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Looking Through a Culturally Proficient Lens: Georgia Elementary ESOL Teachers' Perceptions of School Leaders

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LOOKING THROUGH A CULTURALLY PROFICIENT LENS:
GEORGIA ELEMENTARY ESOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL LEADERS

by

MARY HOUSER

(Under the Direction of Grigory Dmitriyev)

ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceptions of ESOL teachers in Georgia regarding their school leaders' cultural proficiency in working with diverse learners. The hypothesis is that school leaders must embrace diversity within the school they supervise by promoting language learning and academic success through engagement and discourse, establishing a relationship with diverse students and their families, and show a vested interest in language learning programs. The issue surrounding this research is the lack of knowledge, interaction, respect, inclusion, and understanding that some school leaders demonstrate regarding ESOL students and their parents. Using Dewey's Theory of Experience as a theoretical framework, narrative inquiry was utilized to tell the experiences of the participants based on their perceptions of school leaders. Six elementary ESOL teachers in Georgia participated in this study. Data collection included in-depth interviews, detailed field notes, and teacher's written documentation received from the school leaders about their job. Data analysis focused on four emergent themes and categories: 1. School administrators' awareness of cultural diversity; 2. Organizational culture and structure of schools; 3. Administrative support regarding the ESOL program; and 4. Engagement with ESOL teachers, students, and parents. Results from this research indicate that none of the themes had overall positive perceptions of cultural proficiency among school leaders.

INDEX WORDS: Cultural proficiency, EL, ESOL, Language proficiency, School leaders, School administrators, SIOP, WIDA, Perceptions, Experience, ACCESS, Diversity

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B.S., West Georgia College, 1991
M.Ed., University of West Georgia, 1999

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to all of the passionate ESOL teachers around the world and the English learners they teach.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Social-Political Context of the Study

I strongly agree with Kugler (2002) who believes the essential lessons learned by students are priceless to society and are not measured by standardized tests because they cannot measure truthfulness, sincerity, and tolerance which are nurtured in a diverse environment. Many of today's students are immigrants who suffer economically, and are also expected to answer questions in a new language, reflecting a new culture they often do not understand. Additionally, Henze, Katz, Norte, Sather, and Walker (2002) point out that if educators' efforts are primarily aimed at improving test scores, less effort exists to focus on social matters in a school.

Simply stated, testing has become unremitting and excessively threatening for EL students in measuring annual yearly progress. Freire's (1993) view of the banking concept whereby students "receive, file, and store deposits" of information is challenging for ELs when their first language, or L1, limits comprehension of English-only based assessments. Moreover, when evaluating data through an English learner lens, Fairbairn and Jones-Vo (2016) assert that data interpretation is usually unreliable and deficient as it applies to ELs when referring to large-scale test data. The precise interpretation of EL data necessitates the development of an EL lens that recognizes possible conflicting results for ELs than from those of native English speakers. Students' linguistic and cultural needs must be considered when examining EL data, mainly when there is a lack of culturally and sequential visual aids, which is troublesome among many standardized achievement tests.

Testing should not be the priority for school leaders; effective leadership should take precedence. According to Firestone and Louis (1999), school leadership is crucial to school efficacy and academic improvement because school leaders play significant roles that require

skills in communicating, supporting, and motivating others by linking internal and external school environments.

One specific external component of a school environment that school leaders have no control over is immigration. Immigration is an extrinsic factor that plays a vital role in how English learners gain access to education in the United States. While unrest began before 2016, it was shortly after the 2016 presidential election when disagreements over immigration policies across the United States such as mass deportations, building a wall on the borders of the United States and Mexico, and stricter requirements for entering and staying in the United States intensified and most assuredly obscured facts about immigration. Williams (2015) states, "...immigration actually affects America's present and future economic prospects...its really important effects have more to do with education policy than anything else." Spring (2008) posits that the educational needs of immigrants must be measured according to their social and educational circumstances. For children, immigration can have significant psychological effects resulting from unfamiliar surroundings, culture, and friends.

One aspect to consider in educational policy regarding immigration is the prevailing sociopolitical views of students' origin of birth. Would a student's origin of birth impact a school leader's view of that student concerning academic achievement? The answer to this question may be how school leaders view immigration as a whole. Tamer (2014) notes, "The more work schools can do to improve race relations and attenuate stereotypes and stereotype threat based on immigration status, ethnicity, and race, the more immigrant youth and their U.S.-born peers will thrive." Williams (2015) points out that our "country's new diversity is the result of children of immigrants." The majority of these children are American citizens, whether they are second- or third-generation immigrants they are native-born American citizens. Regardless of students'

origin of birth, effective school leaders structure their school on a foundation of respect, thereby setting attainable goals while envisioning and encouraging success.

To understand and respect students of other cultures, especially EL students, my theory is to liberate school administrators from testing demands and educate them to embrace cultural diversity in sociopolitical contexts. I hypothesize that school leaders must embrace diversity within the school they supervise by promoting language learning and academic success through engagement and discourse, establishing a pedagogic relationship with students and their families, and demonstrating a vested interest in language learning programs. According to Dweck (2006), accomplishing tasks such as these require the development of a growth mindset that is constructed on beliefs of basic qualities fostered through efforts and experience.

Personal Justification

“Do we have enough to make a subgroup?” asked my principal. This is the first response made by a former principal when I told her how many English learners we would serve in the ESOL program at the school. I was taken aback when the question was asked...and thus, this dissertation research will try to answer why I was taken aback. Why? Surely, she would be more interested in the students, their families, and what these diverse learners had to offer as students at this school.

Teaching English learners is my pedagogical passion. Although I had stereotypical beliefs about people of other cultures early in my childhood, I became intrigued with cultural diversity while traveling, teaching, reading, and through other personal experiences. One memorable trip was a cruise to the country of Kiribati. While I initially had no idea where the country is located which happens to be an idyllic island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, with many islands encompassing the equator, I was mesmerized by the beautiful scenery, the people,

the school, and the overall culture. Interestingly, English is the official language of the Micronesian people living in Kiribati.

The significance of languages and cultures in education always intrigues me. While I took Spanish in high school, I regret not continuing to learn the language. I genuinely believe the language students obtain in the classroom is fundamental to understanding their own culture as well as that of their peers. ELs learn the language of their peers quite easily. My favorite example is when Raul, an entering English learner in kindergarten, told me everything was beautiful – the chair, my hair, the book. I was taken aback that he learned the word, although it was not in the correct context. Then, one day, he told me I was sexy. Imagine my surprise. When asked what sexy meant, he said it is when something is beautiful. While I doubt he learned the word ‘sexy’ from his peers, he was attempting to use a new language and connect it to something concrete. Another example of my professional interests relating to languages is when I taught two male cousins in my ESOL classroom. Both boys were from The Gambia but spoke two different languages, Wolof and Mandingo, due to the different African tribes they are from.

Additionally, my deep understanding of multiculturalism stems from a book I read in one of my doctoral courses, *Saving Savannah: The City and the Civil War* by Jacqueline Jones (2009). I was captivated by the Gullah Geechee culture and their creole language. Finally, there was the personal experience of my family hosting a few female Japanese students, who attended the East-West Foundation, during summer semesters. This program offers educational opportunities and assists international students with preparation for college study and cultural adjustment in a non-native country. Not only did we have to view these students through a new lens, we also embraced their culture through their language, food, and personal habits. Teaching us Japanese words, meals they prepared for us using seaweed and using a wooden stick as a cotton swab to clean their ears was a cultural awakening for me.

While teaching ESOL students in a suburban area of Atlanta, I have served as an advocate for the students and families I work with because of my understanding of the struggles, adversity, and acculturation challenges they must endure while attending school. I share Pinar and Irwin's (2009) thoughts, "My experiences are centered within my own experiential horizon and undergirded by my own biography of past experiences and my own aspirations and hopes (p. 337)." Consistent with this, Sinagatullin (2003) recommends that an effective way of learning about human diversity is seeing the world. Seeing places and learning how people from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds organize their lives offers a new paradigm about oneself and life in general. When we look at life through the lens of another, it affects how we view everything else. Seeing the world through our life experiences allows for refocusing using a unique lens.

While in an inquiry and development of educational practices course, I was charged with self-study to examine and study my pedagogical practices, gain new perspectives of cultural proficiency, and identify changes to better myself as a culturally proficient educator with English language learners. As an ESOL teacher, my original conclusion was that I already possessed culturally proficient traits. I am responsive to my students' needs by incorporating elements of their culture into my teaching. I also value differences in perspectives, languages, and cultures that expand critical thinking and problem solving among my students. Additionally, I incorporate the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) standards into my lessons by using SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) strategies. Differentiated instruction is also implemented due to the wide range of language acquisition levels of the ESOL students I have served. While researching the topic of cultural proficiency and contemplating my areas of improvement, I realized that educators need ongoing diversity training. However, it is school

leaders who lack the skills when working with students and their families from diverse, multicultural backgrounds.

Working with numerous school leaders in my teaching career for 25 years, I overlooked possible inherent attributes of their cultural proficiency before working with English learners; however, my experience teaching diverse learners has enabled me to analyze effective and ineffective school administrators and the role they have played in contributing to a multicultural learning environment and their interactions with ESOL students. In my opinion, many school leaders have minimal knowledge about second language acquisition as well as the role of instruction in the form of standards and curriculum, the second language process, the languages spoken in their school, or the language proficiency assessments given annually to students. Establishing a professional working relationship with a variety of school administrators and adjusting to their differing leadership styles, I offer brief comparative perspectives of some school leaders I have worked with to justify my research.

Dr. X.

The first school leader is Dr. X., a principal who was hardly affable toward my diverse learners and me. My expectation of all administrators is that they make every effort to communicate with students from all diverse cultures, but that is not the case with Dr. X. She avoided any interaction with my students and their parents. When I began teaching at this school, they had no prior ESOL program, yet Dr. X. had no desire to learn about the ESOL program and the LEP students redistricted to the school.

An example is during a Hispanic Heritage Fiesta when the parents were in line to get authentic Mexican food prepared by the Hispanic parents to celebrate the end of Hispanic Heritage Month. Before the celebration was over, Dr. X. made an announcement over the intercom asking the parents to get their plate and leave the building so the custodians could

leave. When the parents did not respond to her intercom message, Dr. X. came into the cafeteria and turned off the lights indicating they needed to leave. I was appalled at her unprofessional and brazen behavior, as were the parents and other staff members helping with the event. Dr. X.'s egregious attempt to abruptly end a celebration of another culture made me realize her tolerance for diversity was non-existent. Delgado-Gaitan (2004) posits, "Schools that want to engage parents in school activities need to view large, school-wide events as an opportunity to attract parents" (p. 63). The parents came but were dissuaded from returning because of my principal's actions. Chávez-Reyes (2010) maintains that excluding parents from schools can eliminate those with fewer resources and networks to participate successfully in the functioning of the school.

Dr. X. lacks culturally proficient leadership skills and is an ineffective school leader. Rating her on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum described by Nuri-Robins, Lindsey, Terrell, and Lindsey (2007), I consider that Dr. X. has the *incapacity* for culturally proficient practices based on her behavior in ways that disempower another culture.

Mrs. B.

The next school leader is Mrs. B., an assistant principal, who spoke to me as if she knew everything about the ESOL program, but certain events proved otherwise. At one point at the beginning of a school year, Mrs. B. told me she thought an ESOL student that I had for three years should be taken out of ESOL because "She doesn't look Hispanic and she doesn't have a Hispanic last name." She went on to tell me she asked the ESOL student if she, her parents, or grandparents spoke Spanish to which the child responded in the negative. Mrs. B. then asked me what information necessitated testing for ESOL because she needed a copy. The home language survey required for the student's registration indicated that the language spoken at home is Spanish. She did not need a copy, nor did she have the authority to take a student out of ESOL

because of her stereotypical ideologies of a student based on her race. She thought she had the power to do so despite her cultural blindness.

Furthermore, Mrs. B. came into my room for an observation and afterward decided we would need more rigorous materials for instruction, a very dogmatic approach to a subject she knows little about. The textbook series used was explicitly developed for English learners, yet she believed she had the power to override the school district's decision to purchase materials as an inclusive series only to our school.

During the 2017-2018 school year, Mrs. B. was adamant that I take a professional development course, SIOP, that new educators in our school were required to take per our administrator's decisions. Although I had taken SIOP seven years earlier with my ESOL coordinator and was a veteran teacher, she was adamant that I retake it. Interestingly, she nor the principal had completed SIOP training when it was taught at our school for two years, but they wanted everyone else to be trained in the research-based model for teaching English learners. According to Sleeter (2011), school leaders must be seen to be leading changes within the school. School leaders that are not mutually replicating the learning process of professional learning from that of teachers may be creating unevenness in support.

In another situation, Mrs. B. sent a "Needs Assessment – Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices" survey to all the teachers at the school. Working on a degree, it is clear she only did this for her benefit. My concern is that she does not follow culturally relevant leadership practices herself. I would rate Mrs. B. as *culturally blind* on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum (Nuri-Robins et al., 2007) because she acts as if there are no differences among and between cultures.

Mr. K.

The third school leader is Mr. K., a principal, who attempted to interact with the ESOL students through oral discourse in a limited fashion. Though his involvement with the ESOL program itself is non-existent, he was usually supportive of my requests when he first started at the school as they pertain to the ESOL program. I asked permission to attend the International TESOL Conference in Toronto, which he approved without hesitation. Over the years, his support diminished significantly to the point where it was non-existent.

Issues of cultural proficiency lie in the fact that he made no effort to learn my students' names, nor did he make an effort to involve or interact with culturally diverse parents. After repeatedly requesting to pay someone to have the school newsletter translated into Spanish, his response assumed that the PTA President who is Hispanic would do it. The school newsletter never went home in the students' native language.

In another situation, Mr. K. addressed the entire staff at the beginning of the school year to explain that we were a "focus school" as outlined by the Georgia Department of Education's adequate yearly progress requirements because of the ESOL program. He blamed the ESOL program because 57% of the students in third grade, 72% of the students in fourth grade, and 48% of the students in fifth grade failed the reading and language arts portion of the Georgia Milestones test, even though the ESOL population did not make up the indicated percentages of students for each grade level. There were only seven third graders, three fourth graders, and no fifth graders represented in this data. It should be noted that five of the ten ESOL students tested out of the ESOL program on the ACCESS test that year; however, Mr. K. never acknowledged that information because, in my opinion, his primary focus was standardized test scores that directly affected him and how the district and his colleagues perceived him. This could not be more evident than when I had a summative conference with Mr. K. Everything we discussed was

redirected, by him, back to the Georgia Milestones scores. He commented that my primary ESOL data was the Georgia Milestones data when, in fact, it was not because ACCESS data is ESOL's primary data. Not only is he ignorant about this, but he is also unaware of the data the test provides related to language proficiency. Our disagreement over this was extensive. I asked Mr. K., at one point, what he knew about ESOL. He stated that we have WIDA standards, and "some schools are doing it right." It was then that I realized he possessed little knowledge of the ESOL program.

Like Mrs. B., this principal wanted SIOP training at the school yet did not complete the course himself. Another example is his lack of effort to promote cultural proficiency when our staff had a faculty meeting, and the agenda entailed a YouTube video about a speaker discussing cultural diversity. Then he directed the staff to discuss the five-minute video with our colleagues. This was the extent of our professional development on cultural proficiency for the entire year. Rios and Rogers Stanton (2011) emphasize culturally responsive professional development as ongoing, explicit, pragmatic, and collaborative, whereby a shift in attitudes fosters positive change supporting cultural proficiency. Furthermore, Freedson (2010) points out that professional development in bilingual learning circumstances must be of a sufficient period lasting a year or longer and involve frequent meetings between school leaders, teachers, and effective professional development providers that include classroom practice with mentoring and coaching.

Lastly, I went to Mr. K. with concerns about my only ESOL student enrolled but not receiving speech services required through her Individualized Education Plan. This student had not received services for over a year, although there was a speech teacher on-site every day. Houk (2005) suggests it is important to share what we know about linguistically and culturally diverse students because many times, a matter "seen in the light" exposes a more significant

issue to be dealt with to promote student achievement. However, when I initiated dialogue about the specific needs of ELs to my school administrators, my concerns seemed to fall on deaf ears, and nothing was done.

My rating for Mr. K. on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum (Nuri-Robins et al., 2007) is *culturally blind* because he acts as if there are no differences among and between cultures. He fails to understand the difficulty for students from other cultures to acquire and become proficient in a language in which the standardized tests are written.

Mrs. G.

Another school leader is Mrs. G., an assistant principal who embraced students of diversity and shared dialogue with them daily. She made every attempt to learn the ESOL students' names and communicate with their parents. During Hispanic Heritage Month, Mrs. G. was adamant that all teachers focus on Hispanic cultures during instruction. One year, as the Hispanic Heritage Committee was being formed, she enthusiastically expressed interest in participating on the committee. During event planning, she was not a passive observer but an active participant.

Additionally, Mrs. G. supported me and addressed all my concerns relating to the ESOL program. There was a point when the teachers failed to use accommodations in their classrooms with the ELs. Even though I highlighted the importance of accommodations with the teachers earlier in the year, Mrs. G. reiterated this information to the teachers and made sure they were followed.

Nieto (2004) specifies a familiarity with first and second language acquisition, sensitivity to socio-cultural aspects of education for language minority students, and employment of proficient pedagogical practices for culturally and linguistically diverse students as key determinants of those working in culturally diverse schools. Also stressed is having the ability to

communicate productively with parents of diverse languages, cultural, and social class backgrounds. Because Mrs. G. exemplified all of these indicators and actively promoted a multicultural learning environment for all students, she exemplified culturally proficient leadership skills.

I believe Mrs. G. is a *culturally competent* school leader based on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum (Nuri-Robins et al., 2007). She interacts with others by valuing and adapting to diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, and institutionalizing cultural understanding.

Mrs. U.

Mrs. U., a principal, is the most culturally responsive and proficient leader I have worked with during my teaching career. There are many reasons I hold this belief. First, to effectively communicate with the students and Spanish speaking parents, Mrs. U. took Spanish classes in her spare time. Second, she also made sure the weekly newsletter was translated into Spanish by paying an interpreter to translate it. Third, Mrs. U. welcomed the parents of diverse learners into the school by supporting activities and encouraged parents to participate in them, such as the Hispanic Thanksgiving Feast and International Week. Mrs. U. also invited parents of diverse cultures to serve on the Local School Advisory Committee. Fourth, she made efforts to learn about the ESOL program, which is an attribute that many school administrators fail to do. Lindsey, Karns, and Myatt (2010) explain that cultural proficiency is when an individual or school has developed a commitment to one's learning as ongoing development, dedication to social justice that addresses the educational needs of all cultural groups in the school and community, and a pledge to mentor the underserved to have access to educational opportunity.

In my opinion, Mrs. U. is *culturally proficient* based on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum (Nuri-Robins et al., 2007). She has high regard for those from another culture, interacts effectively with a variety of cultural groups, and she committed to continuous learning.

Perceptions of my school leaders vary widely, hence one of the reasons for my research. To understand and gain knowledge of diverse cultures within schools, effective culturally proficient leaders strive and seek ways to get out of their comfort zones to understand student populations and characteristics of each culture represented. Some of the effective school administrators mentioned “recognize the value of challenging themselves and the importance of effort (Dweck, 2006, p. 10)” due to their growth mindset. The ineffective school administrators, including those that possess the incapacity or cultural blindness for cultural proficiency, display a fixed mindset that Dweck suggests “makes people into nonlearners (p. 18)” which “stands in the way of development and change (p. 50).”

Lindsey, Roberts, and CampbellJones (2005) contend that while many educational leaders know every essential characteristic of each diverse culture represented in their schools, the culturally proficient response to increasing diversity and pluralism of schools require educational leaders to exhibit openness and genuine responsiveness of each cultural group represented. Likewise, Terrell and Lindsey (2009) suggest that school leaders need to deepen their understanding and respect of those culturally different than themselves and reflect on why they regard other cultures the way they do. Additionally, school leaders who execute culturally proficient practices represent a paradigmatic shift from dominant views of “tolerating diversity” to a “transformational commitment to equity” (p. 22).

Statement of the Problem

While attending the 2015 International TESOL Conference in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, I asked other ESOL educators attending the same concurrent sessions to participate in a voluntary, informal survey regarding their perceptions of cultural proficiency among their school leaders. My purpose for conducting the survey was to determine if other ESOL educators around the world shared my concerns regarding what I feel is a lack of positive and respectful attitudes toward cultural differences among many school leaders. Many of the comments shared by the participants are indicative of the premise in which my research is based.

Of the approximately 43 participants who completed the Cultural Proficiency of School Leaders survey, all but two are teachers of English learners. The teacher participants included the following: 13 pre-kindergarten through elementary; two middle school; two high school; and 19 college, university, or adult. Seven participants indicated they teach multiple levels among elementary, middle, and high school. Additionally, I inquired about the country in which these participants teach ESL. Countries represented in the pre-kindergarten through high school levels include the United States, Canada, and Panama. The college, university, and adult participants indicated they teach in Japan, the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, or Thailand. Two participants chose not to answer this question. Because my primary interest is based on the perceptions of elementary ESOL teachers, data analysis is based on those participants who indicated that information whether in isolation or as multi-leveled on the survey.

Using a Likert scale where “1” is never and “5” is always, participants rated their school administrator, headmaster, or department chairperson based on criteria I feel are critical in developing cultural proficiency. The results of the survey can be found in Table 1. It should be noted that one participant did not respond to the question regarding the support of professional

development resulting in a .263 variance. Interestingly, only four participants rated their school leaders as always meeting all survey criteria.

Comments made by some participants include:

- “Our principals act like they are culturally responsive but rarely do anything to make parents feel welcome.”
- “ESL is an afterthought, or really a non-thought. All school newsletters go home in English!! It is only when I catch them that they are translated. I am also pulled from my ESL duties to test (state testing) students who are not even ESL!!!!
- “My principal is very cognizant of the need for cultural responsiveness but may not always act in a culturally proficient way (unintentionally).”
- “That’s your job! You’re the ELL Teacher!” referring to how the principal reacts when supporting English learners.
- “I had an exceptionally good principal who had taught in several places overseas. Still...when I had concerns about teachers who were not accepting of other cultures, I was usually ignored.”
- “The principal consistently and courageously bring[s] up sensitive, but relevant topics to discuss, [for example] the role of L1, school’s mission, how diversity is important. The principal is highly interactive and open with parents, providing Chinese support and newsletters for all the parents.”
- “Our coordinator is a long-term professional working in the field and past TESOL affiliate President. My district is incredibly diverse with families running the gamut from income and social levels.”
- “Our department chairperson is the advocate and voice for the English Language Learner students and parents we serve in our program. The chairperson maintains a level of

leadership through proactive measures for the families which makes our jobs easier to do in an otherwise less participating school community.”

Some comments made by the participants in this survey are sentiments I share about many of my school leaders.

Table 1 Cultural Proficiency of School Leaders Survey Results

Table 1					
Criteria	1 Never	2 Almost Never	3 Sometimes	4 Almost Always	5 Always
Understands, embraces, and respects others by recognizing the unique strengths of all cultures and the diversity of its members	0	5%	25%	40%	30%
Communicates effectively with students and their families by understanding the cultural background from which they come	10%	5%	35%	20%	30%
Values diversity and meets the needs of culturally diverse learners by focusing on inclusion as a goal to be achieved	0	10%	10%	45%	35%
Adapts policies, procedures, and practices that include culturally diverse students and their parents	0	25%	25%	25%	25%
Encourages staff members to recognize assumptions and opinions about equity, inclusion, and student achievement of culturally diverse students	10%	10%	30%	15%	35%
Refrains from stereotypical comments about race and diversity	5%	0	5%	30%	60%
Supports professional development that concentrates on race/ethnicity/nationality	15.79%	15.79%	15.79%	21.05%	31.58%
Promotes events and celebrations that reflect the various cultures within the school where representation is diverse	5%	10%	40%	10%	35%
Routinely interacts with diverse learners and their parents to promote acceptance in a comfortable learning environment	15%	10%	25%	20%	30%

When analyzing this survey data of elementary ESOL teachers, it became clear that my perceptions of school leaders are similar to theirs. To begin with, the highest data point revealed that only 60% of respondents indicated their school leaders always refrain from stereotypical

comments about race and diversity. Moreover, there was an equal distribution of data for adapting policies, procedures, and practices that includes culturally diverse students and their parents to include 25% of respondents stating “almost never,” 25% stating “sometimes,” 25% stating “almost always,” and 25% stating “always.” Of the nine criteria, there were five that indicated 50% of the respondents believe their school leaders “never,” “almost never,” or “sometimes” meet: Communicating effectively with parents and students by understanding the culture from which they come; adapting policies, procedures, and practices that include diverse students and their parents; encourages staff members to recognize assumptions and opinions about equity, inclusion, and student achievement of culturally diverse students; promotes events and celebrations that reflect the various cultures within the school where representation is diverse, and.; routinely interacts with diverse learners and their parents to promote acceptance in a comfortable learning environment. Finally, the data disclosed that there were only four criteria in which more than 50% of respondents felt their school leaders “almost always” or “always” meet. With only one data set exceeding 80% for “almost always” and “always,” it appears the respondents have similar challenges as me when teaching English learners. Overall, data from this survey strongly indicates concerns of ESOL teachers regarding cultural proficiency among school leaders, which leads me to believe there is a need for research on this topic.

