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# Culturally Responsive Coaching: Supervision with a Cultural Lens

## Abstract

Culturally Responsive Practices (CRP) are a focal point for many districts across the country. The emphasis of CRP is on how the institution enacts policies and practices for the benefit of the students they serve. This study views CRP from a different lens. The focus of this study is to 1.) center the voice of Black teachers and 2.) explore culturally responsive practices for the support and edification of the teacher from their coach/supervisor. The eight Black teacher participants and their instructional coaches engaged in interviews discussing current coaching models and the dynamics of their coaching relationships.

The relevant findings in this study are shared through three themes categorized as safety, authenticity, and relationships. Ultimately, the study invites school leaders to reimagine coaching structures and philosophies where teachers' voices are incorporated in the conversation and culture is highlighted and valued. The Relay coaching model is also discussed as participants shared their perspective on the model from a coach's viewpoint and from the viewpoint of the teachers.

## Document Type

Dissertation

## Degree Name

Ph.D.

## First Advisor

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## Keywords

Coaching, Cultural competence, Instructional coach, Multicultural supervision, Supervision

## Subject Categories

African American Studies | Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education | Curriculum and Instruction | Education | Educational Leadership | Elementary Education | Elementary Education and Teaching | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Secondary Education | Secondary Education and Teaching | Teacher Education and Professional Development

## Publication Statement

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Culturally Responsive Coaching: Supervision with a Cultural Lens

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A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Jouanna Crossland-Wells

June 2024

Advisor: Douglas Clements

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Degree Date: June 2024

### **Abstract**

Culturally Responsive Practices (CRP) are a focal point for many districts across the country. The emphasis of CRP is on how the institution enacts policies and practices for the benefit of the students they serve. This study views CRP from a different lens. The focus of this study is to 1.) center the voice of Black teachers and 2.) explore culturally responsive practices for the support and edification of the teacher from their coach/supervisor. The eight Black teacher participants and their instructional coaches engaged in interviews discussing current coaching models and the dynamics of their coaching relationships.

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*Keywords:* cultural competency, multicultural supervision, coaching, Relay Coaching, criticism and connoisseurship, authenticity, safety

## Acknowledgments

This dissertation marks the culmination of a journey that would not have been possible without the unwavering support and encouragement of my family, friends, mentors, and research participants. This dissertation is as much yours as it is mine.

First, to my children: your love, patience, and understanding have been my greatest source of strength. You have been my inspiration every step of the way. Your smiles and hugs have been the fuel that kept me going during the most challenging times. I pray I have made you proud and encouraged you to chase any dreams you have.

To my husband, Marlon: your steadfast support, patience, and love have been the foundation upon which I have built this work. Thank you for being my rock and my greatest cheerleader. To my siblings and sib/cousin, Michael, Flo, and Amelia and my in-laws: your encouragement and belief in my abilities have been incredibly uplifting. I am deeply grateful for your love and support for me and the care for my children during this process was the greatest help anyone could ask for.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my dissertation chair, Dr. Clements, for your invaluable guidance, support, and patience throughout this process. To my committee members, Dr. Urhmacher and Dr. Michalec, and Dr. Salazar: your feedback, support, and encouragement have been critical to the completion of this dissertation.

Finally, to all my extended family and friends who have offered words of encouragement, understanding, and support: your kindness and belief in me have been a source of immense strength. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

I am an educator. I am a school leader. I am a coach. Over the past 20 years, my educational path has taken many different twists and turns. I started my career as a middle school math interventionist and reading teacher. I then became an Assistant Principal (AP) of a middle school and later served as an AP at a high school. It was in these roles that I had my first task of coaching teachers. I fell in love with the coaching process but knew that I was ineffective because of my lack of formal training. However, it was during these years that I began to understand the impact strong instructional leadership and coaching have on teaching.

