classrooms and us as instructional leaders administratively. We need to bring it to light to our teachers, and show teachers – through talking to them, explaining, and demonstrating. Two, being open-minded enough to try to come up with new assignments and new ways of incorporating some of those things that are part of our cultural heritage, and then being creative enough, open-minded enough to say, ‘Okay, I’m going to bring the culture in,’ and then creative enough to say, ‘How am I going to do it and still be true and keep the fidelity of my curriculum in place?’ So, the challenge is there...

Ms. Cardenas speaking about “showing teachers” is supported by Bruner (2008) who found that specific teacher education training – staff development – needs to be an expectation for current teachers who work with culturally relevant curriculum in multicultural contexts, which is the work environment all teachers in today’s world now potentially face, including Ms. Cardenas’ teachers at Tuco Benedicto High School.

After reflecting on those barriers, Ms. Cardenas discussed ways to change things for a better implementation of culturally relevant curriculum at Tuco Benedicto High School.

I am already beginning to see what kind of changes can happen that will not only have us be in compliance with the seventeen words but also more significantly make a difference in inciting interest and inciting passion in our kids and of understanding of their heritage at the same time that we're trying to move them along with their curriculum to the level that we want them to be. And, you know, sometimes we've got to come back to the basics, and the basics are what are right here. The basics are what are within us that we personally bring to the table. We can begin to personalize our curriculum in a way where they begin to see that there is that cultural relevance that we can tap into and have conversations with Mom and Dad at home at the kitchen, and how much can be enriched through a personal narrative from Grandma and Grandpa, from Mom and Dad and things that they've heard?

Having students engage in these kinds of culturally relevant conversations at home and then being asked to bring them in to the classroom as Ms. Cardenas is discussing here, is aligned with Urdanivia-English (2001) who shared that it is often through the eyes of the children that insight of what is important to them can be unlocked; certainly conversations at home can surface these important culturally relevant things.

Ms. Cardenas added these personal closing thoughts that also touched on how she as the school principal can make a difference in the implementation of culturally relevant curriculum at Tuco Benedicto High School:

I think I have a lot more to give; a lot more to give. My father paved the road for me.

Who am I paving the road for? I think I have a lot to give in terms of the experiences that in looking back happened and were smoothed out for me so that I could have an easier way of pulling forward and doing some significant things in my life. I need to now help

our kids here, and there are kids here that they are going to succeed in spite of us. They're amazing. They're tremendous. We have some fantastic kids. They're terrific. But in every school, you have some kids that don't have that person that advocates for them. In every school you're going to have those kids that will fall through the cracks if you don't reach out and grab them before they're, before they're gone. And maybe my story might be the one that can help, that can help keep them on track. There are still kids out there that I need to pave a little for.

Paving the road and being a role model, as Ms. Cardenas shared here, is part of the positive image building that Ajayi (2006) found in his study as being an important outcome of implementing a culturally relevant curriculum.

Both district level administrators that participated in the research study also shared that they were aware that they could do more to help in the implementation of a culturally relevant curriculum at La Frontera ISD. Ms. Bianca Benitez, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at La Frontera ISD, initially shared the response that "I just know that in our district that we do that" when I asked her how much of an implementation of the seventeen word policy calling for a culturally relevant curriculum La Frontera ISD had; however, upon more reflection, Ms. Benitez gave an example of how already she is starting to do a more intentional job of a better, more focused implementation:

I was asking the science department head from La Frontera High School who was here just prior to you coming in to start the interview, and I asked her, 'What do you all do in science to make it culturally relevant?' And she really couldn't tell me, and I said, 'Have you ever thought, for example, in science, are there any scientists that have done anything that would be part of the concept that the children are learning or that they're tested in

this STAAR exam that has contributions that were done by Hispanics?’ She looked at me, and said, ‘I don’t know. I’ve never thought about that, but that’s a good question.’ I said, ‘I’d like for you to have your students research that, and have them present in the class.’ So she’s going to do that, and I know Ms. Garcia, she’s a top-notch teacher, and I have no doubt that she’s going to follow through with that. So I’m going to say that having just been here today you’ve already made an impact, on one teacher one department in one high school. And it will only grow from there.