The issue surrounding the foundation of my research is the lack of knowledge, interaction, respect, inclusion, and understanding that some school leaders demonstrate regarding ESOL students and their parents. Effective school leaders accept and respect the cultures from which English learners come and guide them into learning a new culture while retaining their native culture. Lucas and Villegas (2010) maintain that school leaders tend to minimize the challenges faced by English learners in schools and misunderstand the resources English learners bring to learning. In my experiences, many school leaders assume ELs are automatically going to

qualify for programs such as the Early Intervention Program by being academically low based on their ESOL status and language level. ELs can be identified as talented and gifted students and can be served in both the talented and gifted program and ESOL simultaneously. They also need to understand the connections between language and schooling and the particular implications of those connections for English learners.

Many educators, both school leaders and teachers, consider ELs as inferior students solely based on assessment scores despite the language demands of tests that negatively influence the precise measurement of EL performance. Equally important, culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families are often considered deficient because they may not be as fluent in English and are commonly perceived as lacking knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary for children to succeed in schools (Cooper, He, & Levin, 2011). My own experiences can account for such instances. For example, while I had students in my ESOL classroom, another educator stormed in with a Hispanic student who had tested out of the ESOL program and was in his first year of monitoring. The teacher yelled, “He can’t do anything!” I was shocked. After hearing the teacher’s argument, I determined that the student lacked the motivation to do his work. Rather than giving him the required accommodations for learning, the teacher made her assumptions that the student could not master the math assignment. Would she have done that with any other non-Hispanic student? Perhaps not. While this scenario involved another teacher, the question remains as to why educators may hold this belief. I agree with Archambault (1964) who references Dewey’s (1934) statement,

We all jump to conclusions; we all fail to examine and test our ideas because of our personal attitudes. When we generalize, we tend to make sweeping assertions; that is, from one or only a few facts we make a generalization covering a wide field.

(p. 222)

Manning and Baruth (2004) assert that the most significant factor in a learner's development is self-esteem. Children's perceptions of themselves, how others perceive them to be, and how the children perceive others are distinctive features impacting self-esteem.

Culturally diverse learners may achieve and behave in conformity with the educator's stereotyped academic and behavior expectations. Sinagatullin (2003) believes a reexamination of educational philosophies that embrace sincerity, sensitivity, compassion, and understanding to all students through tolerance of views, responses, and behaviors is essential among teachers and school leaders in ethnically and culturally pluralistic schools. Personal attitudes and assumptions created are the reason generalizations exist. Matsumoto (2009) believes our capabilities to recognize, value, and interact with people of diverse cultures, lifestyles, and belief systems affect our interactions with not only friends, neighbors, colleagues, and strangers, but also in the manner in which we perceive other cultures. This is the problem that explains why this research is vital. It involves an unawareness of many ESOL teachers and what school leaders expect of them, what ESOL teachers are doing in the ESOL classrooms, and how they need to establish better professional relationships in the area of promoting the basic human rights of children in obtaining equal opportunities in education.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of my research is to investigate the perceptions elementary ESOL teachers have of their school leaders in Georgia schools to promote cultural proficiency within the school community. Implementation of this will require examined perceptions regarding the capacity in which school leaders exemplify culturally proficient leadership behaviors regarding the ESOL program. My own experiences working with a variety of school administrators who possess varied leadership qualities of cultural proficiency lead me to research this pedagogical issue.

Henze et al. (2002) explain:

How we come to stand at a particular place in the circle of life experiences and perceptions, and how society differentially treats those in different locations, creates very divergent experiences among those who occupy different locations. Not only are our perceptions of events and their meanings different but also our society values some perceptions more than others, thus creating a second layer of difference. (p. 19)

My experiences and perceptions may not reflect those of my participants, but the “second layer of difference” is the information I seek to understand through my inquiry.

Educating students of diverse cultures enables ESOL teachers to identify challenges and concerns of cultural proficiency firsthand. Because ESOL teachers proactively advocate for the inclusion of diverse students, they also tend to comprehensively evaluate their school leaders’ culturally proficient leadership skills and ask themselves the following questions: Do the school leaders have knowledge and understanding of cultural proficiency behaviors? Do the school leaders support English learning programs? Gaining insight into their perspectives will be invaluable to furthering my knowledge of ESOL teachers’ pedagogical experiences so that I may have a clearer understanding of school administrators’ actions.

Research Questions

There are two guiding questions for my inquiry:

1. What expectations do elementary ESOL teachers in Georgia have that influence perception of cultural proficiency among school leaders?
2. In what capacity do Georgia school leaders exemplify culturally proficient leadership behaviors regarding the ESOL program?

These research questions will aid in my understanding of the teachers’ professional experience as it pertains to the purpose of my study.

Theoretical Framework

Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (2008) contend, “Teachers are urged to facilitate the cultivation of ethnic identities and to communicate knowledge of ‘different’ cultural groups” (p. 324). Due to the world’s increase of pluralistic and multicultural realities, Matsumoto (2009) explains that upholding progressive knowledge and teaching practices in this area is fundamental for teachers so that students emerge as informed world contributors who encompass practical skills while interacting with challenges of diverse life. An ESOL teacher’s experiences act as a liaison between the students and the school by fostering the ethnic identities into the skills that are taught.

Using Dewey’s theory of experience as my theoretical framework, I examine the human experience and the lens through which ESOL teachers view school administrators. Dewey’s foundational thoughts about experience are referenced by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as *interaction* through personal and social experience; *continuity* which encompasses the past, present, and future experiences; and *situation* that identifies a place of the experience. Due to continuity, each experience a person has will impact his/her future for better or for worse. Interaction relates to the situations influencing one’s experience where one’s present experience is based on the interaction between one’s past experiences and the present situation. They continue by explaining Dewey modifies the term *experience* into an inquiry term allowing for improved understanding of educational life. Experience enables us to think of an individual child’s learning while recognizing that learning entails other children, teachers, and the community.

For Dewey, the experience is the means and goal of education. More importantly, Dewey’s framework about educational experiences is as substantial for the teacher who acquires the experience as it is for the student. Teachers can speak out of the experience because they

have been exposed to it; it is only through a number of meaningful experiences that they become experienced as teachers. Experience is exhibited differently in-and reveals itself differently to any individual participant (Roth & Jornet, 2014).

It is significant to remember Erickson, Bagrodia, Cook-Sather, Espinosa, Jurow, Shultz, and Spencer's (2008) position on Dewey's assertion about two contradictory viewpoints of experience in school through objective and subjective conditions. The objective conditions reflect on the learning environment as experienced by the learner, although not directly apparent to outsiders, particularly those whose own life experiences deviate from that of the person they are studying. Dewey (1938) explains that the educators:

...ability to influence directly the experiences of others and thereby the education they obtain places upon him the duty of determining that environment which will interact with the existing capacities and needs of those taught to create a worth-while experience. (p. 45)

Green and Reid (2008), maintain the subjective experience is "where" one's lived experience and pedagogical knowledge of the world can be understood, reconditioned, and exhibited directly through teaching. Dewey (1938) contends an experience ensues between an individual and what constitutes his environment at the moment, whether the environment consists of the subject discussed being a part of the situation. He goes on to posit every legitimate experience has aspects that change to some extent the objective attained. Thus, the subjective quality of experience is essential to understand past experiences. The past experiences of my participants are my primary interests.

Glossary of Terms

ACCESS – Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners; the annual English proficiency assessment that determines continued eligibility in the English as a Second Language program

Culturally proficient – a mindset for how we interact with all people, regardless of their cultural associations (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009); recognizing and responding to both individual and group differences (Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 1999)

EL – English Learner; a student in the process of acquiring English as a second language or additional language; formerly referenced as ELL or English language learner

ELD – English Language Development

ESOL – English to Speakers of Other Languages; commonly used to describe the Title III federally-funded classes in which English learners are served; also referenced as ESL or English as a Second Language

L1 – first language

L2 – second language

Language proficiency – a student's proficiency in processing language (through listening and reading) and using language (through speaking and writing)

LEP – Limited English Proficiency; a term used to reference a student with restricted understanding or use of written and spoken English

School leaders – for this research, a school leader serves as a principal or assistant principal in a school setting; this term is used interchangeably with *school administrators*

SIOP – Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol; a researched-based model designed for sheltered instruction by teaching content matter to English learners through sheltered techniques using content and language objectives

TESOL – Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

WIDA – World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment; also encompasses WIDA Standards

which are the language standards used for English learners in Georgia

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

We observe differences in what we would normally expect in people who *appear physically different* than ourselves. Then we interpret these differences as *cultural* differences. (Matsumoto, 2009, p. 6)

An Achromatic Lens: Accepting Diversity

By viewing others through an achromatic lens, we identify attributes people use to confirm themselves with reverence to others of distinct cultural differences. It is through demographic changes that we can see through an achromatic lens. Banks (2019) points out that because of demographic changes in the United States and the world, teachers and school leaders must reorganize schools so that students from all ethnic, racial, gender, and social-class groups have equal opportunities to acquire knowledge. Additionally, anti-bias strategies can be applied so that all students will expand their knowledge, attitudes, and skills required to function in a progressively diverse, tense, and challenging world. Banks goes on to suggest that rich opportunities for diversity are provided to all citizens of a nation when other cultures are experienced.

According to The Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement (2019), the total state enrollment of Kindergarten through 12th-grade students in the 2017-2018 school year was 1,709,996. The percentage of LEP students in Georgia remained the same during the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years at 8% and increased to 10% during the 2017-2018 school year. The Hispanic and multiracial populations increased the most with an average of a 1% increase per year from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018. Additionally, the percentage of ESOL students increased from 5.3% in the 2015-2016 year to 6.0% in 2017-2018. Based on this data, there is an obvious need to understand and acknowledge increasing diversity in Georgia's public schools.

In *Teaching Diversity: A Guide to Greater Understanding*, Garcia (2011) asserts that a person is a participant of a global society, and cultural efficacy emerges when individuals identify human diversity and function effectively in the global society as well as their own home culture. Our perceptions are developed to define what we sense and think by viewing the world and all experiences through the window of culture, serving as a screen to filter interpretations, thereby opening our minds of alternate ways of viewing and interpreting experiences. Garcia posits that students should be encouraged to be proud of their cultural heritage because the culture is a means to survive and thrive through social interaction. Also important is developing their unique self-identities of values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors learned from others within their culture. Educational equality is about treating all students fairly, respectful of each student's culture, and must begin with learning about different cultures.

For Nieto (2004) in *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*, culture comprises the ideals, traditions, social and political associations, and worldview that is formed and altered by people with a shared history, geographical location, language, social class, religion, or other common identities. She explains that culture is neither stationary nor deterministic because it gives us only one way to understand differences among students. Furthermore, culture as the principal factor to academic achievement is a simplistic and prejudicious assumption because, despite influential factors, it does not dictate who we are. Accepting culture assumes that one recognizes the culture and language of students and their families as legitimate and embodies them as justifiable agents for learning. Schools should do everything in their control to utilize, acknowledge, and maintain culture and language as a basis for students' academic success rather than attempting to eliminate it. In Nieto's view, the objective of education is to increase the achievement of all students and offer them an equitable

and superior education by allowing students the opportunity to become critical and productive participants of a democratic society.

Only with exposure to dissimilar cultural realities does one acquire knowledge and appreciation for diversity by valuing cultural contributions to the world (Diller & Moule, 2005; Rios & Rogers Stanton, 2011). Page (2008) suggests that we must reconceptualize how we perceive ability to understand the advantages of diversity. Rather than presume a student's ability as a score, we can consider each student has having ownership of a toolbox. The notion of a toolbox allows us to view the value of diversity in school because it emphasizes how much students differ and their potential to contribute. Likewise, Lindsey, Jungwirth, Pahl, and Lindsey (2009) assert that when a value for diversity exists, undertaking issues that evolve from cultural differences emerge, are explored, and clarified as part of developing communication, problem-solving actions, and collaboration. Educators are attuned to the broad meanings of culture when the door to diversity is opened.

In addition to appreciation and understanding, a person must develop critical cultural awareness when working with diverse students and then take transformative actions. When accomplishing this, school leaders need to recognize varieties of diversity as well as approaches to expand their scope of the sociocultural values corresponding with diversity, be cognizant in cross-cultural interactions, and engage in transformative action for equity in education (Cooper et al., 2011). One significant transformative action includes responding to diversity with a sense of positivity. To accomplish this, one must overcome the challenges posed by cultural diversity that necessitate the exclusion of inappropriate behavioral understandings, negative judgments, and miscommunication. Stated positively, cultural diversity challenges us to explain uncommon behaviors appropriately and revere those who demonstrate them (Barrera, Corso, & Macpherson, 2003). Furthermore, Robinson and Jones Diaz (2006) believe that a reflexive approach to

diversity and difference primarily focuses on analyzing the discourse of ‘tolerance’ to emphasize more on the discourse of ‘respect.’

Spring (2008) emphasizes that because we all now face a world of intersecting cultures, recognition of one’s cultural style is essential because an educator’s way of identifying, knowing, and connecting to the world should not be assumed to be that of the students. To recognize the problems of the intersection of cultures, understanding the characteristics of cultural differences is critical. Addressing only superficial attributes of culture does not prepare a person to interact with another culture.

ESOL and English Learners

English as a Second Language (ESL), or English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), is intensive English-language instruction by teachers qualified in identifying and working with language differences. It is mandatory by state laws in school districts with students who have limited English language skills whereby the student’s learning experiences and cultural circumstances are recognized (Manning & Baruth, 2004). Immersion into English only instruction, students served in ESL are taught exclusively in programs where the primary goal is the acquisition of English and the attainment of learning expectations in English (Espinosa, 2010). However, academic programs for ELs did not always address concerns for curriculum based on a student’s limited English proficiency.

In *English Learners in American Classrooms: 101 Questions, 101 Answers*, Crawford and Krashen (2007) emphasize Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that federally subsidized programs are forbidden from discriminating based on race, color, or national origin. School districts assumed they could meet this legal requirement by accommodating ELs the identical, all English education they provided to other students. A unanimous U.S. Supreme Court disagreed in *Lau vs. Nichols* (1974) ruling that districts must take supportive actions to

overcome language barriers hindering ELs accessibility to the curriculum whereby a different educational program must be offered though no specific pedagogical method was enacted.

Another U.S. Supreme Court case concerning diverse students, *Plyer vs. Doe* (1982), ruled that immigration status may not be discriminatory in public schools. Stoops Verplaetse and Migliacci (2008) argue that expectations before the Supreme Court rulings were unrealistic for non-English speaking students and their access to education delivered through the English language. Schools must make logical accommodations for EL students for equitable opportunities to learn school content.

Valdés, Capitelli, and Alvarez (2011) point out that most ELs only hear their native language in their homes and communities, so there is limited access to English. Delgado-Gaitan (2004) expands on this by suggesting that the home language and culture uncover children's eyes to the world thereby conveying a worldview where their language and culture assist in defining their identity and develop their ability to make choices. Delpit's (2002) view in *The Skin That We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom* stresses preservation of a child's home language at a time when she believes schools attempt to rid the student of their native language. Eliminating a person's language may feel that we are eliminating the actual person because language is one of the innermost expressions of identity, truly, "the skin that we speak."

Equally important to maintaining home languages is the blending of native language and curriculum. Espinosa (2010) explains that there is substantial diversity within the EL population that differ not only in their home language but the age of exposure to English, fluency in their L1 and English, and the community resources accessible to them. Furthermore, He, Phillion, Chan, and Xu (2008) maintain integrating immigrant student's linguistic and cultural knowledge into school curriculum results in a school setting where immigrant students feel a sense of belonging,

pride in their native languages and cultures, and experience success in learning situations. They continue by referencing challenges immigrant students contend with in school environments such as impassive [school leaders] who are oblivious or indifferent to students' understanding of language, culture, and identity, and a contradictory curriculum of their experiences.

Similarly, Valdés et al. (2011) stress the need to be cognizant of instruction that provides ELs the development of constructive and receptive skills allowing students to contribute as full members of an academic society so they may acquire interpersonal, interpretive, and communicative proficiencies. However, specific explanations are not given about school leaders and their understandings of how to teach these skills with linguistic populations. While it is expected that ELs use language to attain the skills deemed crucial for becoming productive members of society in this country, the best criterion of children's L2 acquisition is their capacity to function in the language for personal and academic purposes in real-life situations.

As identified by Coady, Hamann, Harrington, Pacheco, Pho, and Yedlin (2008) in "Successful Schooling for ELLs: Principles for Building Responsive Learning Environments," a definition of successful education for ELs means the personal and academic development of each student is supported in a culturally and linguistic manner. ELs are most successful when school leaders realize that educating ELs concerns the entire school staff and school leaders' support of ELs is seen as the inclusion of the school's vision, goals, and reform strategies. Moreover, ELs are successful when school leaders acknowledge the heterogeneity of those identified EL in the student population and respond to the needs of different learners. Also included in an EL's accomplishment is allowing these students to integrate their funds of knowledge that allow them to make connections between prior and new knowledge. Prior knowledge and first language proficiency offer the fundamentals for an EL's achievement in U.S. schools as well as being able to function well in mainstream academic settings and their communities.

With success comes challenges. Valdés et al. (2011) argue that education of ELs and the challenges educating them is evident under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 due to modifications for accountability in public education. In “No Child Left Behind: An Overview,” Klein (2015) stresses the details regarding subgroups initiated by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) which are defined as, “Different groups of traditionally overlooked students, including racial minorities, students in special education, English-language learners, and low-income children,” and specifies that “Schools that don’t meet achievement targets for subgroup students are subject to increasingly serious sanctions.” Klein goes on to emphasize that by 2010, it was apparent that most of the states would fail to comply with these NCLB expectations.

The language skills of ELs affect not only their test-taking abilities but every subject area studied because of their home and community experience that influences their attitudes about learning and the impact of language on their learning (Shatz & Wilkinson, 2010). Furthermore, tests designed for native English speakers may not signify initial improvement or incremental growth in English language acquisition (Coady et al., 2008). Espinosa (2010) points out that it is not explicit whether “racial disparities” exist in children’s academic performance and test scores in English due to poverty, the children’s cultural and linguistic behaviors, or a combination of the two given the higher representation of culturally and linguistically diverse EL children within the overall population of children living in poverty. Westby and Hwa-Froelich (2010) continue this thought by suggesting that poverty is probably the primary factor that affects EL students’ inability to achieve high levels of L2 proficiency due to the high percentage of EL students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Crawford and Krashen (2007) explicitly specify *semilingualism* as a term to describe ELs and other children from underprivileged and minority backgrounds and their lack of proficiency in any language that results in their academic failure. They argue that this conviction

misidentifies children as inadequate in their native language due to speaking a nonstandard dialect or because assessments lack testing language development skills and focus solely on academic skills such as literacy. Furthermore, semilingualism is an example of a *deficit hypothesis* which serves to blame students for progression failure rather than determining how schools are failing these students. The ELs who are misidentified are likely to be in the lowest socioeconomic status and have the greatest educational needs.

While ELs achieve success in language acquisition, the overall academic achievement of language minority students trails that of language majority students at all socioeconomic levels (Garcia & Frede, 2010; Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010). Educating ELs is challenging not because these learners are limited in their learning capabilities but because these language minority students have significant educational disadvantages compared to native English-speaking students. While there are variations among subgroups of language minority students, Galindo (2010) identifies those students who have more significant achievement gaps: Those not proficient in oral English, Hispanic students, and students in the lowest socioeconomic level. Creating school-wide cultures that emphasize academic achievement for all students, including ELs, and include developed learning goals, should be tangible with a focus on essential educational and realistic outcomes, according to Goldenberg and Coleman (2010).

Galindo (2010) emphasizes that despite the risk of language-minority students failing in schools due to language barriers, family poverty, and unfamiliarity with U.S. schools and society, these students bring significant cultural and linguistic resources. By appreciating students' resources, we can aid in closing the prevailing achievement gap between English learning students and their English-speaking peers (Quezada, Lindsey, & Lindsey, 2012).

Inclusion and Equity of English Learners

The inclusion and equity of others from diverse cultures are initiated through attitudes. A critical point Archambault (1964) makes is about Dewey's (1934) statement,

Because of the importance of attitudes, ability to train thought is not achieved merely by knowledge of the best forms of thought. Possession of this information is no guarantee for ability to think well.... But no individual realizes their value except as he is personally animated by certain dominant attitudes in his own character (p. 223).

According to Hernández Sheets (2005), students' responses to diversity are impacted by societal attitudes and behaviors toward those who are different. Consistent with this thought, Purcell-Gates (2002) claims that interpretations among children as 'deficit' or 'different' are dependent upon preconceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes held toward the individual children's group culture. Milner (2011) suggests imprecise perceptions of marginalized students that impede students' advancement could be the result of deficit thinking. This deficit thinking could impede [school leaders] from being cognizant of the substantial knowledge students bring into the classroom. Heterogenous ways of knowing must be acknowledged and valued despite differences in proficiency and experiences of culturally diverse students. To sum up, deficit thinking could cause culturally diverse students to be viewed as liabilities rather than assets.

Cognizant of the complexities and contradictions regarding diversity and difference, educators can cooperatively deconstruct barriers that exist whereby the full inclusion of sociocultural Others is prevented (Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006). Jones, White, Fauske, and Carr (2011) define inclusion as a "system of policy and practices that embraces diversity as a strength, creates a sense of belonging, equal membership, acceptance, and being valued, and involves fundamental civil rights" (p. 9). Additionally, they believe "school leaders set the philosophical tone of acceptance in school" (p. 8). Incorporating inclusive pedagogy means the

educator identifies the cultural and linguistic background of students and what they bring to the classroom and school as significant, challenges the learner with engaging content, and understands the desire to learn in the arduous learning process of each student (Stoops Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008).

In “Teaching for Diversity: The Next Big Challenge,” Ainscow (2008) posits that efforts to develop inclusive schools should focus on developing inclusive cultures and inclusive values in the school community. School leaders should be selected and trained, taking into consideration their commitment to inclusive principles and their ability to lead in a participatory manner. The goals require an ongoing process to promote inclusion and an increased understanding through thinking and talking, examining and refining practice, and striving to develop a more inclusive culture. Furthermore, White and Jones (2011) contend that school leaders who acknowledge and promote inclusive practices in schools impose systems of explicit expectations for processes and practices, respond to the needs of those working with diverse learners, and identify positive and negative outcomes that might necessitate changes.

Ryan (2003) advocates for the parents of the school community and their exclusion from essential aspects of schooling, such as policy decisions due to belonging to the minority culture in *Leading Diverse Schools*. In some situations, parents have had little control over curriculum content. Establishing purposeful inclusion is essential for parental empowerment, which can only be achieved when school systems give parents a voice in the governance of school communities. Advancing inclusive communities compels school administrators to critically contemplate their own and other’s situations, thoughts, and actions to subscribe to the impact of oppressive thoughts and practice. Also emphasized is a barrier to inclusion, which is lack of knowledge on the part of the school administrators about the various groups in their communities and the processes of diversity. Administrator’s rudimentary knowledge may be due to the degree of

diversity in their respective communities as well as dissimilarities between themselves and members of their communities.