Despite being undertrained for the coaching role, I received positive feedback from the teachers I coached. Teachers often expressed their appreciation for how I approached the coaching relationship as showing care and consideration for them as people was a cornerstone of my coaching practice. At that time, I did not realize I was aligning to a particular coaching method, I was simply striving to support teachers by listening to them with compassion – as their work is challenging – and by offering research-based strategies to help improve their practice. Additional positions, along with years of coaching training and development courses, have helped to shape my current coaching expertise and philosophy. Through fifteen years of experience, coupled with extensive research on coaching practices, I have built an understanding of various coaching models

and shape my practice to align with my values and beliefs about people, the teaching profession, and the various instructional practices that yield positive student outcomes. Important outcomes must include space for students' learning and growth and provide opportunities for them to develop as critical consumers of content.

Over the course of fifteen years, I have been fortunate to coach in a number of schools, with new teachers and those with several years under their belt. Some of the teachers trained through a traditional teacher pipeline program and some trained using alternative methods. I believe the training I received from various professional development sessions for instructional and life coaches prepared me adequately to meet the diverse needs of these distinct categories of teachers. Some of the trainings have been education centered: several workshops on *The Art of Coaching* by Elena Aguilar, Relay Coaches Training professional development summer intensives, Cognitive Coaching training, professional development modules centered around Change Management in Schools, as well as countless others. All these trainings have supported my leadership growth and development connected to school systems and curriculum and instruction. Outside of the education realm, I invested in a life coaching certification program to develop my skills to support the whole person through various facets of life. Although I attended countless hours of professional development (PD), institutes, and workshops on multiple coaching philosophies, none focused on or called out how their strategies and techniques applied to or centered the experiences of people of color. Therefore, coaching teachers of color was not a part of my formal training.

For a long time, I believed that my coaching was race neutral. It was not until I really started analyzing my coaching relationships with teachers of color--considering how I approached our coaching conversations--and then noticing nuanced differences in our meetings that I realized that my coaching was anything but neutral. There was a difference. Some things I could pinpoint and identify as distinct differences and some things I could not. Educational researcher H. Richard Milner (2007) warns about the “dangers of not paying close attention to our own or others’ racialized and cultural systems of coming to know, knowing, and experiencing the world” (p.388). This warning resonates with me as I seek to understand the racialized experiences of Black teachers in this study. It is through my chosen methodology, Criticism and Connoisseurship, that I plan to center the experiences of myself and the participants and seek to know the cultural systems that have an impact on coaching relationships and practices.

### **Background of the Study**

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), the student body at public schools is comprised of over 50% non-white students. However, the teacher demographics do not reflect the current student body with approximately 79% white teachers (NCES, 2020). Since teachers of color comprise only 20% of the teaching force, while 50% of the students are students of color, it is important to assess this trend and develop a plan to support teacher diversity. With much of the research showing that teacher race and ethnicity can have a positive impact on student outcomes, districts are interested in increasing the numbers of teachers of color in their schools (Di Carlo & Cervantes, 2018). However, some of the nation’s largest school districts are experiencing

a drop in number and proportion of the teacher of color population (Carver & Hammond, 2017). This is an especially disturbing trend in these school districts as they have increased their recruitment efforts for teachers of color and are therefore incurring costly expenditures of both money and human capital with no substantial impact on workforce demographics. To expend significant resources to recruit, only to fail to achieve recruitment goals, has economic, cultural, and educational impacts on a district.

Recruitment of teachers of color is an important issue to investigate; however, for the purposes of this research study, I will focus on retention of Black teachers by investigating culturally responsive supervisory practices that support Black teachers' growth and development. Cochran-Smith (2004) asserted that recruitment was both the "wrong diagnosis" and a "phony cure" for the teacher shortage we are facing as a nation. It is my belief that recruitment is the easily detectable but superficial target that school district leaders choose to spend their time and resources on but is not ultimately sustainable in increasing the number of teachers of color. In fact, the crux for diversifying the population of teachers in the United States is rooted deeper in retention than recruitment. Retention is a 'systems' issue that requires districts to modify current policies and practices, and institute new ones (Minarik et al., (2003). These kinds of systemic changes will take intentional reflection upon the status quo within the district.