Ms. Benitez’s commitment to find opportunities as a district educational leader to do more about implementing a culturally relevant curriculum is apparent.

Dr. Alvaro Arnoldo, Superintendent of Schools at La Frontera ISD, also shared his thoughts on the district doing a better job of implementing a culturally relevant curriculum. He shared this narrative about it:

We could do more to provide the resources to keep the culture of those kids as part of our district, as part of our community, and not to forget that when we have those kids that their ethnicities, their religions, their cultural backgrounds for us to find the resources that they also need in the instructional process in the classroom. We could do more. We take it for granted because we are all Hispanics, but we could do more. To say, to celebrate and respect and recognize other people’s home countries, or heritage, we could do more as a district... Emphasize more culturally relevant curriculum. It is something that needs to be discussed more, talked about more among our principals, and our principals with our teachers, because as you’re interviewing me and we’re talking during this interview we take it for granted that it’s happening. But is it *really* happening?

Dr. Arnoldo's cryptic final interrogatory statement, asking the rhetorical "But is it *really* happening?" question, was a fitting ending to the research study's data collection phase. When Dr. Arnoldo's final words "But is it *really* happening?" were uttered just prior to 3 PM on November 5, 2012, it marked the end of the study's data capture stage. The subsequent analysis that has continued to this very point, as the analysis has led to findings and next recommendations, while not a firm conclusion is a good ending point now. The recommendations that follow are based on the data gathered, the analysis of that data, and the findings that were uncovered. As the research study now moves to those recommendations, the answer to Dr. Arnoldo's "But is it *really* happening?" question can only be a mixed yes and no. Yes, it is happening, at some times at some places and in some manners because of some key people and their stories. And, no, it is not happening at other times at other places because of some key people and *their* stories. The challenge for La Frontera ISD and for other school districts in Texas and in other places around the country will be to find the lessons in the "yes, it is happening, at some times at some places and in some manners because of some key people and their stories" sites and use the Knowing to Lead (KL) Model's dynamics about leading at the self, organization, and community ecologies (Guajardo et al., 2013) using the technical, political, and cultural leadership skills (Trueba, 1999; Mehan, 2008) and use them to make the necessary changes so that the *new* updated response to that question can be a simple, direct, unequivocal "Yes, it is."

Answering the Research Question and Sub-Questions

The researcher will next answer the research question and sub-questions based on the research study's data analysis and the research study's findings. The research question in the research study was "How and to what degree does educational leadership shape the

implementation of a policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas?” The sub-questions for this research study were: 1) How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifest itself at the school and classroom levels? 2) How is implementation of policy of cultural relevance in curriculum shaped by school leadership? 3) How is the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translated into classroom practice?

Sub-Question 1

How does having a mandated district-level policy implementing a culturally relevant social studies curriculum manifest itself at the school and classroom levels? There exists no one, simple, single answer to this “how” question, but it can be answered in this manner. The research study’s data analysis and the research study’s findings confirm that district-level mandated policies manifest themselves at the school and classroom levels based on the technical, political, and cultural leadership skills (Trueba, 1999; Mehan, 2008) that the educational leaders at those schools and in those classrooms harness, develop, and use. And, specifically, so much depends on the “cultural self” values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) that the principals and teachers at those schools and classrooms espouse, along with the “technical self” and “political self” skill set they have developed and know how to use effectively. Quite often, the data showed, in the schools and classrooms where there is a high level of culturally relevant social studies curriculum being implemented by principals and teachers against a rigid district-level mandated curriculum that is *not* rich in cultural relevance (such as CSCOPE), and experienced by students, parents, and the community at large, teachers somehow feel empowered to wield their political relationships (Trueba, 1999) to take a risk and put it in place; conversely, where it doesn’t thrive, it is also due to a lack of political will (Trueba, 1999).