Concerning inclusion, Delgado-Gaitan (2006) describes *equity* when all students attain their potential in culturally responsive environments. Accommodations in the learning setting to equitably support students from minority cultures is the goal. Inequalities in learning for children from diverse communities are perpetuated if we fail to work to change the bias to equity.

Anderson (2014) highlights key points in “Diversity Matters: Leadership Counts” by stating that equity is not something one does, more so it is something we are. The nonexistence of equity generates conflicts that arise from cultural differences in our educational paradigm. Conflicts become barriers and not learning experiences when we fail to embrace and support diversity through equity. Effective administrators can recognize the conflicts, identify and contemplate their personal biases, and provide support for others to elicit change. Persistently supporting equity and acknowledging diversity means that leaders identify the significance of diversity within the educational community.

In their book, *Culturally Proficient Practice: Supporting Educators of English Learning Students*, Quezada et al. (2012) assert both language and cultural circumstances need to be regarded by educators and visibly integrated into the school curriculum. Policies to achieve equitable educational and socially fair outcomes for ELs must also be implemented. A lack of confidence, apprehension, and lack of ambition are all negative factors that ELs may experience when school leaders do not regard language and cultural diversity. When adapting to diversity, there is an awareness in which cultural understanding guides educator principles and school policies toward attaining equitable and inclusive educational opportunities that promote socially fair outcomes.

ESOL Teachers

ESOL teachers are active participants in fostering culturally responsive curricula and enhancing professional knowledge and skills to contend with the diversity of students. Additionally, they can promote students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that ELs can successfully assimilate in a pluralistic society by providing education to students for global literacy and competency (Sinagatullin, 2003). Learning and acquiring English that incorporates comprehensible content instruction in English is the predominant goal of English language development (August, Goldenberg, Saunders, & Dressler, 2010) by offering explicit instruction that supplements meaningful experiences necessary for EL success (Shatz & Wilkinson, 2010).

August et al. (2010) describe ELD instruction as a dedicated time frame in which developmentally explicit language teaching offers exposure to and promotes L2 learning in comprehension, oral fluency, and communicative abilities as well as self-confidence. They also discuss that reading and writing are integrated, while listening and speaking are emphasized more during the ELD block. Successful performance in school requires proficiency in academic language skills which language minority students need to master. For this reason, it should be noted that school leaders may have unrealistic expectations about a student's language attainment and that acquiring academic language skills and mastering them takes time, sometimes years, for students at an entering stage of language acquisition.

Shatz and Wilkinson (2010) point out that all educators need to have an understanding of language and language learning as well as how L1 and L2 influence learning in the classroom in their book, *The Education of English Language Learners: Research to Practice*. Metalinguistic familiarity about the social variations between daily language use of students from diverse cultures and the requirements of language in the classroom must be developed by all educators, not just ESL teachers. Also emphasized is that ESL teachers are experienced in discerning cross-

language similarities that enable them to identify the linguistic assets of individual students for the support of language transfer approaches as well as determining developing linguistic involvement which varies for each EL. The authors also suggest that ongoing professional development in language typologies should be arranged or instructionally supported for educators to maintain knowledge of updated trends in working with linguistically diverse students; however, what is not explicitly addressed is school leaders' participation in this ongoing training, only "other educational practitioners (p. 11)." They continue by stating that "those teachers who are prepared for cultural and linguistic diversity and who have developed a deep understanding of how to teach diverse students to acquire academic literacy will be prepared to make a difference in the lives of ELL students (p. 11)." With ongoing professional development, one might expect that all educational practitioners, not just teachers, would be equipped to develop a profound understanding of working with ELLs.

Houk (2005) notes in the book, *Supporting English Language Learners: A Guide for Teachers and Administrators*, that it is critical for ELs to have someone sensitive to their home culture, and is congenial, and capable of communicating with them openly and relating to their culture. These students must have someone who can support them socially, emotionally, and academically, despite language objectives, and a teacher who creates an anti-bias environment. Additionally, Villegas and Lucas (2002) proclaim teachers who view their EL students through an affirming lens subscribe to the existence and rationality of pluralistic methods in thinking, communicating, behaving, and learning.

Experiences of diverse students are acknowledged and valued by ESOL teachers to foster tolerance, effective communication, and acceptance both within the school and the larger society. ESOL teachers also facilitate learning that inspires students to address their own intrinsic and learned biases (Rios & Rogers Stanton, 2011). On the same accord, Ladson-Billings (2011)

explains the cultural competence of an ESOL teacher pertains to assisting students in recognizing and honoring their own cultural beliefs and practices while obtaining access to the mainstream culture where they are likely to have opportunities to advance their socioeconomic status and make informed choices about their life.

[ESOL] educators assist children in learning about the world, guide them to interpret their place and purpose in it, and inspire them to develop and express their own distinctive identities. They dedicate themselves to supporting children in their own bicultural and bilingual growth (Houk, 2005). Responsibility in educating ELs is an obligation that is long-term and offers a lifelong impact on whom they become (Ladson-Billings, 2011) with the result on empowerment regardless of race or ethnicity to embrace the educational opportunities fully (Byrd-Blake, 2011). The key element in becoming an effective ESOL teacher, apart from ethnic, class, or linguistic attention, is an avid dedication to transformative, liberatory education for students, and a profound commitment to professional growth as teachers (Houk, 2005), however, ESOL teachers need more feedback and theoretical guidelines from school leaders.

A Crystal Lens: Tools for Cultural Proficiency

A highly organized structure and form that is transparent like a crystal lens serve as a guide in a complex and extensively important field of diversity. The specific tools incorporated in this guide address diversity and can solidify educators' quest for cultural proficiency. According to CampbellJones, CampbellJones, and Lindsey (2010), cultural proficiency is a lens through which we examine and extend our moral perspectives.

Cultural proficiency is an action that entails a shift in thinking that inspires people from seeing culture as problematic to embracing culture, and it begins with us, not the students or their communities. It also provides a lens to examine roles as school leaders employ a set of four corresponding tools to guide practice (Lindsey et al., 2010; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

Furthermore, Lindsey, Nuri Robins, and Terrell (1999) reference cultural proficiency as an inside-out approach. It is an approach that is to be assimilated into the culture of the school to focus on the concerns of diversity in a classroom, school, and district.

Nuri-Robins et al. (2007) authored “Cultural Proficiency: Tools for Secondary School Administrators,” that bases tools of cultural proficiency on a framework developed by Cross (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). The authors point out that cultural proficiency should be seen “as a way to understand, embrace, and talk about differences that recognizes and respects individuals and their cultures” (p. 16). The four tools of cultural proficiency are highlighted to address the effort to recognize, understand, and respect diversity with the goal of educational equity and are as follows: Guiding Principles, or underlying values; a Continuum, or language in describing policies, behaviors, and practices; Essential Elements, or behavioral standards for measuring growth toward cultural proficiency; and Barriers, or obstacles in developing cultural proficiency. The cultural proficiency tools delve into more meaningful attributes of an educator, such as a comparison of reactive and proactive behaviors and explicit roles of culturally proficient teachers and school leaders rather than generic surface values and practices. Knowing to move progressively along the continuum, understanding the guiding principles, implementing the essential elements, and identifying barriers would be beneficial to all those in the educational field.

Guiding Principles

CampbellJones et al. (2010) describe each tool of cultural proficiency as a guide for the work of schools. Guiding principles recognize the centrality of culture in our lives and in society that informs action in a culturally competent manner through a comprehensive set of core values. Moreover, guiding principles offer a framework for how students’ cultural diversity informs professional practice while acknowledging the learning needs of students (Terrell & Lindsey,

2009), present interactive opportunities with one another in civil and culturally responsive ways (Lindsey et al., 2009), and expand one's potential for personal and professional work that results in English learning students being academically successful (Quezada et al., 2012).

Core values of the guiding principles emphasize culture as a prevailing force, recognize that people are supported in varying degrees by the dominant culture, and acknowledge personal and group identity of individuals. They also stress the importance of learning about diversity within cultures, distinguish the cultural needs of other groups, and embrace practices of other cultures (CampbellJones et al., 2010; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009; Lindsey et al., 1999). A pathway to modify school leaders' stance on change from *reforming* structures, policies, and rules in schools to *transforming* relationships, interactions, and conduct of the people within schools and districts are provided in these six guiding principles of cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al., 2009).

Cultural Proficiency Continuum

The cultural proficiency continuum comprises six factors that specify ways of responding to cultural differences through "unhealthy" and "healthy" systems and practices used by educators by indicating ways of seeing and acknowledging differences. Unhealthy practices entail *cultural destructiveness*, *cultural incapacity*, and *cultural blindness*. Healthy practices on the cultural proficiency continuum include *cultural precompetence*, *cultural competence*, and *cultural proficiency*.

Cultural destructiveness is the most inferior point on the continuum, such that leading in this manner seeks to abolish the cultures of others in all aspects of the school and connection with the community served (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). It is at the most adverse end of the continuum characterized by attitudes, policies, and practices destructive to cultures and consequently to the individuals within a culture (Lindsey et al., 1999). In cultural destructiveness, an action that rejects, condemns, or eradicates cultural practices or expressions

of culture that are different from one's own culture impacts the exclusion of nondominant groups' legitimacy in the school's setting (Lindsey et al., 2005).

Cultural incapacity is leading in a manner whereby other cultures are devalued by seeking to make the culture of others appear invalid (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). It can also be described as when one's assumption of dominance and behavior of one's culture disempowers another's culture by showing intense bias, often represented by ignorance, as well as a display of scorn or unreasonable fear of people who differ from the dominant group (Lindsey et al., 1999; Lindsey et al., 2005).

Cultural blindness is leading where one does not identify or recognize the culture of others by choosing to disregard the similar experiences of cultures within the school (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). Cultural blindness also acts as if the cultural differences of students are insignificant and a sign of insubordination, or another insufficiency, whereby many students may feel disregarded in school (Lindsey et al., 1999). Lindsey et al. (2005) suggest that with cultural blindness, there is often a contradiction between what is stated and how the statement is experienced. In contrast, Quezada et al. (2012) believe that cultural blindness is pretending not to notice the socioeconomic status and culture of English learning communities.

Identified as a healthy practice on the cultural proficiency continuum, cultural precompetence refers to a heightened awareness of what the leader and the school do not know about working in diverse settings. At this level of development, the school leader can move in a constructive direction or stop and possibly regress (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009; Quezada et al., 2012). This can also include a leader's awareness of the constraints of one's ability or an organization's practices when interacting with other cultural groups, providing unbiased and equitable treatment with appropriate cultural sensitivity (Lindsey et al., 1999).

Cultural competence regarding leading is an approach where one's principles and behaviors, as well as the school's policies and practices, are inclusive with the cultures that are new or differ from a person or a school (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). Lindsey et al. (1999) maintain cultural competence involves the interaction of other cultural groups using the five essential elements of cultural proficiency as a guide for individual behavior and school practices. Furthermore, an ongoing evaluation of one's own culture through awareness of the dynamics of difference with the continued development of cultural knowledge and resources of cultural knowledge is essential.

Finally, cultural proficiency as a leader requires that one be a proponent for life-long learning and increasingly effective in serving the educational needs of cultural groups (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009; Quezada et al., 2012). As a culturally proficient leader, one is in pursuit of adding to the knowledge base of culturally proficient practices by organizing research, advancing new processes derived from culture, and taking opportunities to expand the level of awareness and knowledge base of others about culture and the dynamics of difference (Lindsey et al., 1999). The culturally proficient leader develops an awareness that subscribes to the relationship of personal, organizational, and cultural learning (Lindsey et al., 2005). Overall, development along the continuum is characterized by modified thinking from embracing the view of *tolerating diversity to transformation for equity* (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

Essential Elements

Essential Elements of cultural proficiency are a guide for personal and professional behavior as well as for organizational policies and practices. The core values that inform and guide the essential elements are the guiding principles of cultural proficiency (Quezada et al., 2012). The cultural proficiency continuum and elements shape the ethical framework of the guiding principles from which to make professional decisions (Lindsey et al., 2010).

The first essential element is evaluating cultural knowledge by learning about one's own culture and others' cultures and determining what needs to be done to be successful in cross-cultural situations (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009; CampbellJones et al., 2010). To evaluate cultural knowledge, a school leader ought to understand the English learning community, identify the community as an asset, and initiate learning about their own and others' cultural assets. Implementing changes that help underserved students in schools as well as the linguistically and culturally diverse communities should also be addressed (Quezada et al., 2012).

The second essential element is an appreciation for diversity developed through informal and formal decision-making groups, including people and cultures whose viewpoints and experiences are dissimilar from one's own. Valuing diversity will enhance conversations, decision making, and problem-solving for the benefit of the school as well as linguistically and culturally diverse communities (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009; CampbellJones et al., 2010; Quezada et al., 2012). A school leader who welcomes diversity into the school establishes a community of learning with students, parents, and other concerned members of the school community (Lindsey et al., 2005).

The third essential element involves managing the dynamics of difference by establishing problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies as a natural and standard process within the organizational culture of the schools and cultural circumstances of the communities (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009; CampbellJones et al., 2010). Identifying methods and various perspectives of inclusivity, and teaching others about the dynamics of cultures in association with one another, is also addressed in the third element (Quezada et al., 2012). For schools to become inclusive, school leaders need to know about the fundamental and predominant structures that affect how they and others recognize and assess differences (Ryan, 2003).

The fourth essential element includes the adjustment to diversity by being the primary learner about cultural groups different from one's cultural group and the capacity to use others' cultural experiences in all school settings (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009; CampbellJones et al., 2010). It also considers the extent to which cultural understanding is consolidated into an ethical requirement that guides educator values and school policies to establish impartial educational and socially fair outcomes (Quezada et al., 2012). School leaders that value students' funds of knowledge by including their language, culture, and individuality is a school that Brisk (2010) references as a school conducive to L2 acquisition.

The fifth and final essential element is a commitment to cultural knowledge by incorporating required learning about cultural groups, their experiences, and viewpoints as a fundamental part of the school's professional development (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009; CampbellJones et al., 2010). School leaders that provide continued professional development can, according to Lindsey et al. (2009), inform learners about their culture, others' culture, and the school's culture that could close educational gaps. Overall, the five essential elements are commitments to social justice that address the educational needs of every cultural group and marginalized students by providing educational opportunities that enable them to succeed academically and socially (CampbellJones et al., 2010).

Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

Barriers to cultural proficiency are described as both organizational and individual. The barriers of school leaders, as indicated by Nuri-Robins et al. (2007), may be systemic, grounded on values, or linked to previous experiences. The three types of barriers are unawareness of the need to adjust and opposition to adapt, systems of oppression and privilege, and presumption of entitlement and unearned privilege.

Firstly, change is frequently experienced as an external force that determines ongoing practices as deficient as an opposition to adapt (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). Others view this as a necessary change, but not by one's self. Secondly, systems of oppression occur in the forms of racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, and other forms of oppression as actual experiences without refuting and having the ability to recognize oppression as a systemic issue apart from personal actions. Thirdly, an awareness of privilege and entitlement occurs from indifference to benefits that arise exclusively by one's association in gender, race, or another cultural group due to the belief that what is earned and accomplished is based exclusively by effort and that others must only work harder (CampbellJones et al., 2010; Lindsey, Martinez, & Lindsey, 2007). Critical to understanding how to overcome resistance to change within us and in our schools stems from the ability to acknowledge the barriers to cultural proficiency (Quezada et al., 2012).

An Opaque Lens: Culturally Proficient School Leadership

In the face of diversity, school leaders may be uncertain and unclear about their involvement when working with students and their families of other cultures. Unable to see through the differences in diversity, as an opaque lens, school leaders may need an imaging lens to focus on students and their families with different social and ethnic backgrounds. Having the cultural proficiency knowledge may enable school leaders to project their perceptions and focus using a brighter and larger lens to view these students and families with the result being the acceptance of diversity within their schools.

Kugler (2002) emphasizes that diverse schools need a new leadership paradigm. Effective leadership of a diverse school begins with a state of mind. First, a leader must recognize the diversity within the student body and how it will affect students and their families. Despite the diversity, the school is serving the same purpose for all those children and their families. Kugler (2002) argues, "Diversity is not to be ignored, accepted, or tolerated," instead,

Diversity is to be sought out, identified, and celebrated. A multicultural school offers every student from every cultural, linguistic, and ethnic background an opportunity to be themselves amidst a sea of others different from themselves. It allows individual students and families to express pride in who they are within a community of other proud individuals and families. It encourages dialogue and increased understanding of those very differences that make us all unique rather than trying to blend as one – we are not one! (p. 131)

An effective principal finds many ways to value and promote diversity by creating opportunities that increase interactions among students and their families of different races and ethnic groups. To make a diverse environment a healthy learning environment, school leaders must view differences in beliefs and practices not as a burden to overcome, but as human qualities to be respected and learned from. The recognition of cultural and cross-cultural similarities and differences is vital to the success of a school.

In “A Tangled Path: Negotiating Leadership For, In, Of, and With Diverse Communities,” Goddard (2015) identifies three types of leadership as it pertains to diversity: leadership for diversity, leadership in diversity, and leadership with diversity. Leadership for diversity refers to a school with a range of diverse populations of students and first languages where each of those language groups exhibits a social and cultural ideology that is contradictory from the others. In this regard, school leaders can ask themselves how the school can adjust to the children and their community rather than inflicting a dominant-culture paradigm of what constitutes academic achievement. Leadership in diversity references teachers from diverse cultures. School leaders can contemplate how they lead in context of diversity by acknowledging the differences within the staff and how they lead in a way that honors diversity while permitting

the school to function within a bureaucratic surrounding. Leadership with diversity alludes to schools serving and how aspirations and dreams are conveyed to children so that they become part of society. Overall, school leaders must be aware of various circumstances and accept that alternative paths are leading, eventually, to the same desired result.

Experiences of diversity among principals are paramount in the study of cultural proficiency in schools. Hernandez and Kose's (2012) research is based on comprehending how principals may experience and explain issues of difference and diversity in schools. Their premise is that a foundational characteristic of school principals' development and application should be cultural competence. Assumptions can be made that principals have considerable capacity for cultural competence while developing more complex levels of cultural sensitivity. Considering principals fall along within a range of differing developmental orientations in cultural understanding, they will have various developmental needs in preparation and practice. The authors emphasize the range of developmental orientations as ethnocentric and focus on how principals might interpret these levels and seek to address a racial/ethnic achievement gap in their schools. Ethnocentric stages include ignoring the existence of cultural differences, perceiving their culture as superior to others, and minimizing differences of similar cultural groups. Ethnorelative stages include understanding and acceptance of distinct cultural behaviors and values, adjusting worldviews and modifying behavior for interactions with diverse people, and acceptance by others of identities non-inclusive to one particular culture. Although it is unclear how many principals participated in this study, the authors' hypothetical analysis shows that explanations of defense concerning a racial/ethnic achievement gap indicate that white principals believe the gap is due to students of parents of color inferiority, effort, background, or ability or their lack of "American" culture. In contrast, principals of color at the same stage believe the achievement gap is due to an oppressive white educational system that lacks

multiculturalism. Interestingly, the other areas of the ethnocentric stages indicate the same responses from all principals. The authors conclude that employing this developmental viewpoint into preparation and practice may strengthen school leaders' ability to lead diverse schools that prepare all students to succeed in a complex, multicultural world.

To successfully lead diverse schools and be effective in preparing students for a multicultural world, Cooper et al. (2011) contend that school leaders must be able to respond to the question as to who they are as administrators to understand themselves as cultural beings. Terrell and Lindsey (2009) suggest invoking a process of developing an intentional leadership perspective directed by personally and internally asking questions relative to morals, beliefs, class, and race/ethnicity worldviews. Additionally, other necessary questions to ask entail identifying their stance regarding how their culture as a school leader impacts the students who come to the school, how students' cultures will affect them, and their response if cultures are different. Langley and Jacobs (2006) describe an effective leader as a person that is perceptive in helping to make the connection with one's feelings to ensure the support of acceptance of diverse cultures in the school by the entire faculty and the students. Covey (2004) states,

The person who is truly effective has the humility and reverence to recognize his own perceptual limitations and to appreciate the rich resources available through interaction with the hearts and minds of other human beings. That person values the differences because those differences add to his knowledge, to his understanding or reality. (p. 277)

To be effective in cross-cultural settings, Terrell and Lindsey (2009) believe school leaders must possess a "transformational" paradigm that views their work as to how they affect the educational experiences of people culturally different from themselves. Leaders participating in transformational activities construct the experiences of their students, and they conduct their

leadership activities in a manner that involves all members of the school or district community in becoming culturally proficient (Lindsey et al., 2009; Lindsey et al., 2005).

A transformational paradigm involves understanding the role language plays in learning. In “The Missing Pieces in Teacher Education: The Preparation of Linguistically Responsive Teachers,” Lucas and Villegas (2010) discuss the extensive interconnectedness of language, learning, and knowing that is especially obvious in the school context. An awareness of the interconnected structure of English and second language acquisition, as well as the capacity to apply these understandings to develop a sociolinguistic consciousness, is essential for school administrators. A sociolinguistic consciousness requires an understanding that language and identity are strongly interconnected and a realization of the sociopolitical aspects of language use and language education. There is great significance in finding ways to consider students’ linguistic backgrounds that school administrators need to recognize. By doing this, school administrators can assist students with integration into the school setting while building more effective bridges to learning. The authors also point out that most U.S. born school leaders have limited or no experience learning or communicating in a language other than English, so they are apt to minimize the obstacles ELs encounter in schools and misinterpret assets ELs bring to learning. Overall, there is an essential need for school leaders to understand the relationship between language and schooling as well as the implications of those relationships for ELs.

Equally important as understanding how language learning impacts ELs in culturally proficient school leadership is building a community of belonging for ELs. Burns (2011) examines how school leaders can develop communities of belonging as well as issues regarding inclusion of ELs and offers brief historical perspectives of educational rights about ELs in U.S. schools in “Creating a Context of Belonging for English Language Learners.” Stressing legal matters of neglectful inclusionary practices, the author highlights cases dating back to a 1923

Supreme Court ruling addressing language and education in *Meyer v. Nebraska*. Even though the author touches on subsequent legal issues that emerged involving segregation, ability grouping, equal access to education, meaningful instruction, and assessment of ELs, one could argue the legislation that impacted inclusion of ELs the most is No Child Left Behind of 2002. This legislation was inclusionary because of the requirements to develop English proficiency based on state requirements to meet academic content and achievement standards for all students, parent notification, and testing reporting requirements.

Nevertheless, what the legislation did not consider was if the expectations were fully attainable by ELs. Because of frequently changing legalities in education, school leaders need to understand policies and actions that states have implemented to comply with the legal mandates for educating ELs. Once school leaders understand this information, they will want to learn how their school's program for ELs is implemented. Along the same lines, Sox (2009) suggests school administrators should be cautious about how they interpret policies directed at ELs and immigrant students. Furthermore, they should include ESL personnel in dialogue that correctly recognizes the academic skills of ELs rather than their language proficiency.

A case study conducted by Howley, Woodram, Burgess, and Rhodes (2009) focused on how school leaders responded to school and community culture. Emphasis was on culturally responsive leaders and their organizational culture in response to school reform and rural cultures. Researchers targeted schools with high numbers of economically disadvantaged students having high pass rates on state accountability tests as their focus. Cultural leadership resonated in all of the schools with attention focused not only on student-centeredness and discipline, but the curriculum, pedagogy, academic achievement, and cultural values of the community as well. All of the school leaders made progress using effective leadership practices that community members supported, thereby promoting culturally responsive leadership.

However, Howley et al. (2009) argue that experienced educators in the school district are not necessarily effective leaders, and school boards should hire school leaders who understand community culture to develop strategies in the community's best interests.

Overall, leadership is conveying a person's worth and ability so distinctly that they are inspired to see it in themselves. Leadership is about efficacy, possessing integrity, constructing relationships, thinking from new perspectives, inspiring people, and teaching principles (Covey, et al., 2014).

A Transparent Lens: Family Support

Family support can be viewed as a transparent lens. By viewing students' families through this lens, they can be distinctly seen as a compound lens consisting of several simple and clear lenses. The simple lenses are transmissions of support, guidance, and morals as significant contributions to the educational process of their children, thereby bridging the gap between home and school.