The disproportionate underrepresentation of Blacks in the teaching profession has cultural and educational impact on districts in many ways. Researchers have found that Black teachers and other teachers of color have the potential to make significant contributions to the profession (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019). There are intangible

contributions such as the funds of knowledge, both linguistic and cultural, that Black teachers bring with them to the classroom (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). For many Black students, Black teachers represent surrogate parent figures, act as disciplinarians, counselors, role models, and overall advocates for their academic, social, cultural, emotional, and moral development (Milner & Howard, 2002). Research suggests that Black students who have a Black teacher are more likely to do well in school and graduate (Milner & Howard, 2002). According to Milner (2006), Black teachers can have meaningful relationships and can have an impact on Black students' academic and social success. Beyond the aforementioned factors, there are tangible benefits to diversifying the population of educators.

One of the economic impacts that Black teachers have on districts is connected to the school placement preferences of Black teachers. Black teachers are more inclined to seek out positions at schools with a larger population of Black and Latinx students, usually in hard-to-staff schools (Achinstein, 2010). They also persist in these school settings at higher rates than their white counterparts because of their commitment to serving a diverse student population and their desire to make a difference (Achinstein, 2010; Mccray et al., 2002). This has a positive impact on schools because positions in these schools can go unfilled for extended periods of time, leaving those classrooms to be taught by long-term substitute teachers (Carver & Darling-Hammond, 2019). The impact on the academic achievement of the students in classrooms with substitute teachers can be detrimental to students' overall academic success (Bekingalar, 2015). Effectively

coaching Black teachers will support their growth and development to be more effective in their practice teaching in the highest needs school settings.

There are many reasons suggested in the literature as rationale for the decreasing numbers of Black educators entering the field (Hudson & Homes, 1994; Orfield & Lee, 2004; Tillman, 2004; Farinde-Wu, 2016). Reasons such as mass firing from the *Brown v. Board of education* case, negative impacts felt by Blacks while attending educational institutions, systemically racist assessments such as the PRAXIS, and a lack of professional development to support teachers to stay in the field. First, there were unintended consequences related to *Brown v. Board* (Tillman, 2004). One of the *Brown v. Board* impacts was the considerable number of Black teachers who were fired because white parents would not allow their children to be taught by Black teachers (Tillman, 2004). After the *Brown* decision, not only were Black educators removed from service of schools in their communities, but Black children began to be educated in greater numbers by people that did not look like them, did not live in their communities, and did not have the context or understanding of the Black family or community life (Tillman, 2004).

Second, from 1975 to 1985, the number of students selecting education as a major decreased by 66% (Hudson & Homes, 1994; Orfield & Lee, 2004). Further, some research suggests that Black people were more likely to have had negative experiences with their own educational development which has caused some to avoid entering the profession. The field has not rebounded from such a drastic decrease in Black students opting out of education (Farinde et al., 2016). Third, according to a longitudinal study examining the PRAXIS I teacher assessment and its impact on Black and Latino students



seeking admission into a teacher education program, teacher candidates of color are being negatively impacted by the PRAXIS test (Bennett et al., 2006). These assessments are serving as gatekeepers to block Black and Latinx candidates from being able to become certified teachers, thus impacting the number of teachers of color entering the field.

Fourth, another reason the teaching force lacks racial diversity is provided by the Bailey (2015) report. This comprehensive study of the experiences of Black teachers and students in Denver Public Schools found that Black teachers identified high-quality professional development, coaching and mentoring as essential support for their growth and development as educators. The teachers shared their concerns about not receiving high-quality coaching, and in some cases, they did not have access to any forms of coaching. They also lamented the lack of mentoring support they were offered (Bailey, 2015). It is for these reasons that I seek to answer the research question: what culturally responsive coaching practices may yield a significant impact on the teaching profession, specifically on the retention of Black teachers in urban districts?