Sub-Question 2

How is implementation of policy of cultural relevance in curriculum shaped by school leadership? As with the previous sub-question, there isn't one, simple, single answer to this "how" question, but it can be answered this way. The research study's data analysis and the research study's findings confirm that school leadership shapes implementation of policy of cultural relevance in curriculum based mostly on the individual school leader's ability to lead at the self and organization (Guajardo et al., 2013) levels; this, of course, is dependent on the technical, political, and cultural (Trueba, 1999; Mehan, 2008) leadership skills that the school leader has developed and feels empowered to use. But, as the data analysis and research study's findings showed, it is mostly when the leader ventures out of accessing only the purely technical (Mehan, 2008) set of skills and into using the political and cultural (Mehan, 2008) skills as well that a broader and deeper implementation of the culturally relevant curricular experience occurs at the school level. As the data analysis and the finding uncovered, classroom teachers may on their own seek to implement cultural relevance in curriculum; however, for cultural relevance in curriculum to take hold systemically within a school, it is the educational leader at that school – primarily the school principal – that must lead that effort. Again, it is the educational leader's cultural (Mehan, 2008) compass that will set the direction that the school will take, and a culturally relevant curriculum can only take solid hold at a campus where the leader has deep rooted values, beliefs, and norms (Mehan, 2008) about such a curriculum.

Sub-Question 3

How is the policy of cultural relevance in curriculum translated into classroom practice? As was discussed in finding number three previously, the research study participant teachers' stories which were discussed in the research study's data analysis and the research study's

findings confirm that teachers found ways to bring cultural relevance to the classroom experience. Finding number three stated the following: *Despite teachers' perspective that the official district-mandated curriculum does not easily allow for implementation of culturally relevant curriculum in their classrooms, teachers still found ways to incorporate culturally relevant curriculum.* Mr. Duarte and Ms. Enriquez at Los Veteranos Middle School and Mr. Gonzalez and Ms. Hernandez at Tuco Benedicto High School all expressed concerns that the official district-mandated curriculum did not officially specify any time, materials, activities, strategies, or lessons that intentionally called for culturally relevant experiences. All four teachers demonstrated that with some imagination, a little creativity, and a respectful perspective that allows students to bring in their own ideas, issues, and examples, there are ways to address culturally relevant topics even though the district-mandated curriculum does not have it. None of the four teachers – and none of the other research study participants as well – could remember previously seeing or hearing of the seventeen words in the TASB *Update 93* policy that La Frontera ISD approved on March 1, 2012 that called for a culturally relevant curriculum to be implemented at La Frontera ISD and other school districts in Texas. Thus, any implementation of any culturally relevant curricular experience in the classroom – and district and schools – was not policy driven, but rather driven by the stories and experiences of the students, their parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and other personnel.

Research Question

How and to what degree does educational leadership shape the implementation of a policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in a school district in Texas?

The research study's data analysis and the research study's findings confirm that the technical, political, and cultural leadership skills (Trueba, 1999; Mehan, 2008) possessed and used by the

leader at the self, organization, and community (Guajardo et al., 2013) ecology levels of knowing directly shape the implementation of a policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum at La Frontera ISD; however, this initial statement must be tempered by the fact that the research study's data also pointed to what can only be described as a high level of ignorance of the policy calling for the implementation of culturally relevant curriculum that had been officially approved by the La Frontera ISD School Board on March 1, 2012. Yet, all eight research study participants – educational leaders in various positions at the district, school, and classroom levels – completely understood and were therefore subsequently able to discuss the policy once they were made aware of it. More significantly, in spite of the previous ignorance of the policy's existence, all eight research study participants were able to share stories and narratives that affirmed that culturally relevant instruction was occurring at some places and to some degree at La Frontera ISD. Also significantly, all eight research study participants agreed that culturally relevant curriculum was important and its benefits were worthy of the effort in time and human and non-human resources to implement it. The researcher can only anticipate that had there been less ignorance and more awareness of the board-approved policy after its approval, the educational leaders would have better used their technical, political, and cultural leadership skills (Trueba, 1999; Mehan, 2008) at the self, organization, and community (Guajardo et al., 2013) ecology levels of knowing to more effectively and efficiently intentionally implement the policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum at La Frontera ISD.

Recommendations

The researcher used a qualitative case study research approach to conduct the research study. The following recommendations are now made by the researcher based on the findings from the research study.

Recommendation 1

Based on the findings from research study and the answers to the three sub-questions and the overarching research question that drove the research study, the researcher makes the following first recommendation: *Educational leaders must be better aware of policies that school boards adopt in order to subsequently fully implement them.* It is difficult to implement any school board policy if the educational leaders responsible for implementing the policy are not familiar with such. If a school board deems a policy important enough to officially approve it, then immediate steps should be taken by the school board and superintendent of schools to create awareness about the policy within the district and the plan for implementation.