We must infer that all families, despite how restricted their English is, no matter how limited their formal schooling has been, regardless of their employment to make ends meet, *all* families want to and *can* contribute to their child's success in school (Houk, 2005), especially the parents of ELs who are interested and able to support their children's achievements (Reese & Goldenberg, 2010). Likewise, Hutchins, Greenfeld, Epstein, Sanders, and Galindo (2012) maintain that parents need to know that educators recognize, value, and regard the care given to their children as well as their efforts to assist with their school success in *Multicultural Partnerships: Involve All Families*. Additionally, students and their families bring numerous complex elements such as knowledge, talents, and other resources across cultures to school every day that offer enrichment opportunities for student learning and development.

In an article about Latino immigrant students in southern schools, Sox (2009) states that many immigrant parents do not feel welcome in their children's schools because they do not speak English, and the school may not make an effort to translate or interpret for them. Immigrant and EL students often feel unwelcome in schools and discriminated against due to their perceived or actual immigration status both on the state and local levels.

As the EL population continues to increase, schools will benefit from making sure they are reaching out to their most marginalized population in a manner that will assuredly influence the lives of children and the lives of families in the community. The result of such efforts generates an inviting environment that parents seek as they consider participating in the school and school-related activities, especially if parents are attempting to understand a school system in a language they are unfamiliar with (Garcia Ramos, 2007). Many school leaders view the parents of ELs through the same cultural lens as mainstream American students. They have the same expectation for both groups without considering that the EL community may be vastly dissimilar in terms of cultural background, expectations of schools, and capability to provide resources, whether through financial means or time availability (Stoops Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008).

Reese & Goldenberg (2010) proclaim that a major problem of understanding parental support of ELs is that school staff often conclude that parents are apathetic or assume that either they do not find formal schooling significant or that they are too financially stressed to consider it a priority. Educators who are not mindful of parents' interest or of how best to utilize that interest to encourage an EL's achievement is a critical problem. This lack of understanding could be that educators concentrate more on differences between schools and families rather than commonalities that are shared.

In "Teacher and Student Perspectives on Cultural Proficiency," Anderson (2011) studied perspectives of teachers and students regarding cultural proficiency and family support

emphasizing the importance of school leaders and teachers changing their perceptions of working-class, ethnic-minority parents and the roles played in their children's education. When school leaders and teachers positively view home support, a culturally proficient school is formed, thereby increasing academic achievement due to a sense of belonging on the part of the ethnic-minority parents and students. Participants in this study consisted of teachers and students in three public high schools where the teachers are primarily Caucasian and the students primarily Latino. In general, findings indicated the teachers' perceptions of students' home support as negative, whereas the students felt positive home support. Interestingly, Caucasian teachers viewed their schools as culturally proficient, yet Latino teachers felt otherwise because "many teachers do not understand the Latino students and community" (p. 33). The tremendous increase of not only the Latino population in the United States but the increase of Latino students necessitates the need for teachers and school administrators to make culturally proficient changes in their practices that will impact their school.

Family support of ELs cannot exist without adequate communication from the school. When school administrators have limited contextual awareness about students and families, their speculations can lead to hostility and avoidance rather than improved communication. In time, these ineffective communication attempts create conflict and may lead to an even more troublesome atmosphere where constructive school-family involvement becomes unattainable (Ferguson, 2007). With communication comes dialogue and Shields and Sayani (2005) advocate that effectual school leaders will establish a meaningful dialogue within the context of diversity and emphasize that it is the foundation of the school leader's ability to lead in "Leading in the Midst of Diversity: The Challenge of Our Times." The authors also assert that participation in dialogue about differences is critical to leading amid diversity. For school leaders, meaningful communication and understanding offer the focus for creating spaces and a sense of community

in which all members of the school feel recognized and valued (Shields & Sayani, 2005). Freire (1993) states, “Without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education (pp. 92-93).”

A Focal Lens: Teacher Perceptions

The primary focal point of teachers is their students. Utilizing a focal lens for students enables teachers to magnify their work and “zoom in” on students’ academic achievement. Working with these students allows teachers to have sharper images and distinct beliefs of others who affect students’ education.

Our distinct beliefs stem from our sense of identity which Pawar & Bhardwaj (2017) suggest is relevant to our individual and social behavior in “Perception, Identity, and Peace.” To understand identity development, we need to focus on perception. The authors define perception as an explanation of internal and external stimuli that is shaped as a result of our experiences, how we encounter events, and the conduct of others. Internal stimuli are considered as thoughts, feelings, emotions, and several biological changes. External stimuli consist of events as well as different external situations.

Additional definitions of perception are the progression by which sensory stimuli are categorized into practical experience (World Almanac Education Group, 2016) and an act or effect of observing or an awareness of one’s surroundings through physical sensation (Meriam Webster, 2016). Audi (2013) believes we may reasonably infer that perception is experiential. To view, or otherwise perceive, involves having a qualitative experience.

According to Henze et al. (2002), our perceptions are brought on by past experiences. They also explain that actions based on the assumption that we have impartial views may promote friction. Contrary to that thought is the assumption we each have a logical view of the world and can learn from each other’s perspectives resulting in a foundation for mutual respect

and appreciation. Manning & Baruth (2004) continue that thought by pointing out people's foundation for perceptions and their authentic perceptions differ culturally because how we feel, reflect, respond, and conduct ourselves reflects our cultural background.

In Karaköse's (2008) study about perceptions of primary school teachers, opinions about principal cultural leadership behaviors were analyzed according to the teacher participant's occupational characteristics regarding gender, years of experience, and the subjects taught. It was determined that even though perceptions of the teachers' principals varied considerably, the teachers were unsure of the principals' cultural leadership behaviors although teacher experience prompted more critical perceptions. Because the primary focus is on school culture, the author claims, "Cultural leadership is such a leadership that influences the ideologies-beliefs, values, and norms shared by the members of organizations and the cultural forms through which they are expressed" (p. 571). To integrate effective cultural leadership behaviors in their schools, principals promoted positive actions and attitudes for creating an organizational culture that developed visions of change shared by its organizational members as well as motivating stakeholders and managing staff and resources.

Any person who is objective and empathetic to new perceptions, and who has an awareness and concern in connecting them, has a moral disposition (Dewey, 1935). Perception gives us moral knowledge, and moral perception is associated with instinct and emotion; therefore, perception is essential for human knowledge (Audi, 2013).

Summary of the Literature

The primary limitations of the aforementioned literature review involved finding subject matter that directly addresses elementary ESOL teachers' perceptions of cultural proficiency among school leaders. While the majority of the literature presented was strictly informational, there are a few studies somewhat relevant to my research within the fields of cultural leadership

behaviors, cultural proficiency and family support, school leaders' response to cultural proficiency, and teacher perceptions.

While the data was quantifiable in Karaköse's (2008) study, some of the survey items of culturally proficient leadership behaviors were vague such as "*Principal uses his/her influence more than his/her legal power*" and "*Principal uses everyday speech and written language skillfully.*" This could have been addressed using further clarification of survey items. Because my methodology primarily pertains to the human experience and teacher perceptions, this study draws upon a fundamental component of my research.

Only Burns (2011) identified English learners directly, but the protocol for school leaders offered regarding the selection of professional development for improving instruction and learning was somewhat limited. With four knowledge and skill objective questions, an expanded list of protocol items that include more inclusionary practices would be beneficial for reflection of professional development activities. Anderson's (2011) study utilized an electronic questionnaire in this qualitative study; however, it is unknown how many questions were asked which could result in reduced validity of the study.

The study conducted by Howley et al. (2009) indicated math as a focus of data. It is unclear why the authors chose math as the focus of high pass rates on state accountability tests when the math curriculum was only explicitly discussed in one of the schools where the research took place. Finally, while the cultural proficiency tools do not specifically address issues at the secondary school level throughout its entirety as reflected in the title, Nuri Robins et al. (2007) use various terms for both educators and school leaders throughout the article.

All of the literature presented discussed leadership as it pertains to a leader's ability to recognize diversity and proactively embrace cultural proficiency in an educational setting. While

no study addressed my topic specifically, it is enlightening to believe there is importance in this research that others have not pursued, yet necessary to address within educational institutions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

My primary interest in researching elementary ESOL teachers' perceptions of cultural proficiency among school leaders is what Merriam (2009) calls an "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). Constructing a qualitative study allows me to understand how my participants make sense of their culturally and linguistically diverse student population and reflect on the experiences they have when teaching diverse learners. My perspective about school leaders and their lack of cultural proficiency is an issue in schools that I first thought was a view everyone shared. Results from my informal survey, which I described in chapter 1, indicated most participants shared my views while others did not. Merriam (2009) explains that the key to qualitative research is understanding the viewpoint from the participants' perspective, not the researchers.

Participants

Six elementary ESOL teachers participated in this study. Four teachers work in suburban areas of Atlanta and two work in a suburban area of Savannah. Each participant is referenced using a pseudonym. Participants include four women and two men who come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Their experience teaching ESOL students range from six to 21 years as shown in Table 2. Participants were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Experience in Georgia schools
2. Professional experience teaching ESOL
3. Understanding of multicultural diversity
4. Expertise in working with school leaders

Additional information that Merriam (2009) references as a “short portrait” of each participant’s life and background are included in the narrative.

Table 2 Participant Information

Participant	Gender	Race	Years ESOL Teacher at Current School	Total Years as ESOL Teacher
1	Female	White	13	18
2	Female	White	11	13
3	Female	White	19	19
4	Female	Hispanic	17	21
5	Male	Hispanic	10	17
6	Male	Hispanic	6	6

*Participant 6 is split between two elementary schools daily

While interviewing, it was important to keep in mind that participants may be friends with their school administrators, thereby answering questions that favor their friend(s). Additionally, if a formative observation score is low, a participant may purposefully downgrade any interview questions about the cultural proficiency a school leader may possess. Finally, participants may not be able to respond to interview questions with detailed answers because they do not have enough interaction with the school leaders themselves.

Short Portraits

Eyelee

Eyelee, a northerner by birth, lived in Illinois before moving to Georgia at the age of eight. Growing up, Eyelee only encountered a minimal number of diverse students in elementary school for a total of about four. In high school, there were only about ten diverse students among the entire student population. Despite the lack of diversity within Eyelee’s school, her family hosted exchange students. At first, her family hosted a boy, Didier, from Belgium when she was in the eighth or ninth grade. Then, they hosted a girl, Barbara, from Germany when Eyelee was a

junior in high school. Eyelee remains in contact with them and has traveled to visit-Didier currently lives in Paris, and Barbara currently lives in London.

Because she was not around many people of diverse cultures growing up, she does not feel she had any negative feelings of stereotypical beliefs. It was not until she began teaching at an elementary school south of Atlanta when she encountered a culture shock. About 99% of the student and faculty population were African Americans. She is Caucasian.

As a family, they traveled a lot but not necessarily out of the country until Eyelee was in high school. They visited Didier's family in Belgium. She was fascinated by her experiences while visiting, especially the culinary aspects of the countries. She enjoyed going to the grocery store and looking around, so much so that she loves doing that now in every country she visits. Eyelee finds it pleasurable to see what kind of food people eat. She is truly a world traveler having visited 17 countries in Europe, three in Asia, 16 in North America, and Australia. It helps to have a father who was a pilot for a major airline. As far as languages of the countries visited, Eyelee states she does not understand any of it but stresses that a visitor can always communicate with translation applications and pointing because that "always works."

Immediate Gratification

She shifts her thoughts to teaching. Longing to retire from the hectic demands involved with teaching, Eyelee ponders when that will be. Reflection of her 17 years teaching ESOL in a suburban area of Atlanta is not without formidable moments. Adhering to state and county protocols, endless testing, requirements of administrators, and unnecessary meetings augment Eyelee's strong desire to leave the teaching profession.

Sitting in the dining room of her large, brick home overlooking the river, Eyelee fondly recalls why she wanted to leave the rigors of teaching in the regular classroom of rambunctious first and second graders at Tutland Elementary and begin teaching ESOL. With a thoughtful

smile she says, “Smaller class sizes and more immediate gratification as a teacher because you get students that don’t know any English and, within a year, they are speaking and having conversations with you.” For Eyelee, regular classroom teachers see academic growth in their students, but for ESOL teachers there is tremendous growth academically intertwined with intense language growth as well...the language of comprehension, the language of inquiry, and the language of dialogue.

Working with lower and middle socioeconomic students, she was one of only a handful of Caucasian teachers, the rest African Americans. Eyelee recalls culture shock when beginning to teach in an area of a school district that was unfamiliar to her-its way of life and attitudes she was unaccustomed to at the time. Eyelee wanted a pedagogic change, and a new opportunity arose at Tutland Elementary. Mrs. North, her principal at the time, afforded her the position to teach ESOL at the school. Without hesitation, Eyelee took the position and maintained it for five years before making a drastic change, to be closer to home, and transferring to an elementary school with completely different dynamics than that of Tutland.

Eyelee’s new teaching endeavor has enabled her to maintain an ESOL position at Packson Elementary for 13 years. Though the culture shock from her previous school subsided, her students were primarily Hispanic and the faculty was more diverse. She faced a daunting task as the lead teacher working alongside four other ESOL teachers after being the only ESOL teacher at Tutland. Fast forward to the present and the same is true as when Eyelee first started at Packson. Thinking back to her previous school, Eyelee notes, “The population at Tutland wasn’t all Hispanic and there were some Africans. For the most part, Packson is majority Hispanic with 98% of the students and maybe a few Portuguese and Russian students.”

The school is located amidst a growing northern suburb, with traffic sometimes as far as the eye can see. Rundown, some might even say dilapidated apartment buildings fill the area

surrounding the school along with a handful of nicer, well-maintained apartments. The majority of the student population at Packson lives in these apartments.

After teaching at Packson for two years, Eyelee discovered that two young first and second grade students-Georgie and Bernardo-from Africa whom she taught previously at Tutland were enrolling at her school. Eyelee was just as excited to see them as they were to see her! Though they had tested out of the ESOL program at that point, she still took delight that they remembered her. She relishes in a fond memory of teaching these young boys who had grown to become fifth graders, almost as if she had come full circle with them. She is passionate about teaching ESOL. "I like to see kids learn English and be able to communicate with me and other people," Eyelee says enthusiastically.

Cami

Growing up in Cincinnati in the 1960s, there was a small percentage of African American students at the time Cami attended school. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, Cami also lived in New Hampshire, Illinois, and California before moving to Atlanta, Georgia. Cami remembers encountering diversity when an Asian girl attended school with her, and all of the students stared because they had never seen an Asian before. That is the extent of the diversity Cami remembers at an early age.

Raised in an open-minded, liberal home environment, Cami was taught to disregard and not focus on the color of someone's skin and had no boundaries regarding race. During elementary school, she did develop a relationship with a best friend who was African American. They remained friends for a couple of years in high school. Cami recalls tense racial issues within the school but notes that her friend had protected her in one rather scary situation. She recalls a time at the age of 14 or 15 when she went into the restroom at school. There were some African American females in the bathroom whom she knew but not well. They started to scare

Cami and push her around in the bathroom. Her friend walked in and told the girls, “Not with her you don’t.” The bullies in the bathroom left Cami alone and never bothered her again. Cami was noticeably aware of racism when she attended high school and felt that her friend was no longer comfortable being around her anymore. They soon parted ways as friends once her friend began playing sports.

Cami feels teaching ESOL came naturally. She was raised in a rather eccentric family. They never took vacations. Instead, they would take “field trips” because her father wanted to expose the family to different socioeconomic groups. When traveling to the southern part of the United States, the family would never take the expressway. Traveling through the Appalachian Mountains, viewing impoverished communities, and seeing the segregated bathrooms is the reason Cami calls them field trips.

Fun and Happiness

The loud sound of milk steaming to make hot lattes and a blender roaring to make frozen coffee drinks blare in the background as Cami reflects on her life as an ESOL teacher. Raising her voice to be heard in the loud coffee shop, Cami begins her story of teaching ESOL for the past 13 years. She began at Banish Elementary where she was part-time. Soon, and while raising three beautiful teenaged daughters, she required a full-time job and started teaching ESOL at Mester Elementary.

Choosing to change from a regular classroom teacher to an ESOL teacher is unimpressive, according to Cami. Many teachers become weary of the day-to-day struggles in a regular classroom setting, and Cami lost the enthusiasm and passion, “It just wasn’t as much fun as when I was younger. Times were changing. We were expected to go to many meetings and stay very late. It was very tiring as I was raising three daughters as well.” The decision to change positions as a classroom teacher to an ESOL teacher was about two things, fun and happiness.

“Every time I would walk past the ESOL teacher’s room, it looked like they were always having fun and that looked good to me. She was always leaving very happy and at a decent time.” The strong desire to achieve happiness by incorporating fun appealed to Cami in a big way. While she jokingly references the change as unimpressive, she laughingly says it is the truth.

When recalling many experiences she has had with diverse learners, Cami shares a memorable time during her second year at Mester Elementary while teaching fifth graders. The unit of study at the time was immigration, a challenging and ongoing issue embroiled in the lives of diverse learners. “When we were studying vocabulary words that went with the unit, a few of my students were drawing pictures of being up in trees and policemen below them with rifles,” a quite disturbing thought to Cami. “We got into a conversation as the unit progressed about how they came over and it was actually quite sad of them crossing the Rio Grande. One young lady cried when she told me her story crawling through a tunnel.” For Cami, that was a heartbreaking but true picture of what diverse learners may experience when trying to emigrate.

Passionate is one of a handful of words to describe why Cami loves teaching ESOL. One of the reasons is the memorable experiences of her students’ struggles, but first and foremost is that she enjoys her students and has a lot of fun. “I found the old teacher in me could be more creative and have more fun with them,” she recalls. Cami finds the kids to be “very delightful.” She continues to describe her love of ESOL, “I like to talk and they like to talk, so that worked out really well. We spend a lot of time getting to know one another.” Cami also finds passion in teaching reading and writing to English learners, although it is challenging at times it is also fun. Cami continues by advocating for the diverse learners she teaches by emphasizing a “safe zone” in her classroom: “They are very innocent. They deserve to learn and be happy in America, so I do everything to help them enjoy school, to make them want to come to school, and to feel safe at school especially in my classroom where they could make mistakes and feel okay about that.”

By doing that, Cami says no one is allowed to laugh at each other in the event someone makes a mistake. “Everyone speaks and says what they want to, and we correct it along the way, and it is no big deal. That is the type of atmosphere I try to make,” she says. Overall, Cami admires all of them.

Binoc

The International City is where Binoc was raised. That nickname is noted on the billboard when entering Lorain, Ohio. After graduating from Ohio University, Binoc moved to Georgia and has lived in various areas of Atlanta. Raised in a very diverse community, Binoc remembers attending school with students that were Caucasian, African American, and Puerto Rican. She remains friends with some of them through social media.

Respecting differences was the motto of her family. Binoc’s father was an elementary school principal and her mother was a college professor, so acceptance of all cultures was expected to work in the educational field. Her mother was a Ukrainian immigrant. Her mother spoke Ukrainian, but Binoc did not, nor did she attend a Ukrainian school.

When speaking of her parents and grandparents, Binoc shares their cultural background. In addition to her mother’s cultural heritage, she tells of her father who is Italian and Hungarian. While Binoc’s fraternal grandparents spoke English, her maternal grandmother and grandfather still speak broken English. Binoc points out that they would have been ESOL students themselves if services would have been offered during their childhood.

Binoc’s mother’s name in Ukrainian is Vuldamira. She emigrated through Ellis Island and lived with a sponsor family in Oberlin, Ohio, after arriving in the United States. They lived in a small house, and her mother was the youngest of three children at that time. No one spoke English. When Binoc’s mother attended kindergarten, her name was Vuldamira. During that time, Vuldamira followed an African American girl around the neighborhood whose name was

Sally. Today, Vuldamira is now Sally. Binoc does not know how she changed her name and if it was even legal at the time. Perhaps Vuldamira just liked her friend's name. The thought is that wherever Sally went, Vuldamira followed. The name change caught up with Sally when she applied for a passport to travel to France when Binoc was a senior in high school. Despite the name change, Sally was able to obtain the passport eventually.

Binoc followed many customs and traditions of the Ukrainian heritage and participated in a Ukrainian dance group that performed at the International Festival in Lorain. She still has her costumes and shares these artifacts with her ESOL students. Binoc enjoys teaching her ELs about the Ukrainian culture and Christmas traditions they have. Referenced as “little pockets of diversity,” there were a variety of cultures in the International City: Polish, Greek, Italians, and Irish. The International Festival was truly an eventful celebration of all the cultures. Binoc loved this event and danced from the time she was in kindergarten through her senior year of high school. Amusing to her now, she was chosen as the Ukrainian Princess while participating in the Princess Pageant during her senior year of high school. Binoc contributes these experiences to her understanding of multiculturalism. After teaching fourth grade and kindergarten, Binoc decided she wanted to teach ESOL based on her mother's cultural heritage because “she was one of those children.”

Her Mother's Cultural Heritage

Upon entering a small, almost vacant restaurant in the northern suburb of Atlanta, Binoc chooses a table close to the window. She enjoys coming to this place which sells soups and sandwiches as well as coffee and pastries. Binoc also likes it because it is a quaint mom and pop type of place, not the usual coffee shop chain. Soon, this restaurant fills up with high school students meeting before a big game and the quietness quickly fades. Her mind is focused on telling her story, as she recalls her life of teaching ESOL for 19 years.

Binoc has been teaching ESOL at the same school, Westwood Elementary, for 19 years. She began her teaching career in a southern suburb of Atlanta for five years before moving and working in Florida for a brief time. She moved back to Atlanta and that is where her teaching career began. Her mother, as well as the cultures she grew up with, was the reason she chose to teach ESOL. Participating in the International Festival and Ukrainian dancing inspired her. “It was so neat to learn about everyone’s heritage. It seems to me, now that I live in Atlanta, that one’s cultural heritage or nationality is bigger in the north rather than the south.”

Fondly reflecting on a special memory of a young ESOL boy, Binoc tells of his inhibition to talk. He spoke Spanish, his native language, but would never share anything in class. He only giggled. He was pulled out for ESOL immediately after lunch every day and, for whatever reason, probably from lunch or the digestive system, he always flatulated in class. Laughing, Binoc shares, “Everybody would laugh at him. He was laughing at himself. At first, he was embarrassed and then started laughing at himself.” Laughing as she shares, “Every time he did it, he would say, ‘Oh, los frijoles! Frijoles! Frijoles!’ I obviously knew what *frijoles* meant, but that was what he first began to say.” He seemed to have frijoles for lunch every day. He started talking more and participating in class-to think it all started with the farting and the frijoles. Binoc feels that everyone laughing increased his comfort level. He embraced it and his conversation continued from there, and it became a part of the class in both Spanish and English.

Binoc recalls another memorable experience of a little girl from Japan, who did not speak any English, and started at Westwood Elementary after entering the United States. She was in the fifth grade and very, very shy. Even though she was extremely quiet, she studied English with her parents at home and tested out of the ESOL program in just one year. As an ESOL teacher, Binoc was shocked. The student and her parents were so excited about the news! Binoc cried at the end of the year because she would soon be starting middle school. Thankful she would not

have to attend an ESOL feeder middle school since she tested out of the program, it was a success story not only for the child but for Binoc and everyone who worked with her.

Binoc's passion for teaching ESOL stems from the incredible growth she sees in students. Binoc believes the younger they come in, the more growth you see in language acquisition. In kindergarten, they can come in not knowing anything, and by the end of the year they are speaking in sentences. For Binoc, it is different from teaching in a regular classroom because she teaches language and content. She emphasizes, "You see so much growth socially and academically with the children. It is so rewarding!"

Suni

With a true passion for travel and culture, Suni began traveling when she was 18 years old. Starting in the Caribbean, she also traveled to South America as well as Europe as a solo traveler. She loves learning about other cultures, ways of life, and foods. She is a self-proclaimed foodie. She also enjoys traveling because of her interest in what the rest of the world has to offer that we, as Americans, are unaware of in other cultures. It is innate for Suni. She is a natural explorer and adventurous person. "I just feel people get so comfortable in their comfort zones that they don't dare live outside of the U.S. They don't dare travel. To understand and comprehend others' backgrounds and cultural differences, you have to put your butt in an airplane and travel" Suni said in a firm tone regarding expectations ESOL teachers have of cultural proficiency among school leaders. She continues, "Sometimes I feel that when people see things that are different, they don't like it because they feel uncomfortable. I like feeling uncomfortable and not feeling like a tourist." When Suni worked at the middle schools in her current school district, she was always defending her ESOL students because she felt the entire staff, school leaders included, were so narrow-minded. They just were not exposed much to differences due to the locations of the schools.

Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Suni has also lived in Georgia, Delaware, and New York. While growing up in Puerto Rico, there were diverse students but mostly of Hispanic descent. The kids were all from the “same crowd”—either children of military personnel or children that worked for different federal agencies such as the DEA, FBI, Customs, and Department of Justice. The parents of these students were not necessarily in the military, but their parents worked for the United States government. Suni’s father is one of those parents—he was a DEA agent.

The diverse make-up of these students consisted of Americans, including Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans. Suni recalls that 75% of the students were from Puerto Rico and 25% were from the United States. Her community was socially and economically diverse, identifying people in tiered classes including upper, middle, and lower class. Stereotypical beliefs of others from diverse cultures were limited to Suni because, as an island, people are very isolated and had little exposure to people of other countries.

The Mind of a Bilingual Person

Sitting in the kitchen of her large home in the northern suburbs of Atlanta, Suni asks if the pizza is warm enough after being in the oven. This was only after we took a ride to her favorite pizza joint to pick up the delicious vegetable pizza with its semi-warm melted cheese and thick crust—a scrumptious yet enjoyable way to begin her story of teaching ESOL for 21 years.

Suni began her ESOL teaching career in the Antilles Consolidated School System at Fort Buchanan in Puerto Rico. She taught in this Department of Defense school for two years as well as a year in an outside school system and a year in a community college in Puerto Rico. For 17 years, she has worked in a school system in the northern suburbs of Atlanta. Suni reveals that

teaching one year in Puerto Rico's public-school system was more than enough because, laughing as she shares, "It was just one year." In her current school system, Suni first began at two middle schools-Pearson for two years and Wellham for three years. When first starting at Northbend Elementary, her current school, Suni was split between two schools which meant she had to be at both schools every day. "It was back-breaking being at two schools every day," Suni claims. "That's the worst experience I've ever had because you have two sets of administrators with different expectations. One school that wasn't my home school put me in charge of the ESOL program and I did not know anyone!" she recalls. "It was really, really tough...those two years." She has worked at Northbend since 2007.

Choosing to be an ESOL teacher came naturally for Suni since she was an ESOL student herself. She believes her knowledge of how an English learner's brain works when learning a second language is an excellent instrument for children, parents, and other staff members to understand the mind of a bilingual person. Suni shares her love of children and enthusiastically declares, "I love, love, love teaching children from other parts of the world because I learn SO much from them!"

Suni has many memorable experiences in teaching ESOL. Happening a few years ago, Suni describes the experience of a new student from Venezuela. Sadly, Suni thinks back to her living situation-the girl was going to live with her dad whom she had never lived with because her parents were divorced when, as Suni describes, "She was an itty, bitty baby." The new student's mother was in Venezuela due to political turmoil. Even though the girl moved in with her father, Suni feels she became a surrogate mother to the student until the girl's mother could leave Venezuela. Suni would pick her up on the weekends and care for her as if she was a biological daughter. During those nine months, the student's English went from a zero to a 4.2 out of a 6.0. Suni credits herself as well as the student's father due to her keen understanding of

the Spanish vocabulary and working with her independently. Suni worked with her in the morning, during lunchtime, and on the weekends. A bit of jealousy ensued from her daughter who had grown to dislike her mother's student strongly and the weekend visits. Suni thought, "I felt so bad that she was here with someone that she didn't know who happened to be her biological dad, but she didn't like him. He was so strict with her." Laughing at the thought, the student asked Suni and her husband to adopt her. Suni finds the situation funny. Finally, the student's mother came at the end of the year. Even today, Suni and her student retain a close relationship. Doing well, the student currently attends a private high school in Miami.

Fondly recalling her experiences as an ESOL student, Suni feels passionate about teaching ESOL because she had a great teacher who inspired her. While attending college, Suni had no desire to become a teacher. She was in school studying architectural design, but she was "very poor," living in Syracuse and attending the university there. Suni could not pay her way through school. Her mother told her, "You know you'll need to study something that is your second choice that you can make money as soon as you get out of school." Suni told her mother what her second choice would be-art history. She was incredibly passionate and studied art and art history. Once again, her mother told her that it was not enough, "It isn't going to get you far. You need to go into education." Then, Suni took courses in education, more specifically Kindergarten through fifth-grade early childhood development, and that is what got her into teaching. After starting to teach, Suni thought about the great ESOL teacher that inspired her and said to herself, "You know what? I would be such a great ESOL teacher especially since I live in Puerto Rico, and I have to help the Hispanic kids who are coming to school." Again, talking to herself and finishing her conversation, Suni said, "I could be of great help! I know how to do this! I can handle this! And so, I did." Suni had no desire to become a classroom teacher, but wanted to be an ESOL teacher.

Her experience as a classroom teacher includes terrible memories for Suni, so much so that she has almost wiped them from her memory. While teaching in the public school system in Puerto Rico, Suni taught in the countryside in an old school made from wood with a chicken coop right next door and the sugar cane fields close by. An event in the spring entailed burning the sugar cane fields to fertilize the land. Suni was teaching, and then suddenly, it would rain ashes. Laughing at the thought, Suni would wipe her face with soot all over it. Teaching in such a “small, very small” town, the students were just “country folks” that just wanted to be outside climbing the mango trees and running after the cows. “I couldn’t stand it! I thought I was going to die. I swear! I cried every single day I was there. I hated it, I cursed, I swore, it was awful!” claimed Suni. She asked her husband every day when they could leave. Thankfully, that day arrived...

Magno

Having a pleasant experience as an English learner in Puerto Rico, primarily because he already knew some English, Magno points out, “I’m still learning, but I have improved through the years. At that time, I was learning a language in a complete Spanish environment. It was hard!” Magno stresses that Puerto Ricans today are speaking more English, which he attributes to more access for opportunities to learn English than when he was a child. He had one hour per day of English classes. All other classes were in Spanish. While recollecting his experiences as an EL, he says it was challenging yet fun. An actual test of knowing the English language came when he returned to the United States at age 16 for vacation. He got lost in New York, and he realized he had to prove himself by asking for help from two police officers who helped him find his way back to the house in which he was staying.

Indifferent to others from Asia while growing up, Magno and his friends always thought Asians were all very smart or very gifted with computers. Dominicans and Puerto Ricans grew

up thinking they are not intelligent, and Cubans are known as hustlers, according to Magno. During his childhood, there were always political issues between the United States and Puerto Rico. Some people think the United States invaded the island, and some people think the presence of the United States is helping Puerto Rico, so there is always a debate. Tension is still evident, especially during election time.

Born in New York, Magno was raised in Puerto Rico from the age of one to 35 years old. He moved from Puerto Rico to Orlando, Florida, and consequently to the Savannah, Georgia area ten years ago. For Magno, diversity was represented by a majority of Puerto Ricans, 97% of them, with the remainder of students from the Dominican Republic. Magno had no other friends from diverse cultures as a child.

A Better Option

Sitting at a table in the back corner of the public library, Magno reflects on his experiences teaching ESOL. It is quiet in the corner where bookshelves stand tall, filled with books from a variety of genres including fiction, history, and poetry. The quiet soon fades with the voices of children looking for their favorite books and their parents ‘*shushing*’ them to be quiet, acutely aware of other library patrons.

Magno has been teaching English to mostly Hispanic students for 17 years. Teaching in Puerto Rico for 13 years, Orlando, Florida for seven years, and 10 in Georgia, he has taught in six different schools. Although beginning his teaching career as an English teacher in Puerto Rico, the courses he taught were not considered English as a Second Language because it is a different label than what we have in the United States. Magno chose the ESOL path because he believed teaching ESOL was a better option in Puerto Rico. Later, a Master’s degree in ESOL was offered, so he took that route. Starting with his Bachelor’s degree at the University of Puerto

Rico in history, he later obtained his postgraduate degree from InterAmerican University in Puerto Rico.

Teaching English in Puerto Rico is different than what it is like in the United States. Magno was helping his students learn English but as a second language, similar to English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In Orlando, Magno encountered many students from many different places, many different languages, and in a remarkably diverse community. It was a shock for Magno in the beginning because, as he says, “there were different cultures, different syntax, different vocabulary, cognates...things that were very different in the same way that I was going to impact the students. That really, really made an impression on me.”

Magno fondly recalls a memory while teaching ESOL when he taught high school in Orlando. He had a student, Stephen, from Haiti that started at his school in the ninth grade. Magno notes that he came with many needs. Bullying was extremely problematic at the time, and this boy was ‘brutally’ smart but could not communicate well. “I took him under my wing and started coaching him after school and working with him, especially with reading skills,” Magno shares. When Stephen graduated from high school as the valedictorian, he mentioned Magno in his speech by sharing his appreciation for his ESOL teacher who was “always there, helping me.” Although years passed, he maintained communication with Stephen through social media. Stephen still felt Magno impacted his life quite significantly when he invited Magno to his graduation as a medical doctor. Unfortunately, Magno recalls, he was unable to attend due to his father’s passing. Magno will always cherish that memory.

Rewarding is the word that describes Magno’s passion for teaching ESOL. “Not only learning the language but getting the cultural thing and getting to understand the students when they come from different cultures. It’s one thing in knowing the language but coming from another place and looking at things in a different way, from a different perspective.” Being that

person that can guide students who look up to the teacher because the ESOL teacher understands where the student is coming from is what drives Magno as a teacher. “In my particular case, I am a second language learner myself.” Fluent not only in his native language of Spanish, he knows a little bit of French. Working with students of other cultures, Magno understands his students’ backgrounds and their struggles. “I get to understand their personalities. They all have their particular way of learning the language.”

Telles

An English language learner himself, Telles does not recall much about the process. His parents tell him he went through an extended silent period due to problems he faced determining which language he should speak. Upon starting kindergarten, it was suggested that Telles work with a speech pathologist. This proved to help Telles work through his L1 and begin working on his L2, which was Spanish. Telles feels that it was not a positive experience at first. He faced incredible peer pressure due to his inability to express complete thoughts. None of his siblings required ESOL services because they were fully bilingual. Telles states that his biggest issue was code-switching the two languages, which he laughingly references as *Spanglish*. Absent from his language instruction was an ESOL teacher. The speech pathologist served as the ESOL teacher who was also bilingual. Amusingly, he even remembers her name, Ms. Rivera, and what she looked like. Telles first learned English and then Spanish.

Born in Queens, New York, Telles lived in the Bronx for five years. His family moved to Puerto Rico, where he was raised and educated beginning in kindergarten through his postgraduate years. His parents are native Puerto Ricans. Attending a private school, kindergarten through ninth grade, there were few students of other cultures other than Puerto Ricans. The majority of textbooks used in school were in English even though the school did not incorporate bilingual immersion in English.

Telles fondly recollects attending school with two siblings in the same circumstances as he and his brother. They attended elementary, middle, and high school together. Coincidentally, one of the siblings now lives close to Telles in the suburban area of Savannah. He had positive relationships with friends as a child.

Attending a Christian school, Telles never had any stereotypical beliefs of others from diverse cultures. He claims he retained those innocent ideals but never understood the concept of war. He and his friends could not understand how hard it was to converse with others because, to them, they all lived in the “same world.” In his view, “Everybody likes to pursue and have the right to happiness.”

The Job Chose Him

Rushing from his other school, Telles seems a bit flustered. His quiet classroom, neat and organized with work ready for his students, is small yet comfortable. He grabs some snacks from his lunch box, including an orange, yogurt, and a protein bar along with a bottle of water. Peeling and eating the juicy orange, and taking a sip of water, he shares his experiences teaching ESOL.

Having taught in only one school system in the six years he started in his current school district, Telles laughs when he shares why he chose to teach ESOL. “I didn’t! I was hired in this school district to teach P.E. and my position was eliminated due to a reduction in force, but I have ESOL education experience because my former job was working in an English immersion school. We needed to be ESL certified or with a degree to work in that school.”

Although he did not choose the job and the job chose him, he feels joy when he sees his ESOL students working in an environment where they feel comfortable. Telles feels that one particular first grade student at a former school in his first year of teaching ESOL made an impact on him because they were acquiring experience at the same time. For Telles, it was his first year teaching ESOL and, for the boy, it was the first time he was in an American school

acquiring English. Rayni's teacher at the time argued that he did not master his kindergarten skills and should be retained. The principal, who had an ESL background, disagreed, which supported Telles' view of the possible retention. Although Rayni moved after completing the third grade, his language level showed that he was performing at the same level or better than his English-speaking peers.

Passion for teaching ELs is due to the growth Telles sees. "I can see how they [ESOL students] come with that insecurity, that barrier of low self-esteem or no confidence in their skills, intimidated by their culture. How I help them to go through that dual barrier because of the same anxiety, the same fear, the same motivation is not a barrier from just the students' perspective but from the teacher that is working with them, with the lack of skills, too. Those are two barriers we have to breakthrough."

Data Collection

My methods for data collection were through direct interaction with the participants by conducting individual in-depth interviews utilizing audio recording, taking detailed field notes of their responses, and asking participants for written documentation received from their school leaders about their job. This triangulated the data and provided a more comprehensive view of my participants' perceptions.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe that interviews with each participant will provide rich and detailed data, allowing me to understand the participants' lived world with respect to interpretation of the experiences. The qualitative research interview aims to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, describe the meaning of their experiences, and reveal their lived world. They continue by stating the interviewer should be inquisitive, receptive to what is said, and critical of his or her assumptions and views during the interview. Freire (1993) suggests that as researchers,

It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather dialogue with the people about their view...We must realize that their view of the world, manifested variously in their action, reflects on their *situation* in the world. (p. 96).

Information shared was based on the participants' teaching experiences while incorporating an unbiased perspective and respecting their views even though they may differ from my own.

Lambert (2012) proposes that researchers should dig deep when interviewing participants by actively engaging with them by prompting, probing, seeking reasons, and inquiring about specific examples. Also discussed are the advantages and disadvantages of interviewing participants. Advantages include adapting questions from one participant to another, enabling a researcher to identify information that is the most useful. Disadvantages include keeping the interview on track and agreeing with my participants' views rather than taking a neutral stance.

In addition to interviews, Merriam (2009) suggests that all types of documents can aid the researcher in exposing meaning, generate understanding, and uncover insights applicable to the research problem. Lambert (2012) believes there are advantages and disadvantages in using documents as a form of data collection. Advantages include making use of existing data and identifying cultural values and practices. Disadvantages include the confidentiality or copyright to access documents or if the documents are not primary sources reflecting actual situations.

To begin data collection, a timetable was formulated for scheduling the in-depth participant interviews. Because my interviews were semi-structured, it included questions created before the actual interviews. Interview questions were sent to each participant via email before the scheduled interviews. Interviews were recorded for accuracy, detailed field notes were taken, written documentation from participants' school leaders was discussed, and results were written using a narrative form.

Interviews took place after school hours at a place determined by the participant. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 work in schools in the northern suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia. Participants 5 and 6 both work in a suburb of Savannah, Georgia. Each interview took one and a half to three hours. At the beginning of each interview, a letter of consent was given to the participant and the purpose of the study was explained. Then, the list of open-ended questions was reviewed with the participant, and clarifications were made if misunderstandings arose. All information from the interviews is stored using computer software. This information will be stored in a secure place in the researcher's residence for future reference for approximately three years. Interviews were transcribed, and results were sent to the participants for review via U.S. mail. If participants had questions or concerns, they contacted me through text or email, and then we discussed clarifications over the phone. Participants were asked to sign a receipt of acknowledgment after reading their responses. This allowed each participant to affirm that the summary documented from the interview accurately reflected their views and experiences.

Data Analysis

The primary focus was on the emergent major themes and categories of the in-depth interviews, handwritten notes, written documentation obtained from participants, and direct interaction with the participants. Once interviewing was completed, the answers supplied by the participants were transcribed and cross-referenced with handwritten notes taken during the interview sessions to look for similarities and differences. Completed responses were then shared with the participants for accuracy. McMillan (2004) references this "member checking" as a "useful method of enhancing reliability (p. 278)." Merriam (2009) also references member checking as "respondent validation," where the researcher requests feedback on emerging results (p. 217). In a study conducted by Candela (2019), the member checking process was crucial to precisely depict participants' voices. In educational research, member checking can be used for

reflection by aiding the participants to think through their experiences and how they can integrate what was learned in their classrooms. The author contends that member checking is not only used for validity measures but could also be used as a reflective tool for the participants to refine their practice.

Reporting the Data

Once data was collected, a narrative inquiry was employed and delineated across each common theme to share my participants' experiences through their stories. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) reference narrative inquiry as the ideal manner of representing and understanding experience due to collaboration between researcher and participants, occurrences through time and in places, and in social interaction within settings. The authors claim that the phrase *experiencing the experience* is a reminder that the goal of narrative inquiry is understanding and *making meaning* of an experience. When embarking on research into experience, one is experiencing it inward and outward, backward, and forward. One makes inquiries, obtains interpretations, and writes research text that focuses on both personal and social issues by looking at past and future events.

Schaafsma & Vinz (2011) maintain that narrative inquiry is especially beneficial in exploring daily teaching and learning as well as acquiring numerous viewpoints on the way we and others experience education. They go on to propose that narrative in educational research is a way of analyzing theoretical and practical problems of human actions through subjectivity, experience, and culture.

Relating the experiences of people is a way to view the world through a distinct lens in a precise context, which depicts the most essential way in which knowledge is revealed (Carger, 2005). My objective as a narrative researcher was to develop strong portrayals of human

experience that serve as a foundation for administrators to view and understand diverse students through a distinct, culturally proficient lens.

Reliability

Significant requirements I followed to show reliability within my study entailed data collection and analysis enhanced by detailed field notes, interview transcriptions that were reviewed for accuracy by participants, documented communication of participants with school leaders, supplying sufficient and necessary participant quotations, and thorough descriptions of their body language and emotions. My goal was to provide findings that were authentic, original, and reliable. It is important to note Merriam's (2009) belief that reliability is challenging in the social sciences, primarily because human behavior is never static. With numerous interpretations of events taking place, there are no standards in which to repeat measures in establishing reliability as in traditional research.

Limitations of the Study

With any research study, there are always possible limitations that may occur. Since my inquiry was based on the cultural proficiency of school leaders, participants may have been hesitant to answer interview questions based on their rapport with the school leaders. Before conducting the interviews, I encouraged participants to respond objectively and without bias and prejudice.

When providing the participants with a copy of my analysis that prompted their reactions through the member checks, there may have been some indifference regarding how their interview was interpreted and how it may affect them. Although my goal was to provide a positive, reflective experience, I did not want the results to be harmful to them.

Ethical issues I considered were informed consent, withdrawal from the study, confidentiality, and anonymity. Additionally, as a qualitative researcher, it was important to understand that my personal opinions and perspectives could affect the study's findings.

This study has some limitations that future studies might address. First of all, the research's sample size was small, consisting of only six teachers. Accordingly, more studies are encouraged to include larger study groups to generalize the views of the participants to the vast majority. Secondly, the results of this study might differ from other geographical contexts of other states. Comparably, studies may be conducted to have views of teachers in different cities and states to compare the results. Lastly, the present research was designed to depict the views of teachers about cultural proficiency among school leaders. However, other research might comparatively analyze the perceptions of not only teachers but how school leaders analyze their own culturally proficient behaviors as well as students' perceptions of cultural proficiency among school leaders.

CHAPTER 4

A CULTURALLY PROFICIENT LENS

Throughout the analysis of the participants' perceptions on the topic of the dissertation, I always kept in mind Merriam's (2009) suggestions that because some documents are created for reasons other than for the purpose of the study, resourcefulness is needed to find documents that focus on the problem and then in analyzing their subject matter. As a result of the study, the following four major and distinct themes emerged: 1. School administrators' awareness of cultural diversity; 2. School administrators' organizational cultural and structure of schools; 3. Level of administrative support regarding the ESOL program; 4. School administrators' engagement with ESOL teachers, students, and parents. The process of reviewing the common themes is referenced by Saldaña (2015) as *sorting* where themes are produced based on patterns of a word or phrase that is repetitive or consistently occurs in the transcription. These patterns can be characterized by resemblance, variances, regularity, order, consistency, and connection.

Theme 1: School Administrators' Awareness of Cultural Diversity

"Do we have enough to make a subgroup?" is a question forever ingrained in my head regarding English learners in the ESOL program and the principal's lack of awareness regarding cultural diversity. School leaders must establish the process of cultural awareness that will educate, encourage tolerance, and promote an appreciation for diversity in the school culture (National Association of Elementary School Principals, n.d.). Lindsey, Roberts, and CampbellJones (2005) believe the increasing diversity and pluralism in schools necessitate social competence of educational leaders in a manner that establishes respect, understanding, justice, and concern for students who are culturally dissimilar to them whether it be racially and ethnically, linguistically, in their beliefs, or through varied ways of expressing their cultural identities. This is significant because, as an educational leader, distinguishing responses and

reactions to cultural identities of students profoundly affects what students learn and how they learn it. Moreover, a leader's responses and reactions to difference, consciously or subconsciously, can be demonstrated in numerous ways that range from devastating a student's perceptions of cultural identity to augmenting and highlighting a student's individuality.

Responses and reactions of school administrators' awareness of cultural diversity were found in the answers of the participants. Of the six participants, perceptions of the levels of cultural diversity among their school leaders varied widely. Both Binoc and Suni have culturally diverse school principals, so their perceptions differed from the other participants. Although Binoc and Suni have diverse school leaders, they also pointed out that there are other diverse faculty members at their schools as well.

It is important to note, Cami believed her school leaders make strong attempts to keep an open mind about diversity, yet she claimed that they "have no idea what is going on," when addressing the learning needs of the diverse learners. Furthermore, all participants except Binoc believed their school leaders do not address the learning needs of students. She felt her principal continuously has discussions with the staff to address diverse learners' educational needs; however, she stated her school leaders do not care about professional training regarding teaching the diverse learners, nor would they ever make an individualized effort to complete year-long diversity training themselves.

Although Packson's multicultural night is an important cultural event, Eyelee stated that her school leaders neither promote these events, nor are they involved because they are "just there." While Binoc and Suni have heard their school leaders make stereotypical comments, Suni stressed that these comments were made by a former administrator at a different school. Magno, Telles, and Suni all confirmed that their school leaders have never negatively referenced students due to their place of origin.

Overall responses indicated there is unawareness of principals' cultural diversity in the areas of understanding cultural backgrounds, addressing learning needs, and promoting cultural events. I agreed with many of my participant's responses, such as a school leaders' lack of effort to learn about the students and the cultural backgrounds from which they come as well as the lack of knowledge of the ESOL program. Furthermore, I have the same opinion as Cami who stated that school administrators do not understand that fully acquiring a language can take five to seven years in addition to the expectation that diverse learners should be held accountable for the same assessments of their English-speaking peers. Additionally, my thoughts coincide with Magno's concerns advocating for the diverse learners and the need for cultural diversity training that all faculty members should attend. Equally important is addressing concerns about ESOL students, which Cami expressed was an issue-I concurred because all of my concerns seem to fall on deaf ears. Also, I agreed with Telles's thoughts about misconceptions that must be acknowledged to address student needs and, finally, with Eyelee and Cami who both mentioned cultural events and the lack of administrators' involvement-they always fall on my shoulders to organize the cultural events.

Understanding Diversity

Eyelee states that her teaching experience in two different culturally diverse schools has shown her that while teaching at Tutland the various school administrators made little to no attempts in learning about the diverse students within the school, nor did they show interest in the ESOL program. While working at Packson, Eyelee has worked with two administrators-Penny for six years and Bethany for 12 years. Penny, a hardworking and dedicated principal, is always visible and actively engaged with faculty and students. Bethany, a lazy and somewhat concealed assistant principal, stays in her office for most of the day. Is there an intimidation factor among the school leaders at Packson? Eyelee laughingly says, "Oh, maybe because

Bethany is stoic and looks like a grumpy old woman. It's a good cop, bad cop situation. Penny is always the good cop." While administrators have differing leadership traits, the Packson administrators are very attuned to one aspect of the ESOL program-testing the ESOL students.