Recommendation 2

Based on the findings from research study and the answers to the three sub-questions and the overarching research question that drove the research study, the researcher makes the following second recommendation: *Additional research is needed and should be conducted at the district and school levels on how educational leadership shapes the implementation of district-level policy that dictates culturally relevant curriculum in social studies and in other curricular areas.* The limitations on this research study, namely the small participant size and therefore the lack of its findings' broad transferability, call for more research to be conducted about district-level policy that dictates culturally relevant curriculum in social studies and in other curricular areas. There are over one thousand school districts in Texas that approved

TASB's *Update 93* in February and March of 2012; therefore, there are over one thousand potential research study sites that researchers may consider studying with respect to their implementation of this district-level policy. Conducting such additional research could help verify and affirm this research study's findings or uncover new findings which did not surface in this research study.

Recommendation 3

Based on the findings from research study and the answers to the three sub-questions and the overarching research question that drove the research study, the researcher makes the following third recommendation: *Research is needed and should be conducted at the school board, community, student, parent, and policy-maker levels on how educational leadership shapes the implementation of district-level policy that dictates culturally relevant curriculum in social studies and in other curricular areas.* This research study focused directly on gathering and analyzing data from participants who were all educational leaders in some capacity at a school district – superintendent of schools, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, principals, and teachers. Additional perspectives and findings could potentially be surfaced by interviewing and yielding stories and narratives from participants representing other important populations not included in this research study who also have important specific stakes in this policy: 1) school board members who approved the policy; 2) community members who participated in the election process of the school board members, and who form the community in which the school board policy was approved and was then implemented; 3) students who are the direct recipients of the instruction affected by the policy; 4) parents of the children affected by this policy; and, 5) policy-makers such as members of the Texas Association of School Boards, the Texas Education Agency, and U.S. Department of Education. Expanding the breadth

of research context can only increase the data set which could then be analyzed for possible verification of this research study's findings or discovery of new findings.

Recommendation 4

Based on the findings from research study and the answers to the three sub-questions and the overarching research question that drove the research study, the researcher makes the following fourth recommendation: *Awareness sessions and further subsequent training are needed and should be conducted at the school board, district, school, student, parent, community, and policy-maker levels to assist in better implementation of district-level policy that dictates culturally relevant curriculum in social studies and in other curricular areas.* TASB Update 93 has been approved by all school districts in Texas. In order to ensure that a fully functional implementation of this policy occurs, all pertinent personnel who are affected by this policy should be provided the tools with which to fully and functionally implement the policy. One strategy to ensure that this occurs is to develop and deploy awareness sessions which inform all constituents affected by this policy – *all* Texas residents –about the policy's details and its ramifications. Appropriate training should follow to fully and functionally prepare people at the school board, district, school, student, parent, community, and policy-maker levels to effectively and efficiently implement the policy. Training is certainly supported by the work of Bruner (2008), Cuevas Lopez (2008), and Lamar-Dukes (2009).

Recommendation 5

Based on the findings from research study, the researcher makes the following fifth recommendation: *The researcher should publish and present the research study's findings and recommendations through peer-reviewed educational journals and at educational conferences as well as other venues.* It is only through planned and intentional outreach efforts that the research

study's finding and recommendations will have any potentially broad dissemination; therefore, just as the policy implementation which this research study focused on hinged on awareness first, so too do any of the research study's implications and ramifications. If the research study's findings and recommendations are going to have possible impact, those findings and recommendations need to be made public in as many spaces as possible, including publications and forums best tailored to suit this purpose; otherwise, other than helping a graduate student earn a doctorate degree in educational leadership, this research effort may have for all other practical purposes been an academic exercise in vain. The findings and recommendations that the research study yielded are far too important to relegate to such a dire and unproductive conclusion in this process.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR SUPERINTENDENT

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Brief description of research project and the interview process:

The purpose of the study is to explore how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in school districts in Texas.

I will be posing some statements to initiate an open dialog about culturally relevant curriculum.

The term “culturally relevant curriculum” is defined as “*a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes*” (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Interview Protocol Items:	Field Notes:
<p>1. Tell me your name and share a little bit about your background in education.</p> <p>Probes: Where did you go to elementary school, etc.? Tell me about it.</p> <p>Where were you raised?</p>	

<p>What influence did your parents have on your education?</p> <p>2. Tell me about your understanding of <i>culturally relevant</i> social studies curriculum as it is defined in this interview.</p> <p>Probes: What do you know about it?</p> <p>How does it happen here in your job?</p> <p>3. Tell me how you feel about culturally relevant curriculum.</p> <p>Probe: Well, how about culturally relevant <i>social studies</i> curriculum?</p> <p>4. Detail some of the conversations you have had with the <i>school board</i> about curriculum policy.</p> <p>Probe: How and where do these conversations occur? How often? Why?</p> <p>5. How do you know that <i>principals</i> are participating in curriculum decisions that impact student achievement?</p> <p>Probe: How do your principals help their teachers create social studies curriculum that is culturally relevant?</p> <p>6. Tell me about some of the discussions you have had with <i>teachers</i> about culturally relevant curriculum.</p> <p>Probes: Share evidence you've seen of culturally relevant staff development.</p> <p>How are culturally relevant instructional strategies demonstrated in the social studies classroom?</p> <p>How would you describe the general</p>	
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<p>feeling in the district about cultural relevancy?</p> <p>7. How do you talk to <i>students</i> about culturally relevant curriculum?</p> <p>Probes: How important do you believe culturally relevant social studies curriculum is to students?</p> <p>What difference do you believe it makes in their lives? How do you know that?</p> <p>8. Tell me about the conversations you have with <i>parents</i> about culturally relevant social studies curriculum.</p> <p>Probe: Describe formal/informal settings where these discussions occur.</p> <p>9. Detail the conversations you have with the <i>community</i> about culturally relevant social studies curriculum.</p> <p>Probe: Describe formal/informal settings where these discussions occur.</p> <p>10. What comes to your mind when you hear this phrase: “<i>resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community</i>”?</p> <p>Probes: What images and feelings does the term <i>ethnic</i> bring up in you?</p> <p><i>Religious? Cultural? Contributions?</i> <i>National heritage? World community?</i></p> <p>Why do you believe you think and feel that?</p> <p>11. What are some other things you’d like to share about <i>culturally relevant</i></p>	
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<p><i>social studies curriculum?</i></p> <p>Probe: What is the biggest lesson you may have learned from this interview?</p>	
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Thank you for participating in this study.

This protocol is based on Sample Interview Protocol in Creswell (2013).

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Brief description of research project and the interview process:

The purpose of the study is to explore how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in school districts in Texas.

I will be posing some statements to initiate an open dialog about culturally relevant curriculum.

The term “culturally relevant curriculum” is defined as “*a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes*” (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Interview Protocol Items:	Field Notes:
<p>1. Tell me your name and share a little bit about your background in education.</p> <p>Probes: Where did you go to elementary school, etc.? Tell me about it.</p> <p>Where were you raised?</p>	

<p>What influence did your parents have on your education?</p> <p>2. Tell me about your understanding of <i>culturally relevant</i> social studies curriculum as it is defined in this interview.</p> <p>Probes: What do you know about it?</p> <p>How does it happen here in your job?</p> <p>3. Tell me how you feel about <i>culturally relevant</i> curriculum.</p> <p>Probe: Well, how about culturally relevant <i>social studies</i> curriculum?</p> <p>4. Detail some of the conversations you have had with the <i>superintendent</i> about curriculum policy.</p> <p>Probe: How and where do these conversations occur? How often? Why?</p> <p>5. How do you know that <i>principals</i> are participating in curriculum decisions that impact student achievement?</p> <p>Probe: How do your principals help their teachers create social studies curriculum that is culturally relevant?</p> <p>6. Tell me about some of the discussions you have had with <i>teachers</i> about culturally relevant curriculum.</p> <p>Probes: Share evidence you've seen of culturally relevant staff development.</p> <p>How are culturally relevant instructional strategies demonstrated in the social studies?</p> <p>How would you describe the general</p>	
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<p>feeling in the district about cultural relevancy?</p> <p>7. How do you talk to <i>students</i> about culturally relevant curriculum?</p> <p>Probes: How important do you believe culturally relevant social studies curriculum is to students?</p> <p>What difference do you believe it makes in their lives? How do you know that?</p> <p>8. Tell me about the conversations you have with <i>parents</i> about culturally relevant social studies curriculum.</p> <p>Probe: Describe formal/informal settings where these discussions occur.</p> <p>9. Detail the conversations you have with the <i>community</i> about culturally relevant social studies curriculum.</p> <p>Probe: Describe formal/informal settings where these discussions occur.</p> <p>10. What comes to your mind when you hear this phrase: “<i>resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community</i>”?</p> <p>Probes: What images and feelings does the term <i>ethnic</i> bring up in you?</p> <p><i>Religious? Cultural? Contributions? National heritage? World community?</i></p> <p>Why do you believe you think and feel that?</p> <p>11. What are some other things you’d like to share about <i>culturally relevant</i></p>	
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<p><i>social studies curriculum?</i></p> <p>Probe: What is the biggest lesson you may have learned from this interview?</p>	
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Thank you for participating in this study.