Attempting to learn about the diverse students and cultures at Mester is something Cami feels the school leaders make strong attempts to do by getting to know the families and bringing them into the school, whereas Suni feels that to learn more about diverse students school leaders should learn about the cultures of the students. Ritha, her current principal, is more of an expert on Asian cultures, as well as Indian and Pakistani cultures. Suni believes that Ritha makes sure that if she does not know something, she will hire someone who does. It will help her grow in Suni's opinion. "I think she hires purposefully-to have diversity, but, at the same time, she's learning so much from those people." Now, with her current principal, Suni feels Ritha is open and understanding of differences. Suni's perception replicates the thoughts of Cooper et al. (2011) who point out that school leaders who distinguish diversity will develop methods in extending their capacity of the socio-cultural values comparable with diversity, be conscious in cross-cultural interactions, and employ transformative action for equity in education. Ritha travels a lot, too, so that opens another door of possibilities and another door of understanding. This is quite the oxymoron of her former administrators who hired similar-looking teachers. As Suni describes them, she laughs. "I called them the Barbie dolls because they were all tall, thin, and blonde. I feel like the school was all about fluff and public relations." Laughing, Suni shares that the Barbie dolls are gone now. The next two school leaders were more culturally aware, and more diverse faculty members were hired. Ritha hired all types of people from all walks of life because, as Suni describes, "That is the REAL world." Suni's thoughts of her current assistant principal are limited because she just started this school year, and Suni has had limited interaction with her thus far.

While Magno believes his school administrators at Dilmont do not necessarily know the names of the diverse learners he works with, they do know that students come from Belize and the vast majority from Puerto Rico. Mrs. Hopson and Dr. Willco may not know them by name when seeing the diverse students in the hallway or classrooms, but they do if the students are struggling when Student Support Team (SST) meetings are held and for special meetings. Magno firmly believes that school leaders should get to know these diverse learners better. Other than meetings about a child's academic deficiencies, Magno does not see that his school administrators make attempts to share daily dialogue with the diverse learners at Dilmont. Magno's perceptions parallel those of Lindsey et al. (2009) who believe when a value for diversity occurs, matters evolving from cultural differences materialize, are explored, and defined as part of advancing communication, problem-solving measures, and collaboration.

Understanding Cultural Backgrounds

Understanding the cultural backgrounds of students is something Cami feels her school leaders try their best to understand by keeping an open mind. Perceived attitudes of her school leaders at Mester are that they "have no idea what is going on, especially with the Macy program." She firmly believes that they do not understand that language can take five to seven years to acquire. "I think they just don't understand it is a process and we have to be patient." Cami's perception reflects the thoughts of August et al. (2010) who point out that school leaders may have unrealistic expectations about a student's language attainment and that acquiring academic language skills and mastering them takes time. She goes on to say, "These children do benefit from a program that works at their language level. I think that's what they forget." Building knowledge, interaction, respect, inclusion, and understanding of ESOL students and their parents is something that Cami feels some school leaders do and others do not.

Having worked with her current principal for 12 years and her assistant principal for less than one year, Binoc feels comfortable sharing her views primarily of her principal, Viti. Attempting to learn about diverse students and cultures at Westwood is something Binoc feels strongly about. Overall, Binoc primarily considers her principal, Viti, to understand cultural backgrounds from where English learners come and does not feel she has perceived assumptions of an English learner's place of origin. "I think she understands that different cultures are different. She respects every culture. I don't think she knows all of the ins and outs of the cultures but wants to learn and is willing to learn." Viti tries to hire people from other cultures to bring diversity to the school, so they have a better melting pot of faculty and staff. Binoc's perceptions mirror Nieto's (2004) thoughts in her book, *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*, on the issue of accepting culture by recognizing that culture and language are authentic means for learning. Despite the melting pot, Binoc wishes for a Spanish speaking school leader because that is what is needed at Westwood, a wish that may happen someday.

Knowing the backgrounds of the diverse students entering school is what Magno considers school administrators should know in their attempt to learn about the diverse learners and cultures represented at Dilmont. Additionally, he believes that they should know their students' struggles in terms of the cultural aspects but also realizes that this takes time. Engaging stakeholders in extracurricular activities, to involve the students and parents, with a goal of inclusion and being a part of the school is needed. Magno has worked with his current principal, Mrs. Hopson, for two years at Dilmont Elementary. Laughing, he says he usually gets a new principal every year. He has worked with his current assistant principal, Dr. Willco, for ten years. Understanding the cultural background from where students come is something Magno feels his school administrators do not understand. He senses they do not understand the 'whole spectrum'

he teaches or what he references as ‘the rainbow.’ Magno’s perception reflects Nieto’s (2004) philosophy that schools should find every avenue available to employ, recognize, and support the culture and language as a basis for students’ academic success. To him, school leaders believe, “Everybody speaks English, so we are good to go. We are all Americans.” He feels that his school administrators take for granted that everything is okay, and there is no need for ESOL students and their families to adjust to a new life and a new way of doing things. This could be the reason he thinks ESOL students feel intimidated by school administrators simply because they do not know anything about the cultures of the students. He says, “Sometimes if they [ESOL students] don’t see a friendly face or someone they know who greets them, they might feel intimidated. I know some of my students, especially the level ones that do not know and just arrived, are very intimidated by administrators and by some of the teachers as well.”

According to Telles, Mr. Rey and Dr. Crashen do not understand the cultural backgrounds from which the diverse English learners come. Sometimes Telles tries to explain that these students are not exposed to such a fast pace in their native countries. The students are coming from an environment that is student-centered, and the student determines the pace of the instruction. That is why it is quite shocking for Telles when these students are constantly assessed when they cannot perform.

Advocating for Diversity

Eyelee believes that advocating for diversity at Packson is essential for school administrators. Although there are usually one or two training sessions with someone from the county’s ESOL department every year, SIOP training has been implemented for all faculty members this school year, although it is unknown if the administrators are participating in the training sessions as well. Eyelee believes this training has been implemented so “the teachers know how to deal with the students because of test scores.”

It is not promoted at Dilmont, and Magno feels he is the only person that is the voice of the students when referencing advocacy for the diverse learners at his school. “I would be the voice of the students, but they only rely on how I can help or what I can do instead of doing it together. That’s what I see.” While there are other Spanish speaking faculty members at Dilmont, he is expected to explain things to the families and advocate for them because he is the ESOL teacher. “It’s part of my job. It would be better if there is involvement with the whole community-stakeholders, the teachers, and the others...and it’s not promoted, let’s put it like that. It should be promoted.”

Advocating for diverse learners is imperative at Westwood. Pull-out and push-in ESOL models are utilized to enhance instruction. Students in kindergarten through second grade are pulled out, and third through fifth-grade segments vary in the models offered depending on language acquisition levels. Binoc says, “Because students are given either model, everyone in the school has a hand in interacting with them, including those diverse students who are not in the ESOL program.” School leaders support yearly WIDA training and expect classroom teachers to incorporate the information given at this training, such as language levels, into their lesson plans. The school leaders expect all of the teachers to adapt to the needs of these students. Binoc’s perception replicates the thoughts of Coady et al. (2008) in their article, “Successful Schooling for ELLs: Principles for Building Responsive Learning Environments,” who contend that ELs are most successful when school leaders acknowledge the heterogeneity of those identified EL in the student population and respond to the needs of different learners.

Cami believes she has gone off on a tangent about her disgust of a learning program she detests and tries to refocus her attention on the school administrators she works with. One topic she thinks about is the expectations of school leaders in advocating for diverse learners. Cami thinks and says, “That’s an interesting thought because they certainly want us to differentiate in

our classroom which I highly agree with, but if you are going to pick one program, this Macy program, that has no diversity in it then there's a huge contradiction in what they are saying on one hand and what they are preaching with the other." To say Cami has strong feelings about the Macy Dakins program is a bit of an understatement.

Addressing Learning Needs

To address the learning needs of diverse learners, Cami believes school leaders, in general, expect the diverse learners to be like the other learners in classrooms as if they do not hold onto any other expectation other than what the American child is doing. Additionally, she notes that some school leaders believe diverse students should be held to all of the standards even if they do not know much English. Cami remembers a time when the teacher of the gifted program asked many questions about the diverse learners at Mester to test them for eligibility into the program. Cami was delighted to talk with the talented and gifted teacher about the possibility; however, none of the students qualified for one primary reason—a language barrier. The school administrators at Mester were not involved in this situation at all. They did not request that the talented and gifted teacher speak with the ESOL teachers about the possibility of gifted students even though an English learner can require ESOL services and be served in the gifted program at the same time. To Cami, the thought would never cross their minds.

A huge concern of Cami's is a reading and writing program she is required to teach that does not address diversity. Her concern stems from the lack of skills taught for students acquiring the English language. Cami's perception on this issue supports Shatz and Wilkinson's (2010) thoughts of explicit instruction that must be offered and supplements meaningful experiences necessary for EL success. Cami shares her frustration, "So, in this program, you need to have the background knowledge to understand what to do next, things they briefly explain. That is the problem, too. The teacher has approximately ten minutes to explain what the

task is, doesn't answer any more questions, moves on, and the students do their work." She stresses that it is very upsetting to the ESOL teachers at Mester. They do not feel their students are being treated fairly, and it is not a productive program. The name of the program? Macy Dakins, as in the same program Eyelee speaks of negatively.

A few years ago, Cami spoke up and addressed her concerns with the school leaders. She spoke out about how she thought the program was terrible for the ESOL students after having observed it in the classrooms and seeing the blank looks on every ESOL student's face. Speaking with the students, Cami states, "They had no concept of what to do, and all that did was put me in a problem way with the administrators. I don't understand! I thought we were there to help the children. Apparently, they did not want to hear this because they've invested quite a lot of money in this program. Actually, it's really sad. It's a moneymaker, that's what I say." Cami states that the Macy program was supposed to come up with a unique ESOL component of the program, but Cami has yet to see this unique ESOL program. Adamant about the lack of content for ESOL students, Cami stresses, "The kids that I was with are just treated as part of the group. They had no clue what they were doing. When I went back to their table to help them, they didn't know vocabulary words such as *elaborate* because it was never explained. It's just a very confusing problem for them." Cami feels very strongly about this subject, an intense dislike for the Macy Dakins program. Cami's perception mirrors that of August et al. (2010) who contend that learning and acquiring English that incorporates comprehensible content instruction in English is the prevailing goal of English language development.

While the faculty may be more diverse at Northbend with a variety of languages, Suni believes school leaders' concern regarding the ongoing learning needs of diverse students should not always imply a language barrier but more of an underlying disability. Suni believes it is not the fault of her school leaders but more so with the school district. "It all boils down to money

and how it's going to ding the schools." Suni will refer students to the Student Support Team when she feels students are not learning at the rate they should be. Suni recalls a student who was born in the United States, went to Pre-Kindergarten, and has been at Northbend for several years where he has been exposed to the English language since birth, yet academic levels have not progressed. While Suni believes the school leaders at Northbend are doing their best to meet this child's needs by referring the student to the Student Support Team, the requirement of integrating interventions for nine to twelve weeks leaves their hands tied. To Suni, it is not their fault because they are just following protocol.

Addressing the ongoing learning needs of diverse learners is also important to Binoc. She feels Viti has constant discussions with the staff, discusses demographics, what is needed to address diverse learners' educational needs, and support needed from the regular classroom teachers. Viti, always engaging in dialogue with the ESOL teachers, wants them to feel supported to support the school's diverse learners. Binoc's perception echoes the ideas of Coady et al. (2008) who believe ELs are most successful when school leaders recognize that educating ELs concerns the entire school staff and school leaders' support of ELs is viewed as the inclusion of the school's vision, goals, and reform strategies.

Part of adapting to a diverse learner's needs is by incorporating the SIOP model. While the entire staff at Westwood has never been trained in SIOP, Binoc has been trained and believes the school leaders do not care about professional training concerning teaching the diverse learners, nor would they ever make an individualized effort to complete the year-long training sessions themselves. According to Binoc, the school leaders do not feel SIOP training is "beneficial for our school." The only training Westwood's school leaders are concerned about has to do with state- mandated testing, which is WIDA. For Westwood's school leaders,

professional development regarding diversity entails expectations that the ESOL teachers will redeliver the information from training sessions they attend.

Expectations of addressing the ongoing learning needs of diverse students, despite the school administrator's guidance, are initiated when culturally diverse students are given the time to work with the teachers. Along the same lines, classroom teachers need more training to work with diverse students and learn about diverse cultures. Magno believes that sometimes his quarterly meetings are useful, and having meetings with a direct focus on helping the teachers know where diverse students are coming from and how better to assist them is training that should be a priority.

“Not one administrator that I have worked with has the full concept of what an ELL student is and what are actually their needs,” claims Telles. His perceptions echo Terrell and Lindsey's (2009) notions of cultural blindness whereby the cultural differences of students are insignificant, and many students feel disregarded at school. Because Telles is split between two elementary schools every day, Murphy and Caster, he does not always see his current administrators. He has worked with Dr. Crashen for four years and Mr. Rey for two years. For both schools, Telles feels that there are many misconceptions that must be clarified and addressed for a school to provide an effective program for diverse students. However, he does feel there are things out of his school administrators' control that are just operationally standard procedures that cannot address circumstances at the time the students require ESOL services. In addressing the ongoing learning needs of diverse students, Telles is aware that professional collaboration with the homeroom teachers takes place. Short term goals are established, but Telles is rarely involved with this process. Ideally, there should be a review team in place to discuss goals for diverse students comprised of the ESOL teacher, the homeroom teacher, the school counselor, administrators, and an additional faculty member who interacts with the

students. However, much of this dialogue with teachers or other faculty members regarding diverse students occurs in the hallways or classroom. The review team never meets at his current schools, but it was an expected practice at his former school. They would meet once per quarter to identify, discuss, and revise practices that were already in place when identifying accommodations, modifications, and interventions. Telles prefers formal conversations rather than discussions in the hallway.

Promoting Cultural Events

Promoting cultural events for Multicultural Night at Mester are tasks the ESOL teachers and parent liaison complete. To Cami, this is a big event for the entire school where parents and kids share their diverse cultures by providing food. Cami's perception echoes the ideas of Garcia (2011) whereby students are encouraged to promote their cultural heritage through social interaction. However, the school leaders neither actively promote this event, nor are they active participants. "Basically, they just stand and watch us do it," laughs Cami.

Dilmont has no special multicultural celebrations. "We could celebrate, but we don't. We kind of overlook that." Magno's administrators have never asked him to organize an event such as Hispanic Heritage Month in the ten years he has worked in the school system. In the past, he helped the Spanish teacher who organized the event. Even then, the school administrators were passive observers rather than active participants. Magno says, "I don't even remember if they were there to be honest." Additionally, promoting events and celebrations reflecting various cultures in the school is not something Telles' school leaders do. They have an idea to organize an event, but no one takes the initiative to do it.

One important cultural event Packson organizes is a multicultural night, which Eyelee says the parents are "super involved because they all bring food" from their culture. Eyelee's perception on this issue supports similar notions of Garcia (2011) in his book *Teaching*

Diversity: A Guide to Greater Understanding because when students are proud of their cultural heritage, it develops students' self-identities of ideals, views, and convictions learned from others in their culture. Disappointing is how the school administrators are involved with this big school event because they are "just there," just present, just another body... "probably because they have to be there," Eyelee states without hesitation. They do not assist with the event, nor do they actively engage in conversation with the parents. Eyelee maintains, "I think it's really difficult for them due to the language barrier."

Stereotypical Comments

References about students' ethnic diversity have occurred, and stereotypical comments have been made at Westwood. Binoc has witnessed her principal using some of these comments, which she believes stems from Viti's cultural background. "Honestly, my principal is from India, and typically, in her mind, the children and parents from India and are well educated and do not need special education services because they usually take care of that at home or help to fix it at home." Binoc's perception on the issue of cultural appreciation and understanding reflects the point made by Barrera et al. (2003) to respond to diversity with positivity by excluding adverse judgments. Referring to a situation with a young student who needed help academically, a conference was held whereby Viti was also the interpreter for the parents. Immersed in this dialogue about the child's challenges in school, Viti finally understood the need for additional help and special education testing. That was eye-opening for Binoc. While Viti supported Binoc and the other ESOL teachers after assuming the student was fine due to the Indian culture, Viti finally saw the data and became aware of the issues. Laughing, Binoc shares Viti's response, "I see where you're coming from, I see, I see, I see." Awareness is the key...

To be culturally proficient, school leaders need to abstain from stereotypical comments about diversity. Surprisingly, Suni has experienced bias and prejudicial comments from school

leaders but not from the Northbend school leaders. She stresses that her current school leaders would never make these comments. Angrily, Suni recalls a time when a former administrator told her to call ICE (Immigration Customs Enforcement) when there were issues with a diverse student. The student had a learning disability upon entering middle school, and the principal made no attempts toward equity and inclusion. Suni was shocked! “That’s why I had to leave that school,” she said, still angry about the situation. Her perception reflects the seriousness of this issue, as explained by Terrell and Lindsey (2009) who believe one’s assumption of dominance and behavior of one’s culture disempowers another’s culture by showing intense bias and often represented by ignorance.

While Magno has never heard stereotypical comments about diversity made by his school administrators, he feels the reason is that he is Hispanic. Overall, though, he does not consider his school administrators value diversity and do not make inclusion a goal to be achieved. He believes, “They could do better.”

Students’ Place of Origin

Magno has not observed school leaders’ possible perceived notions of a student’s place of origin, but he feels that students who enter his school from Puerto Rico are lagging academically in math compared to those of their English speaking peers and that is something that could negatively influence his school leaders’ perceptions of an ELs place of origin. Knowing where the students come from is something Magno feels strongly about. “They aren’t sure where they come from, but if they know the students struggle then they might have that perception.” His perception reflects that of Purcell-Gates (2002) who believes interpretations among children as ‘deficit’ or ‘different’ are contingent upon preconceptions, attitudes toward, and stereotypes held toward the individual group’s culture.

Perceiving ELs based on their place of origin is not something Telles is aware of but says his school leaders prefer to have kids with some proficiency in the English language. He references a situation that happened this school year when a student was placed in first grade despite the fact he could not read or write. It was all about age-the student turned six in October and should have been in kindergarten rather than being placed in first grade. The principal refused and placed him back in kindergarten. “I feel like they did discriminate against the student due to his culture,” Telles recalls.

The ESOL students seem to feel comfortable in their learning environment at Northbend, and Suni has never witnessed any intimidation the students may feel about the school leaders. Suni stresses that she has also never seen any evidence of a school leader’s perceived notions of an EL’s country of origin and treatment of those students. While Suni believes everyone makes assumptions about a person’s culture, it is all about education and learning about those different cultures that sets her principal apart from others. “Ritha is a world traveler, so she exposes herself to other cultures. I feel that I’ve been very fortunate to work at Northbend.” Suni’s perception reflects similar thoughts of Terrell and Lindsey (2009) who believe school leaders must possess a transformational paradigm that views their work as to how they affect the educational experiences of people culturally different from themselves.

Theme 2: School Administrators’ Organizational Culture and Structure of Schools

Janićijević (2011) defines organizational culture as “a system of assumptions, values, norms, and attitudes manifested through symbols which the members of an organization have developed and adopted through mutual experience and which help them determine the meaning of the world around them (p. 72).” Organizational culture is intrinsic, operating from within, and entails beliefs and mutual experience, standards, and perspectives that the organization’s

members share, thereby affecting how organization members ascertain and understand the world as well as how they behave.

On the other hand, the organizational structure is an extrinsic factor that guides people's behavior externally. Organizational structure is defined as "a relatively stable, either planned or spontaneous, pattern of actions and interactions that organization members undertake for achieving the organization's goals (Janićijević, 2013, p. 37)." Therefore, one's behavior in an organization is due to the impact of its culture and structure. Identifying the mutual influence of organizational culture and structure is essential for a general understanding of an organization's members and their behaviors (Janićijević, 2013). This is important because the organizational culture and structure determine a schools' perceived organizational effectiveness and academic achievements. A principal's leadership can contribute significantly to the prediction of a school's strength of organizational culture, especially when there is a shared school vision, specific goals and priorities have been developed, and collaborative school culture is established.

Responses and reactions of the school administrators' organizational culture and structure of schools were identified in the answers of the participants. This suggests that other teachers have related issues of cultural diversity within their schools. For instance, Eyelee had positive perceptions of administrators, including parents in decisions about policies and procedures. Conversely, Telles felt that school leaders should increase their effort to address protocols regarding testing ESOL students new to the country.

Furthermore, recognizing equity, inclusion, and student achievement of culturally diverse students is equally distributed. Eyelee stated that ESOL teachers have to address everything pertaining to ESOL at Packson because the task always falls upon them, whereas Magno felt equity, inclusion, and student achievement should be addressed by the entire staff. Cami stated that equity, inclusion, and student achievement are at the forefront of her school leaders' minds

specifically because the entire staff is enrolled in SIOP courses for the year. Telles added that misconceptions of ESOL students could be addressed when administrators equitably include all diverse students by recognizing their achievements with the entire faculty so misconceptions can be simplified.

Both Eyelee and Binoc agreed that inclusion is the primary goal of addressing ESOL students' needs. On the contrary, Cami, Suni, and Magno all agreed that their school leaders do not prioritize professional development essential to cultural proficiency. There is awareness on the part of the school leaders that inclusion of ESOL students should be a priority; however, there is a lack of organizational cultural structure regarding professional development that emphasizes cultural proficiency as essential.

My thoughts about adapting policies, procedures, and practices to include diverse students and their parents coincide with those of Telles because revising protocols and rules is not something routinely done. Moreover, I agreed with Eyelee who shared that her school administrators always delegate professional development relating to cultural diversity to those professionals who work with diverse students. My views corresponded to those of Magno regarding the recognition of assumptions and opinions about equity, inclusion, and student achievement and its involvement of the entire staff. Last, my views are in accordance with Suni and Magno's regarding the lack of professional development familiarizing oneself to different cultures and backgrounds-supporting professional development is not something my school leaders focus on.

Adapting Policies and Procedures

Adapting school policies and procedures by school administrators at Packson is something Eyelee is uncertain of but feels school administrators want to include diverse parents

into the school culture though they do not know how. The language barrier is most likely the reason, according to Eyelee.

Revising the protocols and the rules regarding assessment is one-way school leaders could advocate for diverse learners in Telles's opinion. "A student new to the culture and language should not be exposed to any of those kind of hectic assessments until at least 12 months after instruction, or until they have reached the next proficiency level so they can understand the expectations of a question or what they are being asked." Telles's perception replicates the point that Shatz and Wilkinson (2010) make regarding the language skills of ELs and how those skills affect their test-taking abilities in all content areas due to home and community experiences that develop their perspectives about learning and the impact of language on their learning.

Adapting policies, procedures, and practice to include diverse students and their parents is not something routinely done at either of Telles's schools. School leaders intend to create extracurricular programs for inclusion such as Spanish Club and Hispanic Heritage Month, but few faculty members are willing to conduct the activity. Regarding curriculum, Telles shares his frustration, "The program guide hasn't been updated since 2007. I heard that it is being revised and they are working on it. It needs to be revised." With students in the first level of language immersion, Telles feels ESOL students need more than one intervention, or segment of ESOL, per day. He provides the services the best way he can under the guidelines, but to him, it is not enough. Telles feels exasperated when his school leaders ask the ESOL Instructional Support Staff questions about ESOL even though he has already answered their questions per the program guide. "It's my baseline. I don't state anything different than what our school district's practices are because they are the only ones I have learned. There's a certain ignorance in how I teach...the actual program."

Recognizing Equity, Inclusion, and Student Achievement

Encouraging staff members to recognize equity, inclusion, and student achievement of culturally diverse students seems to be the job of the ESOL teachers and bilingual parent liaison. School administrators at Packson always delegate professional development relating to cultural diversity to those professionals who work with diverse students. “We always have to do it!” When asked why, Eyelee laughs and says, “Isn’t that what leaders do? Get someone else to do the job?” Other than SIOP training that is being conducted throughout this school year by specifically SIOP trained staff, Eyelee feels that any other training will only be organized and conducted by the ESOL department at her school.

Equity, inclusion, and student achievement are at the forefront of the school leaders’ minds at Mester. The entire staff is completing SIOP training this school year to comprehend how language objectives are intertwined with the regular education curriculum, although Cami is uncertain if the school leaders will participate in the training themselves. Densely populated with Latinos, Cami feels that all diverse students are included in everything that Mester offers and are encouraged to participate in all types of programs. Her perceptions coincide with White and Jones (2011) who maintain that school leaders who recognize and advocate inclusive practices in schools impose systems of distinct expectations for processes and practices, respond to the needs of those working with diverse learners, and distinguish positive and negative outcomes that may require change.

Recognizing assumptions and opinions about equity, inclusion, and student achievement should involve the entire staff because diverse students are continually entering the school. These students come from different cultural backgrounds with different needs. “We overlook certain things that are vital in the learning process,” Magno says. “First of all, I would think we have to create the culture of the school as part of the school routine that the students need to be

incorporated in our daily announcements. We need to keep in mind that bias might be viewed within some cultures,” he adds.

Encouraging staff members to recognize assumptions and opinions about equity, inclusion, and student achievement of culturally diverse students must first begin by educating the faculty so misconceptions can be clarified, according to Telles. “It can be addressed. Not every teacher understands that other teachers are language teachers as well. They have to be willing to provide modifications in the classroom and accommodate these students. They need to understand that there’s only one way to acquire any language and it’s not the same way that kids receive instruction but any information comprehensible for the ELL-that needs to be addressed.” Telles aids the teachers by providing the information about the program to the teachers as well as helping them understand the levels of students’ language proficiency levels for them to differentiate and provide alternatives in modifying students’ work. Telles firmly believes strategies and ideas in working with ELs should be provided through professional development. “I think that it would be great to educate them in the process and the administrators, too.” Telles’s perception reflects Ainscow’s (2008) belief that attempts to develop inclusive schools should focus on developing inclusive cultures and inclusive values in the school community whereby school leaders should be selected and trained, taking into consideration their adherence to inclusive principles and their capacity to lead in a participatory manner.

Inclusion as a Primary Goal

Inclusion is a primary goal to meet the needs of culturally diverse students at Packson. The administrators are “really, really big on having the ESOL teachers push-in to the classroom” for instruction. Eyelee, once again, emphasizes, “It was the big goal to the point where they really wanted the kids in the classroom and with the rest of the population.” Pushing into classrooms at Packson means the ESOL teachers must work with the general population of

students in addition to their own ESOL students, a model that is not always conducive to the learning needs of English language learners.

Despite the lack of direct involvement with diverse parents and guardians, school leaders at Westwood value diversity and focus on inclusion as a goal. To begin with, the staff is very diverse. Secondly, Binoc feels something new the school leaders implemented this school year is a beginning to encourage Westwood's culturally diverse population to feel included and comfortable in the school environment. Binoc's perception on this issue supports similar concerns of Ryan (2003) in his book *Leading for Diverse Schools* about purposeful inclusion and the advancement of inclusive communities. They implemented a cultural bulletin board, and its purpose is to highlight a cultural topic every month such as Hispanic Heritage Month. The school leaders did come up with the idea, as Binoc shares, "Hey, let's have a little corner where we spotlight different cultures at our school," but says with a hint of sarcasm, "We are responsible for the follow-through."

Professional Development

Other than SIOP training sessions, the school leaders at Mester are only attuned to the Macy Dakins program and have only offered training in that program for professional development. Cami references the Macy program as "the most important thing at school, and it's been that way for three years." The only professional development workshops offered have been centered around the Macy Dakins program. Redundant to her earlier concerns, Cami brings up her disdain towards the Macy Dakins program again. Overall, she believes her "school" has good intentions to address and promote diverse learners and thinks "they do think about the diverse students in a lot of different ways, but they're not seeing it because of this one program."

Professional development within a school is vital for all staff members who serve the students at their school, and supporting professional development that concentrates on ethnicity

is something that the school leaders at Northbend do not focus on. Suni assumes it is because Ritha is Indian, and Ann, the former assistant principal, is Jamaican. Northbend also employs other diverse faculty members. Suni's opinion is that Northwood does not have professional development workshops addressing cultural proficiency, per se, but the reason could be that there is already a strong understanding of cultural diversity within the school because of Ritha. Suni says, "The school has evolved from what it was to what it is. Is there room for improvement? Of course. There's always room for improvement, but we have come a long way." Suni's perception on this issue supports similar concerns in Shatz and Wilkinson's (2010) book, *The Education of English Language Learners: Research to Practice*, who suggest that ongoing professional development in language typologies should be organized or instructionally supported to retain the knowledge of updated trends in working with linguistically diverse students. Suni believes it would not hurt if culturally proficient workshops were implemented because she would like people to understand the physical attributes and peoples' assumptions of race. Suni feels strongly about this topic, "You have Mexicans that are blonde with blue eyes, or you have Mexicans that are a mix of Indian, black European, or a mix of European and Indian. We have lots of rainbow colors here. I would like people to understand that better. You know, we need to understand more about race, ethnicity, and nationality." Would her school leaders take a professional development class on cultural diversity without a requirement from the school district? Suni feels, "I think they would. I feel like my administrators are very open-minded. I feel like my administrators are life-long learners."

Including diverse students in all school functions stem from the lack of professional development to familiarize themselves with different cultures and backgrounds and the obstacles these students face depending on where they come from is what Magno believes. No

professional development courses specific to cultural proficiency have been offered, nor have the school administrators at Dilmont suggested that they should be offered.

“We should have something regarding getting to know some of the nationalities and backgrounds if it is in the setting we are in-get to know the cultural struggles and about the people coming from certain places,” Magno states. He tells an example after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico. “We had a prominent number of students coming here, and I had to tell the teachers that the students coming from Puerto Rico would come with a huge gap in education. They come with a lot of insecurity because of their experience and, of course, their own struggles. Coming to a different place makes it very hard.” Magno feels it would be a good idea to incorporate that in professional development so teachers could develop more empathy for those students. He believes this focus on cultural proficiency in professional development should take place at the beginning of the school year and if any other situations like Hurricane Maria occur.

Supporting and promoting professional development and concentrating on ethnicity is an idea that Telles believes his school leaders would be open to through educational and growth opportunities. “They like to take initiative when a teacher takes initiative. They like to provide that opportunity for teachers,” he says.

Theme 3: Level of Administrative Support Regarding the ESOL Program

A leader’s ability to appreciate the relationship of home language and culture of English learning students can increase efficacy when working with other educators and members of the diverse community served by the school. Awareness of this relationship can support being an effective, culturally proficient leader working with diverse language and culturally diverse settings (Quezada, et al., 2012). It is fundamental, specifically to the ESOL program, because the awareness on the part of the school leaders entails communicating expectations of staff regarding

the ESOL program, behavior toward the ESOL staff that is supportive and encouraging, and recognizing ESOL staff members for working with the diverse learners of the school.

Responses and reactions to the level of administrative support regarding the ESOL program were identified in the answers of the participants. This suggested that additional educationalists have related issues of cultural diversity within their schools. Only two teachers, Suni and Binoc, unequivocally believed their school leaders have full knowledge of the ESOL program. If they have a question, they will ask. Eyelee stated her school administrators have knowledge of WIDA and testing as it pertains to the ESOL students but know little about the adopted curriculum, nor have they shown any interest learning about the ESOL program. They hate it now, according to Eyelee. Cami said that her school leaders used the adopted ESOL curriculum with fidelity the first two years in use, but never maintained interest afterward. She discredits the Macy Dakins program as a reading program not suited for diverse learners. Cami believed ESOL teachers should speak freely without retribution regarding the needs of their students.

Magno and Telles were both in agreement that their school leaders know nothing about their ESOL curriculum, nor are they familiar with WIDA guidelines for testing. They have no interest in learning about the program either.

Responses of administrative support regarding involvement in the ESOL program all indicated there is significant unawareness. While Eyelee shared that her administrators have “a good grasp on testing,” they are extremely limited in their involvement. Eyelee shared their familiarity with the ACCESS test and the scores resulting from the assessment because this information is like the “holy grail” for them. Similarly, Binoc, Magno, and Telles felt the same, stating that the involvement of the ESOL program appears to be insignificant to the school leaders and in some cases nonexistent.

Suni is the only participant that believed her school administrators support the overall ESOL program, sharing that the ESOL teachers get whatever they need to serve the ESOL students effectively. Eyelee shared that her school leaders are so data-driven, and that is all they care about, whereas Telles said that his school leaders leave him alone. When Telles runs into “bumps,” they are usually not resolved when he addresses the issues with his school leaders. Overall, based on the participant’s responses and reactions, there was significant ignorance on the part of school leaders in all areas of administrative support regarding the ESOL program.

My views regarding support of the ESOL program conformed to those of my participants in numerous ways. I agreed wholeheartedly with Eyelee, Magno, and Telles who all stated that their school administrators know little about the ESOL program and make no attempts to learn or involve themselves in the ESOL program- “limited,” “unimportant,” and “non-existent” are the terms these participants used. Binoc made a point by stating her school leaders know the ESOL department has a curriculum and aspects of the WIDA standards and testing. While I shared that feeling, I also have the same opinion as Binoc and Cami who stated their school leaders know about WIDA’s language levels, what domains are tested, and the need for accommodations which are details that only my assistant principal knows, primarily because she is the testing coordinator for the school. Moreover, Eyelee made a great point about being held accountable for test scores when ESOL teachers only see their students 45 minutes each day per state guidelines. My perceptions paralleled those of Cami, who felt teachers should be able to speak freely about the needs of their students and voicing their concerns without retribution. Above all, I concurred with Telles who shared his frustration when attempting to communicate with his school leaders about concerns relating to his students or the ESOL program.

Knowledge of ESOL Program

In addition to the scheduling conflicts, Packson's school administrators know little about the ESOL curriculum adopted by the county. "They hate our curriculum! Hate it! They want us to do Macy Dakins with the kids!" Eyelee points out that the Macy Dakins program is a language arts and reading system used by the teachers. It is a premier system of teaching, in the eyes of the administrators, Eyelee presumes because the administrators are spending so much money on the Macy system. "They had coaches come in from the Tech College in New York twice a year, they sent teachers to trainings for Macy Dakins, and they, themselves, went to training. In May, they sent a whole group of people to New York for training. So, they spent a lot of money on it." Eyelee points out that the entire school district is implementing the Macy Dakins program now, but Packson Elementary was "one of the first schools to jump on the Macy Dakins bandwagon." About four years ago, the school district adopted a specialized ESOL curriculum from a well-known textbook publishing company. In light of the Macy Dakins program, the adopted program is not going away. Eyelee's thoughts are that the administrators cannot get rid of the adopted program, "but they are making it really hard for teachers to use it because when we push into the classrooms, we are pushing in during reading or writing and we have to teach Macy Dakins during that time."

All of the ESOL teachers at Packson share the same feeling—they hate the Macy Dakins program because "It doesn't teach kids any grammar skills." Eyelee shares her frustration with the program: "I'll just go over the writing portion of the program," she says. "I was in the upper grades and, maybe it would be easier in the lower grades, but you spend nine weeks working on narrative, nine weeks working on informational...for the narrative, you read the students portions of the story, then the teacher discusses how the author used that, and then you send the kids off to write for 45 minutes." While the students are writing, the teacher might look over their

shoulders and say, “Oh, I see that you need a little bit of help on punctuation, so come to my little group and let’s have a punctuation talk.” The problem? This program does not address the four domains of language acquisition-listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Eyelee’s view is that it fails to address the needs of the ESOL program, and they are the students who struggle the most. Eyelee’s perception somewhat parallels the notions of He et al. (2008) who reference immigrant students’ challenges of unresponsiveness in understanding language, culture, identity, and contrasting curriculum of their experiences within school settings. Eyelee discusses her aversion for the program further: “I’ve read a 4th grader’s writing, and the classroom teacher asks me to work with the student. I look at the writing and think there are so many problems with it-I don’t know where to start! There’s not one period on three pages. Grammar is not being taught, especially to the EL kids. They don’t know what’s going on.”

Eyelee continues by discussing the reading aspect of the program: “You get them into little reading groups and find them a book they are supposed to read and discuss it. Then, you send them off to read for 45 minutes.” The students read for 45 minutes independently, a rather lengthy period of time. “And we start with kindergarten kids doing that! And we pull out little groups. It is the most messed up program! None of the ESOL teachers like it!” For the ESOL students to succeed academically, Eyelee strongly points out that the students should not be taught using the Macy Dakins program.

Years ago, the school district’s ESOL coordinator was firmly against the Macy Dakins program. Now she allows the administrators to choose the program they want, which seems pointless after spending so much money on newly adopted materials specific to the ESOL program. Eyelee believes it is because the program is so expensive, which explains the reasoning for the ESOL coordinator’s change in perspective. Overall, Eyelee believes, “It’s crazy and it isn’t helping the kids at all!” Although the Macy Dakins program is in use, the adopted ESOL

materials are only being used for the kindergarten students that are in a pull-out model as well as the entering level students new to acquiring the English language. Eyelee reasons that the administrators do not make attempts to learn about the ESOL adopted materials because it is not rigorous enough. “That’s the word they LOVE to use! This isn’t rigorous enough.”

“They have an understanding,” says Suni. Her school leaders are aware of the ESOL program. They have knowledge of the ACCESS test, the WIDA language acquisition levels, and the types of ESOL services-active, waived, consult, and monitored. Suni feels that Ritha understands why some students are waived and why some students do not qualify for the ESOL program, although she may need clarification at times. She sees the results of the various assessments given, Georgia Milestones, Fast Bridge, and Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), or any other diagnostic assessment that shows progress, Ritha is okay with it. Suni believes, “She knows we are doing something with it, and it is right. It’s working.” Ritha is always asking and looking at the results. Laughing, Suni shares, “She has wallpapered her office wall with results. She is so much into data, and I have never seen a principal who knows so much about data.” Suni firmly believes that Ritha is a life-long learner.

“They do not know everything there is to know. Honestly, I don’t think I know everything there is to know,” Binoc laughs. Referencing her school leaders’ knowledge of the ESOL program, she emphatically says, “They know we have a curriculum, they know we have WIDA standards, and they know that students have different language levels and they range from 1.0 to 6.0. They know it’s listening, speaking, reading, writing, oral language, comprehension, and an overall score. They are also aware that our students need accommodations.” Because ACCESS is the WIDA developed language acquisition assessment, Binoc’s school leaders are remarkably familiar with the test and what it means for ESOL. Familiarity also resides in the fact that her school leaders know how students move through the

'bands' of ACCESS scores and how students should be moving through the bands. While her school leaders are aware of some of the good teaching strategies, they are unfamiliar with how Binoc and her ESOL colleagues plan for instruction. All they know is that lesson plans are taken from the regular classroom teachers and adapted to bridge an ESOL student's learning when the students are out of the classroom for ESOL services.

"No, no...sort of, but not much," says Magno when he thinks about the extent the school leaders know about the ESOL program at Dilmont. They have not been trained as far as the WIDA program or the ACCESS test, nor does Magno think they will be trained. They only seem to rely on Magno for any information about the initiative. The only knowledge possessed by school administrators concerning WIDA is the levels from lowest to highest, but they do not know the learning expectations at each level. School administrators in his school are not required to take any WIDA or ACCESS training.

Cami describes the ESOL curriculum and its use at Mester as "using it with fidelity for the first two years and now without such fidelity" when referencing if her school leaders know the aspects of the ESOL program. She states the school leaders had books and guides explaining the full ESOL curriculum program when it was first implemented. Her school leaders are very knowledgeable about WIDA and ACCESS testing, specifically the subtest scores and the meaning of each. "When they don't know, they ask," states Cami. In learning about the ESOL program, Cami believes they have never taken an interest in the ESOL program: "No, I've always felt within the last couple of years in this program, and in the past, they aren't very interested in our program because they don't support it. Even a couple of years ago, they wanted us to do Macy writing in our classroom rather than do the writing that was from our program. That's when I started speaking out." Other than testing, school leaders involving themselves in the ESOL program are non-existent, according to Cami.

For Binoc, her school leaders do make attempts to learn more about the ESOL program. They are interested in student success. Binoc shares a situation where Viti called her a couple of years ago about some ESOL information that she was concerned about. Binoc stresses, “It was the Friday RIGHT before Thanksgiving and she got something, I think it was CCRPI, and something was lower than the year before. Our ACCESS scores were, in my opinion, similar results. Well, I think she got something from the county whereby she was being questioned and asked me about it. I was shocked!” Binoc went home and looked at all of the 2016 and 2017 data for every single student, and stressed, “Every student!” She looked to see which student went up in scores and who went down. “I analyzed EVERYTHING! I think she was asking me more because, honestly, she didn’t know the answer. I was shocked because I never heard there was an issue that was in question. I was really shaken by it.” Binoc feels the reason she was asked about the data, other than being the lead ESOL teacher and the data contact at her school, was not intended to be confrontational but more to describe what was happening in the data. “What threw me off is because she didn’t know the answer and wanted to be able to know the answer as to what was happening if someone questioned her,” Binoc explains in a rather heated tone.

The school leaders at Dilmont make no attempts to learn about the ESOL program, nor do they ask questions about it either. They just rely on the ESOL teacher for everything. Support of the ESOL program by the school administrators is limited. While Magno rarely requests things from his school administrators, he will address issues with miscommunication by the teachers if there is a misunderstanding, such as using accommodations with the ESOL students. “I rely on them to explain to the teachers that this needs to happen. These are the accommodations, and they should happen in the classroom. For the students to be successful, they need to do this. Then, if it doesn’t happen and the student gets a bad grade, I have to go to the principal and explain the problem.” If a critical issue arises, then Magno will get the support

he needs, but sometimes it just doesn't happen. "I have to insist or rely on the parents and tell them they have rights and tell them what they can do with those rights," he claims. In Magno's view, the lack of accommodations in the classroom should not be happening, but it does. Magno firmly believes he advocates for everyone and does the 'right thing' when it comes to his students, but he feels suspicious in a way, almost naïve, to believe all of the teachers because he feels that is the culture of Dilmont-the other teachers talk negatively about others. He feels that no one has complained about him, and the parents have praised Magno repeatedly for helping them.

Knowing the aspects of the ESOL program is something Telles' school leaders know little about. As far as WIDA and the ACCESS test, Telles does not know to what extent his school leaders were trained or if they will be. They are aware of WIDA and ACCESS, ask Telles to provide evidence from trainings, and question enrollment levels.

Academic Success

Administrators at Packson pressure the ESOL teachers relentlessly to see that the academic means of students are being addressed by holding them accountable for increasing test scores, which Eyelee points out, "It isn't necessarily fair. I mean, we only see them for 45 minutes a day." Eyelee's perceived notion of academic needs and students' ability parallels that of Page (2008) in that ability should not be based on a score, rather it should be based on a student's toolbox and the value of diversity. Feeling more pressure to increase test scores at Packson than at Tutland is overwhelming. The reason is that the subgroup at Tutland was too small to be included in school-wide test data.

Students' academic success in content area classes and language acquisition should come when the ESOL teachers can speak freely about the needs of their students while discussing and voicing their concerns without retribution and showing respect regarding the years the ESOL

teachers have worked with the children in this field. Cami emphasizes, “If they would just listen to us...”

Helping ESOL students succeed academically in content area classes and language acquisition is a priority for the Northbend school leaders. Asking the classroom teachers questions about the ESOL students to make sure they are adequately addressing their language needs and downloading data to determine the language acquisition levels of the students is one reason Suni believes, “They are all in tune. They surround themselves with players...all stakeholders. Ritha is very smart in picking the people that are going to work for her. I think she surrounds herself with people she knows who are committed...people who are going to work and have her same views and goals overall. I think it is very smart on her part, too.” Suni feels that administrators who hire people with similar views and goals of their own means the school will be more successful. “I feel that in our professional community every grade level works really hard together. We are all engaged collaboratively.”

Feeling comfortable in school can aid in an ESOL student’s academic success in content area classes and language acquisition. Magno firmly believes that the limited time in working with the students is not conducive to their language learning needs. Simply put, “For the different levels we have, we need time to help them.” School administrators do not understand this. Additionally, making sure teachers are giving ESOL students the accommodations they need throughout the year rather than immediately before testing is something school administrators should be held accountable for. While Magno has attempted to communicate on what he references as ‘another level’ to come up with answers he faces teaching ESOL, his school administrators were not happy at his attempts to go ‘a step ahead’ to make them understand about the ESOL program and the struggles he faces. “I would take the initiative to talk with the administrators and see what we can do to have a better setting for the stakeholders.”

From Magno's perspective, the school administrators at Dilmont are not open to change. He suggested to a school administrator that he was willing to present ESOL information at a professional development meeting since there are so many misconceptions about the ESOL students, and she agreed, but it never happened. "That is something they could do in order to improve cultural respect," stresses Magno.

Involvement in the ESOL Program

When thinking about her school administrators' culturally proficient leadership behaviors regarding the ESOL program, Eyelee believes her current administrators "have a good grasp on what is going on." By that, Eyelee feels her administrators are knowledgeable about the WIDA Standards as well as the ACCESS test that is administered yearly during the winter semester. They are familiar with what the ACCESS test measures and always want to know the subtest scores in listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as the overall score and language acquisition levels. To Eyelee, "These scores are the holy grail" for them. Her school administrators always use the ACCESS scores, especially in the Student Support Team (SST) meetings. In professional development meetings, they stress that the scores are meaningful quantitative data limited to a short period of time for the remainder of the school year. Once students begin school in the fall, the scores are not ideal determiners in identifying the learning needs of students. "They would make a big fuss about ACCESS scores in September or October. The test was given the previous January, so what does it matter what the scores are back then? They aren't valid anymore, but they would harp on that!" states Eyelee emphatically.

However, school administrator involvement in the ESOL program is limited at Packson. "They attempt to make the schedule. In fact, they make the schedule to the point where they think they know better. I don't know if I mentioned it, but this year they wanted ESOL as all push-ins and they found out they couldn't. I told them they couldn't do that. Sure enough, our

ESOL coordinator came to the school and told them they couldn't do that. They sent out a nice 'cover my ass' email saying 'Oh, we are going to give the kids additional support by having some of them as pull-out.' Yeah," Eyelee states annoyingly. Her perception of this issue somewhat parallels those of Sox (2009) who contends school administrators should include ESL personnel in dialogue that accurately recognizes the academic skills of ELs rather than their language proficiency.

Involving themselves in the ESOL program does not appear to be an essential task for the school leaders at Westwood. Would they ever come into an ESOL classroom and teach a lesson? Binoc relishes in the idea, "For our administration, that would be an interesting situation for them because sometimes they look at what we're doing and they question it, not necessarily because they don't believe it, but they want to know why we are doing it. So, I think they learn from us. For them to be in our shoes and try to deal with what we are dealing with would be an eye-opening experience."

Involvement in the ESOL program by school administrators is virtually non-existent in Magno's opinion. He would like to assume they know he is doing the 'right thing.' Regular classroom teachers frequently tell the school administrators that Magno is working with particular students that require needs, but at the same time, the school administrators believe Magno will handle everything since he is the ESOL teacher, and he is the expert. "Let him do it," is their thought. Having the knowledge and identifying the needs of learners in a program is a big contrast to special education administrators in Magno's view. "They are involved in everything. They know the students, they know who services them, and they have to go to the meetings." Magno's thought about this disparity is because there is more 'weight' for the school and the way it looks because special education is more of a priority than ESOL. "Because ESL is just a language barrier, and there is the expectation that a student is going to succeed eventually. It

takes time, but you are going to know the language. It's going to happen, but special education is different. There is constant attention on special education," observes Magno.

Involving themselves in the ESOL program is only done when school administrators complete observation walk-throughs. Only one administrator from his previous school would ever sit down and routinely interact and participate in the lesson with the students while Telles was teaching. He says, "That was a great experience." As far as his current school leaders, Telles says they are too focused on math and reading expectations that he does not think they pay attention to anything else. ESOL is somewhat of an afterthought as opposed to other programs.