This protocol is based on Sample Interview Protocol in Creswell (2013).

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PRINCIPALS

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Brief description of research project and the interview process:

The purpose of the study is to explore how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in school districts in Texas.

I will be posing some statements to initiate an open dialog about culturally relevant curriculum.

The term “culturally relevant curriculum” is defined as “*a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes*” (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Interview Protocol Items:	Field Notes:
<p>1. Tell me your name and share a little bit about your background in education.</p> <p>Probes: Where did you go to elementary school, etc.? Tell me about it.</p> <p>Where were you raised?</p>	

<p>What influence did your parents have on your education?</p> <p>2. Tell me about your understanding of <i>culturally relevant</i> social studies curriculum as it is defined in this interview.</p> <p>Probes: What do you know about it?</p> <p>How does it happen here in your job?</p> <p>3. Tell me how you feel about <i>culturally relevant</i> curriculum.</p> <p>Probe: Well, how about culturally relevant <i>social studies</i> curriculum?</p> <p>4. Detail some of the conversations you have had with <i>upper administration</i> about curriculum in general.</p> <p>Probes: What about <i>culturally relevant curriculum</i>?</p> <p>How and when do these conversations occur?</p> <p>5. Share how you participate in curriculum decisions at this school that impact <i>student achievement</i>.</p> <p>Probe: How do you help your teachers participate in the process as well?</p> <p>6. Tell me about some of the discussions you've had with <i>teachers</i> regarding culturally relevant curriculum.</p> <p>Probes: Share evidence of <i>culturally relevant staff development</i> here.</p> <p>How are culturally relevant instructional strategies demonstrated in your social studies classrooms?</p>	
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<p>How would you describe the general feeling in the school about cultural relevancy?</p> <p>7. How do you talk to <i>students</i> about culturally relevant curriculum?</p> <p>Probes: How important do you believe culturally relevant social studies curriculum is to your students?</p> <p>What difference do you believe it makes in their lives? How do you know that?</p> <p>8. Describe conversations you have with students' <i>parents</i> about culturally relevant social studies curriculum.</p> <p>Probe: Detail the formal/informal settings where these discussions occur.</p> <p>9. Detail the conversations you have with the <i>community</i> about culturally relevant social studies curriculum.</p> <p>Probe: Describe the formal/informal settings where these discussions occur.</p> <p>10. What comes to your mind when you hear this phrase: "<i>resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community</i>"?</p> <p>Probes: What images and feelings does the term <i>ethnic</i> bring up in you?</p> <p><i>Religious? Cultural? Contributions? National heritage? World community?</i></p> <p>Why do you believe you think and feel that?</p>	
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<p>11. What are some other things you'd like to share about <i>culturally relevant social studies curriculum</i>?</p> <p>Probe: What is the biggest lesson you may have learned from this interview?</p>	
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Thank you for participating in this study.

This protocol is based on Sample Interview Protocol in Creswell (2013).

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Brief description of research project and the interview process:

The purpose of the study is to explore how and to what degree educational leadership shapes the implementation of policy that dictates culturally relevant social studies curriculum in school districts in Texas.

I will be posing some statements to initiate an open dialog about culturally relevant curriculum.