Support of ESOL Program

Overall support of the ESOL program is limited at Packson. Because the school leaders are so data-driven, that is the priority for the ESOL teachers-providing data for meetings. The school leaders have no concern with the needs of the ESOL teachers, and their attitude is that they already know everything about the ESOL program. The primary focus of the students is lost in the need for data. School leaders' understanding of students' cultural backgrounds is a perplexing thought to Eyelee. After a long pause and with hesitation, she thinks her school leaders try to understand the cultural backgrounds of the ESOL students. An English learner's origin of birth does not seem to be at the forefront of Packson's school leaders, although Eyelee suggests that "kids from Europe pick up the language a lot faster than those from Mexico." She references a girl from Russia who learned English rather quickly, "It makes me wonder if those other kids pick up the language faster just because they don't have anyone else at school to speak their native language to...I just thought of that," Eyelee laughs.

Northbend's school leaders fully support ESOL teachers. Whatever the teachers need to serve the ESOL students effectively, they get which is the reason Suni enjoys working with her current school leaders. Overall, school leaders don't question things. "We do things really well at

our school. They support us and don't question things. We have positive results. We have kids that are growing. They see our kids testing out and doing well." Suni's school leaders do not question her or the other ESOL teachers because they are not the experts on second language acquisition.

Supporting Telles as an ESOL teacher follows the 'You are the expert' approach whereby they leave him alone and allow him to run the ESOL program. On occasion, he runs into 'bumps' that concern him and will need his school leaders to address circumstances when working with resistant teachers. "I don't think it's my job to make sure the teacher is providing the modifications and accommodations. I believe the administrators should be held accountable for checking and looking for that. In the end, they are still my colleagues, so...yeah, it makes it a little uncomfortable, but I advocate for the students' rights and I address this the best way I can with the teachers." Telles shares his frustration when trying to talk to school leaders about anything pertaining to ESOL or his students. His perception replicates Delgado-Gaitan's (2006) philosophy that accommodations in the learning setting to equitably support students from diverse cultures is the goal. "At this school, I've tried but it is meaningless to me now. I have tried to meet with Dr. Crashen to address a situation on different occasions." Telles specifically refers to a situation with a fifth-grade student having difficulties with foundational math skills and especially word problems. Telles wanted to make it a goal because relating word problems is through language, not through academic gaps that needed to be addressed. Dr. Crashen never sat down with Telles and never wanted to take the time to do so. Eventually, the issue was addressed through the counselor and the special education teachers but never by Dr. Crashen.

Theme 4: School Administrators' Engagement with ESOL Teachers, Students, and Parents

An administrator's vision for equity is aligned through collaborative school and community partnerships. According to Quezada, et al. (2012), this occurs when English learners,

their families, and the community emphasize achievement, work with community partners, communicating with families, and including them as a part of the educational learning community. By working collaboratively with not only teachers, but with students and parents, allows effective educational leaders to develop opportunities whereby people of diverse cultures can find acceptance, integrate within a community, and engage in meaningful dialogue (Shields & Sayani, 2005). These collaborative partnerships must build on the assets and strengths of families and communities with a goal of dialogue between home, school, and the community that brings new resources to the learning process (Decker, Decker, & Brown, 2007).

Responses and reactions of school administrators' engagement with ESOL teachers, students, and parents were discerned in answers of the participants, thereby showing that other teachers have comparable issues of engagement of ESOL teachers, students, and parents on the part of school administrators. About engagement with ESOL teachers, only Binoc shared written communication her principal wrote in appreciation of working with the ESOL students at Westwood. Telles shared written communication requesting feedback, but that communication was not from his immediate school administrators. All other participants indicated their school administrators never or rarely engage with the ESOL teachers.

An awareness of cultural diversity through interaction with students is evident in both Binoc's and Suni's school. Eyelee and Cami noted that engagement with students may be difficult due to the language barrier; however, Cami felt her school leaders do a good job as far as interacting with diverse students. Telles claimed there is little to no interaction with diverse students at his schools.

Disregard lies in the area of engaging the parents of diverse students. While Cami felt the parents would be comfortable expressing their concerns in their language to someone familiar with the cultural background, she also believed her principal is interested in those concerns in an

environment with an open-door policy. Binoc, Magno, Suni, and Telles all shared analogous thoughts-school leaders do not offer suggestions, give ideas, or help with the events, they only delegate.

There is awareness of connecting with the diverse community in both Eyelee and Cami's schools. Administrators are acutely aware of where the diverse families live and what the school can offer. For example, Eyelee expressed appreciated effort of her school leaders to send a bus to an apartment complex to conduct a book club over the summer. At both Telles's and Suni's school, there is no awareness of connections with diverse communities. Overall, responses indicated there is an unawareness of engagement among ESOL teachers, students, parents, and the community, primarily found in the areas of engagement with teachers and engagement with parents.

I shared Binoc's feelings that school leaders should visit classrooms to interact with students rather than for observation purposes alone and engage themselves in dialogue with the diverse students to make them feel special. I also agreed with Suni's belief that the dialogue should be meaningful when speaking with students.

Regarding engagement with parents, I had the same opinion that Eyelee, Cami, Binoc, and Telles had which is limited or non-existent direct involvement. Cami pointed out that parents might feel more comfortable addressing their concerns with a school administrator in their native language, whereas Magno felt a comfortable learning environment is not provided to the diverse families. I concurred with both of these opinions. Finally, my thoughts coincided with those of Suni and Telles about connecting with the school community. Suni claimed that connecting with the school community is not a focus for her school leaders, while Telles indicated there are no connections made by the school leaders to embrace the diverse population in the school community.

Engagement with the ESOL Teachers

While all participants stressed limited engagement with the ESOL teachers on the part of the school leaders, only two participants shared documentation supporting this engagement. Other than general questions about the ESOL program such as WIDA levels or testing questions, the majority of the school leaders make few attempts to understand the ESOL teachers' job and duties. Binoc and Suni both have school leaders that make efforts to understand what the ESOL teachers do, the requirements of the job such as the endless paperwork, the struggles faced when teaching five different language levels, and challenges when working with teachers who may or may not be supportive of the ESOL students.

Binoc shared two emails whereby her principal, Viti, thanked her for the outstanding job she does to support the English learners at Westwood. Interestingly, Telles shared one email from his Instructional Support Specialist (ISS) rather than either of his current school leaders. When asked why he chose to share that particular email, he stated, "My immediate school leaders don't send me emails. I write them emails about concerns, and they don't respond to me. I try to talk with them about concerns, and they never have time." The email Telles shared references a Google evaluation link and asks if there are questions.

Additionally, the email asks for recommendations for changing a background picture on an ESOL website page. Telles responds at first with a joke and then states he would like to recommend "comments or feedback from teachers that work with ELLs" as well as "comments and feedback collaborating with the ESOL teacher to support the ELL." He goes on to tell his ISS, "I'm not afraid of the feedback. Colleagues have provided me with good feedback." Telles continues by making more suggestions for revisions: "I would like to revise these, to evaluate the comments about the program and the services that are in my control to modify and improve."

Interaction with Students

After speaking for quite some time about the Macy Dakins program, Cami tries to refocus her thinking about the direct involvement of school leaders with diverse students. Cami references the parent liaison at the school when reflecting on this, “Many of our parents do not speak English, so I have noticed that when I have tried to speak to a parent with the help of a parent liaison, they are less apt to speak comfortably with me because there’s a barrier there. That could be the same problem that administration has as well.” Aside from the lack of participation at Multicultural Night, Cami feels that Mester’s school leaders do a good job of interacting with diverse students by going into the cafeteria and conversing with them as well as speaking with the students in the hallway.

Binoc feels that her school leaders should be around during curriculum nights and visit classrooms, not only for an observation of the teacher but to interact with the children. “Keeping in mind that ESOL children have a variety of language levels and knowing as well as accepting that their language levels can be different, they may get a response from students when they are talking in conversation that may range from just a smile to a long sentence or paragraph,” Binoc shares. School leaders need to talk to the diverse students in the classroom, in the hallway, and in the cafeteria. They need to engage diverse students and make them feel like they are special. Binoc’s perception on this issue reflects the thoughts of Lucas and Villegas (2010) in “The Missing Pieces in Teacher Education: The Preparation of Linguistically Responsive Teachers” and their emphasis on school administrators’ efforts in assisting students with the integration into the school setting while building effective bridges to learning. Binoc, with confidence, believes her principal does this: “She is definitely around the school. My principal is from India, so she already values other cultures.”

While meeting the learning needs of the diverse students is vital, so is sharing in meaningful dialogue with these diverse learners. Confident that her school leaders know the diverse students as well as their names, Suni believes, “They know all of their names. I think Ritha goes home and studies every family. She goes into classrooms, and while the teacher is teaching, she will ask the students what they are learning today and what the learning goal is and then give them a nice compliment such as ‘Oh, you have nice handwriting.’ She will interact with the children. She doesn’t mess around.” Suni claims her school leaders want to know if the diverse students are learning. The school leaders’ main goal is to support learning. Ritha is not the type of principal that goes into her office and closes the door. “I feel she has an open-door policy. I’ll go in there and tell her I need to talk to her,” says Suni.

Additionally, Ritha encourages all staff members to recognize the equity and inclusion of all diverse students. Suni stresses, “Yes, yes, oh yes! Ritha is SO big on that. The whole school understands that.” During the morning announcements, Ritha will include students of every nationality to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to make sure all students have equal opportunities.

Laughing, Telles says, “Well, it would be nice. It would be a nice idea to separate the demands that the school, or the expectation the school has, with every single student and have conversations with the ELL so they can see up close the specific needs.” This is one way he believes school leaders could initiate discussion and participate in meaningful dialogue with the diverse learners at the schools where he works. Because he is at two schools every day, it is hard for Telles to see if this is genuinely happening because, as he says, “I am always running.” Because he begins his day at Murphy Elementary, he has seen Mr. Rey interacting with students in the gym before they go to their classrooms. That is the extent of what Telles has seen regarding interaction with diverse students.

Telles believes ESOL students may feel intimidated by the school leaders because of culture. For ESOL students, a school leader is someone who deals with discipline, so they see that person in some regard as somebody who can enforce more by keeping behaviors in check.

Engaging the Parents

An open-door policy is critical for school leaders to incorporate into Mester, according to Cami. “I think the parents would feel a lot more comfortable if they could come in and sit down and speak in their language to someone that understood their background and their culture.” Enthusiastically she states, “I think it would prove wonders for the type of school I’m at!” She sees that the principal would have an open-door policy all day, whereas the assistant principal may require parents to make an appointment to discuss concerns the parents may have. Communication through a bilingual newsletter is also something Mester does routinely; however, the parent liaison is in charge of creating the newsletter. If the school did not have a parent liaison, Cami feels confident the school leaders would attempt to hire someone to translate school information for the newsletter.

The pressure to include diverse parents in school activities also falls heavily on the shoulders of the bilingual parent liaison. Because the school administrators do not speak Spanish, they do not directly involve themselves in communicating with the diverse parents, according to Eyelee. Sending out a weekly newsletter in Spanish compiled by the parent liaison is the primary mode of communication between the school and the parents. When initiated, the newsletter was printed, and now it is sent through email. The bilingual parent liaison primarily initiates communication at Packson. For parent meetings such as PTA, or Parent Teacher Association, the parent liaison utilizes a voice box translator for parents to understand what is being discussed. Eyelee believes that school administrators would like more parent involvement, and

there is an opportunity for the parents; however, the school administrators have little to do with it and “pass it on.”

School leaders’ direct involvement with the parents is extremely limited, according to Cami. While the parents are invited to breakfasts and events such as Doughnut Day, they are also encouraged to join the PTA. Cami feels the school attempts to invite parents to attend school functions to promote acceptance and comfort in the learning environment; however, the language barrier, lack of cars for transport, and the fact that the students translate for their parents is a concern which may be the reason for the lack of participation.

Direct involvement with parents and guardians by school leaders is non-existent at Westwood, other than the ESOL night at the beginning of the year, whereby the ESOL teachers babysit and school leaders are “probably there, honestly, because one of them has to be there and be in the building.” Pausing for a long moment, Binoc thinks, “I guess our school leaders don’t have a direct...they don’t do anything for our diverse parents.” They make no attempts and leave all direct contact up to the ESOL teachers and the parent liaison. Binoc feels it would be good to include parents on committees and offer them opportunities to volunteer in the school community. Other than the emailed weekly newsletter that she does not think is translated into Spanish nor does she believe the parents read, Binoc feels that it is only the parent liaison that commits to ongoing communication with parents and there is little effort on the part of the school leaders to connect with the communities in which the school is located. Additionally, there are no policies, procedures, or identified practices that include culturally diverse students and their parents because everything is done by the ESOL department and the parent liaison.

Magno feels the school administrators do not provide a comfortable learning environment for the students or their families. “Well, they need to feel more secure. They [the parents] need to feel they can rely on the school system to have their doors open so they can feel more

comfortable, but if they don't understand what's going on, then they won't feel as secure.”

Magno's perceptions duplicate those of He et al. (2008) who believe blending immigrant students' linguistic and cultural knowledge in the school curriculum develops a school setting whereby immigrant students feel a sense of belonging. Furthermore, communication with parents is through an email and a newsletter, but these two modes of communication fail to attempt to connect with diverse parents because these forms are not a language other than English. Magno believes there should be a bilingual monthly newsletter to send home to parents. Current English-only communication goes out every Wednesday. There are a variety of events that Magno feels would encourage the parents of diverse learners to participate in school activities such as calling to welcome them on the first day of school. He also believes that having a special luncheon for parents of different cultures would be beneficial to the school. On the same accord, Magno believes his school administrators would never invite diverse parents to be on special committees, nor would they ask them to volunteer at school. “They won't do that as administrators. They rely on the ESOL teacher to do that...everything in that matter.” He shares his feelings, “Well, it shouldn't be like that because they are part of the community, and they are stakeholders, and everybody should get involved.” While his school administrators only routinely interact with the parents of diverse learners in SST meetings, they do not meet with diverse parents in a group setting.

Identifying learning needs and sharing dialogue with diverse students is important, as is involving their parents. Suni stresses that her school leaders seem to understand what is going on everywhere; however, they will delegate the responsibilities of organizing workshops for the parents to the ESOL teachers and the parent liaison. They do not offer suggestions, give ideas, or help with the events; they only delegate. Later, they will ask the teachers how the workshops went and how the parents felt. Suni feels that Ritha will try to engage parents in attempting to

‘bring them in,’ but the problem is the socio-cultural differences of the parents-the culturally diverse parents who are well off and educated make time to be involved within the school. The blue-collar parents have a difficult time being involved. The school leaders, in Suni’s opinion, tend to gear their dialogue towards the upper-class parents rather than the blue-collar workers.

Direct involvement with parents and guardians is not something the school leaders at either school do, specifically with diverse parents and guardians. Instead, the school leaders have direct involvement with all the stakeholders. However, Telles feels that school leaders should meet with parents of diverse learners at the beginning of the school year. “At the beginning of the year, I believe that diverse families should have the opportunity to receive orientation so they can understand what the EL descriptors are, and what their challenges are, as well as how the ESOL program can provide assistance, how they can support their children at home, and how the school can help them.” Telles’s perception parallels that of Quezada et al. (2012) who propose that a school leader ought to understand the English learning community, recognize the community as an asset, and establish learning about their own and others’ cultural assets for implementing changes that help underserved students in schools as well as the linguistically and culturally diverse communities.

Encouraging to hear would be school leaders telling these diverse parents that they have an open-door policy, and they are welcome to come and bring any concern to the administrator so it can be addressed. Telles has seen Mr. Rey do this but has not seen Dr. Crashen in this regard, although he feels she would.

Connecting with the Diverse Community

In connecting with the diverse community outside of the school, Eyelee is impressed with the way the school initiated a book club at the main apartment complex feeding into Packson. Meeting with the kids once a week during the summer, and providing lunch, groups were formed

to discuss books they were reading. Additionally, meetings are held at the apartment complexes before the beginning of the school year for those parents who have difficulty attending meetings at the school. Finally, the school sends school buses to the apartment complex, picks up the parents to attend a testing meeting at school, feeds them dinner, and takes them home after the meeting. In the past, ESOL classes have been offered to diverse parents that include free babysitting and a meal to encourage parents to participate. Beneficial to Packson's school community, Eyelee says it is a way to say, "Hey, you are welcome here. The parents seem to feel comfortable in participating in these school functions because they always seem to have a good turnout." She firmly believes that her current school does a lot more for parents than her previous school, primarily because the diverse population is so much larger. Eyelee's perception reflects the ideas of Lindsey et al. (2005) who maintain that a school leader who welcomes diversity into the school establishes a community of learning with students, parents, and other concerned members of the community.

Making attempts to connect with the diverse school community is something Cami feels the administrators do. She describes a summer reading program at apartment homes conducted by committed teachers from Mester Elementary. They also have a multicultural night similar to other schools in the area. Cami feels parent participation is low because she believes many of the diverse parents cannot drive, so there is not always an abundance of parent participation. What Cami would like to see at Mester, which she feels may not be probable, are workshops for parents to teach them about the Macy Dakins program. Unaware of school leader involvement in developing school community events, Cami believes the parent liaison does most of the work to engage and invite diverse parents into the school. She stresses a problem in the school-lack of communication. She does not see an effort by the diverse parents to try to learn the English language and believes that is one of the problems.

Connecting with the school community, other than school events, is not at the forefront of the school leaders' minds. Suni believes the lack of attempts to connect to communities within the school zone is due to a low diverse student population. She estimates that they have 100 diverse students at their school. Communication with the parents consists of 'a blurb' in Spanish about school events delivered via email. The problem, says Suni, is, "A lot of these parents don't read these emails. The best way to get in touch with them is texting them." Prior to this year, Suni would take personal time on Thursday and Friday nights sending out translated emails until midnight in attempts to make parents aware of homework and meetings. "It's a waste of my time," Suni thought. "I spent hours doing this when parents didn't do what they need to do." Now, she sends out video clips and a list of websites for students to use at home, although Suni feels a paper newsletter would be more effective in corresponding with parents. 'The blurbs' are not something the school leaders at Northbend associate with, as Suni says, "I think it's more us. It's more us, that's how I feel."

According to Telles, school leaders have few, if any, connections with the diverse communities in which the schools are located by school leaders. "There should be a resource to help diverse families integrate with everyone else-not to encourage segregation but integration in that matter." Telles's perception reflects the notions of Garcia Ramos (2007) who believes schools will benefit from making sure they are reaching out to their most marginalized population in a manner that will assuredly influence the lives of children and families in the community.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The qualitative study of the four common themes revealed a detailed picture of ESOL teachers' perceptions of their expectations of cultural proficiency among their school leaders and the capacity these leaders exemplify regarding the ESOL program. Of all common theme analyses, none of them had overall positive perceptions. The fewest negative perceptions were in the area of Theme 2: School Administrators' Organizational Culture and Structure of Schools with inclusion being promoted in most of the participants' schools. The perceptions reflected as the least favorable were in the areas of Theme 3: Level of Administrative Support Regarding the ESOL Program and Theme 4: School Administrators' Engagement with ESOL Teachers, Students, and Parents. Based on responses, these areas showed the most negative perceptions within all subgroups of Theme 3: School Administrators' Knowledge of the ESOL Program, Academic Success, Involvement in the ESOL Program, and Support of the ESOL Program. The most negative perceptions within subgroups of Theme 4 are Engagement with ESOL Teachers and Engaging the Parents. There were some minor subgroups of perceptions which were not consequential in number, but researchers should still keep them in mind.

The use of teachers' perceptions gave an opportunity to provide extensive insight into the lack of respect, knowledge, inclusion, and understanding toward cultural differences of culturally diverse students and their parents as described in the statement of the problem. The comprehensive analysis enables us to form significant conclusions about the manner of solving problems related to cultural proficiency by providing comprehensive cultural diversity training and including more multicultural education courses requirements for school administrators in preparation for school leadership positions.

With the goal of revealing the perceptions of Georgia elementary ESOL teachers about cultural proficiency, the study has contributed to the field addressing the need for school leaders in Georgia to be in a position to lead proactively in the face of diversity. This research provides new insight on the relevance of teacher perceptions to school leaders' knowledge and expertise of cultural diversity as well as the degree in which they are involved in the educational process. These findings confirm the analysis of teacher perceptions are timely and fundamental for elementary school teachers, students, and the society.

The results of my research support most of my expectations and make me more confident in my conclusions. Based on the short survey conducted at the 2015 TESOL Conference, my own experiences with school administrators while teaching ESOL students, and my participant's responses, my conclusion is that a small percentage of school administrators are culturally proficient as deemed by the perceptions of the teachers that work under their guidance.

I am optimistic that this research will expand the minds of school leaders, not only school-based but on a broader spectrum such as superintendents, by opening their eyes to clearly see the needs of ESOL students and how others perceive their culturally proficient behaviors. I highly recommend that academic institutions require school leaders to actively participate in ongoing, specific, comprehensive, and intensive cultural proficiency professional development yearly. Requiring school leaders to participate may alter how school leaders address cultural proficiency within their educational organizations by changing their practices and shifting their ideologies about diverse students. Working with school leaders directly through mandated professional development sessions may encourage-or force them-to reflect on their attitudes and beliefs of cultural diversity among students and others through stages of awareness, acceptance, and affirmation. This culturally proficient mindset may lead to a sustained and positive focus in closing the achievement gap of ELs and the general student population.

My proposed plan of action is to create professional development sessions incorporating my research with the five essential elements and correspondence of professional development as described by Lindsey, Jungwirth, Pahl, and Lindsey (2009). These include addressing: cultural issues, issues of cultural identity, the advancement of inquiry and dialogue, changes to meet community needs, and developing policies and practices to meet the needs of diverse communities.

Finally, I believe Telles sums up the importance of teaching English learners which is a sentiment I share as well:

Information has to be delivered in a specific and particular way. It is not through words alone, rather the information has to be with actions, visuals, and experiences...doing things that are comprehensible for the students and making them fully bilingual by the end of the process (October 2019).

For ESOL students, it takes years...

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Short Portrait Questions:
To identify background of research participant in reference to education and life experiences:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long have you been teaching ESOL?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In how many schools have you taught ESOL?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you choose to teach ESOL?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please describe a memorable experience that you've had teaching ESOL.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are you passionate about teaching ESOL?
Research Question 1:
What expectations do elementary ESOL teachers in Georgia have that influence perception of cultural proficiency among school leaders?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long have you worked with your current administrators? Principal/Assistant principal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think your school leaders understand the cultural background from which your diverse English learners come? Please explain.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways should your school leaders make attempts to learn about the diverse students and cultures that represent your school?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what manner should your school leaders initiate discussion and participate in meaningful dialogue with the diverse learners at your school?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do your school leaders adapt policies, procedures, and practices that include culturally diverse students and their parents?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often should school leaders meet with the parents of diverse learners?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what manner should your school leaders communicate effectively with diverse students and their families?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways should your school leaders make attempts to connect with the diverse community in which the school is located?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do your school leaders promote events and celebrations that reflect various cultures within the school?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should school leaders do to address the school's ongoing learning needs of the diverse group of students in your school?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should your school leaders advocate for diverse learners?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should your school leaders encourage staff members, other than yourself, to recognize assumptions and opinions about equity, inclusion, and student achievement of culturally diverse students?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should your school leaders build their knowledge about valuing diversity and meet the needs of culturally diverse learners by focusing on inclusion as a goal to be achieved.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do your school leaders support and promote professional development that concentrates on race/ethnicity/nationality?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What professional development goals regarding diversity should be addressed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever heard a school leader make a stereotypical comment about ethnic diversity? If so, please describe the incident.

<p>Research Question 2: In what capacity do Georgia school leaders exemplify culturally proficient leadership behaviors regarding the ESOL program?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do your school leaders know aspects of the ESOL program at your school?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do your school leaders make any attempts to learn about the ESOL program? Why or why not?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do your school leaders question and involve themselves in the ESOL program? If so, what do they do? If not, why do you think they don't?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do your school leaders support you as an ESOL teacher?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the attitudes of your school leaders when you ask them about anything pertaining to ESOL?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think your ESOL students feel intimidated by your school leaders? If so, why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do school leaders perceive ELs based on their place of origin?

APPENDIX B

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PARTICIPANT'S RESPONSES

I acknowledge that I have read the responses from the interview in relation to the dissertation

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completed by the primary investigator, Mary Houser, and that all responses are factual. If my responses were not correct, I spoke with Mary Houser regarding my concerns and she assured me the discrepancies would be corrected.

Print name _____

Signature _____

Date _____