The term “culturally relevant curriculum” is defined as “*a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes*” (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Interview Protocol Items:	Field Notes:
<p>1. Tell me your name and share a little bit about your background in education.</p> <p>Probes: Where did you go to elementary school, etc.? Tell me about it.</p> <p>Where were you raised?</p>	

<p>What influence did your parents have on your education?</p> <p>2. Tell me about your understanding of <i>culturally relevant</i> social studies curriculum as it is defined in this interview.</p> <p>Probes: What do you know about it?</p> <p>How does it happen here in your job?</p> <p>3. Tell me how you feel about <i>culturally relevant</i> curriculum.</p> <p>Probe: Well, how about culturally relevant <i>social studies</i> curriculum?</p> <p>4. Detail some of the conversations you have had with your <i>principal</i> about curriculum in general.</p> <p>Probe: How and where do these conversations occur? How often? Why?</p> <p>5. Share how you participate in curriculum decisions at this school that impact <i>student achievement</i>.</p> <p>Probe: How does your principal help you as a teacher create social studies curriculum that is culturally relevant?</p> <p>6. Tell me about some of the discussions you've had with other <i>teachers</i> about culturally relevant curriculum.</p> <p>Probes: Share evidence of any culturally relevant staff development.</p> <p>How are culturally relevant instructional strategies demonstrated in your social studies classroom?</p> <p>How would you describe the general</p>	
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<p>feeling in the district about cultural relevancy?</p> <p>7. How do you talk to your <i>students</i> about culturally relevant curriculum?</p> <p>Probes: How important do you believe culturally relevant social studies curriculum is to your students?</p> <p>What difference do you believe it makes in their lives? How do you know that?</p> <p>8. Describe conversations you have with students' <i>parents</i> about culturally relevant social studies curriculum.</p> <p>Probe: Detail the formal/informal settings where these discussions occur.</p> <p>9. Detail the conversations you have with the <i>community</i> about culturally relevant social studies curriculum.</p> <p>Probe: Describe the formal/informal settings where these discussions occur.</p> <p>10. What comes to your mind when you hear this phrase: “<i>resources that represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community</i>”?</p> <p>Probes: What images and feelings does the term <i>ethnic</i> bring up in you?</p> <p><i>Religious? Cultural? Contributions?</i> <i>National heritage? World community?</i></p> <p>Why do you believe you think and feel that?</p> <p>11. What are some other things you'd</p>	
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<p>like to share about <i>culturally relevant social studies curriculum</i>?</p> <p>Probe: What is the biggest lesson you may have learned from this interview?</p>	
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Thank you for participating in this study. This protocol is based on Sample Interview Protocol in Creswell (2013).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dagoberto Eli Ramirez was born in Roma, Starr County, Texas on October 8, 1956, at the Roma Memorial Hospital. His mother Mirtala Herlinda Ramirez was at the hospital, giving birth, while his father Arnolfo Ramirez was across the street at Tio Chano's Cantina, drinking a Lone Star beer, and watching Don Larsen pitch the only perfect World Series baseball game, as the Yankees won on that fateful day, defeating the crosstown rivals Brooklyn Dodgers, 2-0.

Dagoberto graduated from Roma High School in May 1975, and attended the University of Oklahoma on an ROTC scholarship from September 1975 to May 1979, earning over 100 credit hours but no degree. He traveled to Mexico City where he taught English to adults at private companies and government agencies from August 1979 to May 1980. Dagoberto returned to Texas and taught at Ringgold Junior High School in Rio Grande City CISD from 1982 to 1985 with an emergency teaching certificate and simultaneously attended Pan American University, completing his Bachelor of Arts Degree with a major in English and a minor in History in 1985.

Dagoberto taught English, History, Geography, and Leadership at La Joya ISD between August 1985 and 1998. Dagoberto worked as an Education Specialist at Region One ESC in Edinburg, Texas from 1998 to 2001. Dagoberto attended The University of Texas-Pan American between June 2000 and December 2002 earning his Masters Degree in Educational Leadership. Dagoberto returned to La Joya ISD to be the Social Studies Coordinator from 2001 to 2012.

Dagoberto recently earned his Doctor of Education Degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Texas-Pan American in May 2013.