### **Study Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to better understand the coaching experiences of Black teachers in urban school districts in a western state in the USA. Through this study, I intend to understand how culturally responsive coaching practices can impact the retention and support of Black teachers. The findings have the potential to support Black teachers' growth and development, therefore leading to higher retention rates in the classroom. In a time when teachers of color are leaving the profession at higher rates than their white counterparts (Villegas et al., 2012), it is important to determine the ways

coaching practices are supportive of the retention of Black teachers. This study analyzes the intentions of teacher coaches as they work with Black teachers, as well as their coaching philosophy in relation to the way they coach and support Black teachers. This study can support the development of a culturally responsive coaching framework aimed at increasing Black teacher retention in urban school districts across the US.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study provides a new lens through which to see and understand coaching practices and the potential impact of more culturally responsive coaching relationships. Through interviews, teachers expressed that they are, in fact, cultural beings working within a system that often feels oppressive and does not validate who they fully are. They sometimes feel unseen, not heard or valued in the school setting. As a result of the current system, we are seeing a trend of Black teachers leaving the profession stating reasons such as: hostile working conditions (Kohli, 2018), lack of coaching and mentoring (Bailey, 2015; Kohli, 2018); and other conditions connected to a lack of cultural responsiveness (Calderon, 2014; Huber et al., 2006; Olivos, 2006).

Urban districts largely serve students of color. In these districts, retaining teachers, with a great emphasis on teachers of color, must be a priority for all stakeholders. For teachers of color, the attrition rate is higher than that of white teachers (Farinde et al., 2016). Although Black teachers persist in urban settings at higher rates, we are losing more Black teachers overall. The positive impact that effective, highly qualified Black teachers may have on students within these districts cannot be understated (Farinde et al.,

2016). There is value added in retaining teachers of color to support academic outcomes for all students, particularly students of color.

The questions in the survey and the interview questions all centered around the three levels of the Multicultural Competency Framework (discussed in depth in later chapters). The framework was used to provide examples of practices that coaches could enact to be more culturally responsive to Black teachers. Many of the practices were identified through shared stories of coaching behaviors enacted through the coaching relationship.

This study bears significance to school leadership teams and district level administrators within the chosen district of study, Parkside School District (PSD). According to Lewis (2020), schools would benefit from embracing a race-centered leadership model, one that acknowledges the impact of race on the individuals within the institution. Districts do extensive training on race-centered leadership from the lens of student impact within the schools but there is no evidence of race-centered leadership in relation to the impact on teachers as cultural beings. The results of this study will offer a much-needed perspective on the impact of culturally responsive coaching and impact on Black teachers' retention within the school.

I chose PSD, which is a large, urban public school district in the western United States, because of the district's professional development focus on culture and equity for all employees. PSD has publicly acknowledged that the district has lost a number of Black teachers over the years and commissioned a study to understand the possible reasons for the large exodus of Black teachers and leaders. This study can serve as

another layer of information as they seek to understand what they can do to improve retention of Black teachers.

## **Research Design**

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the intentions of educational coaches when coaching Black teachers?
2. What are culturally specific practices enacted in coaching relationships?
3. How do Black teachers make meaning of their coaching experiences?

### **Rationale for Qualitative and Quantitative Inquiry**

Qualitative inquiry consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The seemingly invisible world of coaching practices for Black teachers came to light through the use of the survey, interviews from the teachers and the coaches, and other representations within this study. Qualitative researchers study a phenomenon in its natural setting, collecting evidence to make sense of and interpret the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative inquiry starts with assumptions and utilizes an interpretive or theoretical framework as the lens to view the research questions through, the researcher collects data, and identifies patterns and themes based on their findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In qualitative data, the researcher seeks to answer the “what and why” questions, not the “how often” question of quantitative inquiry (Black, 1994).

Through Criticism and Connoisseurship, explained below, I sought to center the voices of the teachers in the study to better understand how they made meaning of culturally responsive practices within their supervisory relationships in schools. These

types of narratives need to be told but often have been dismissed, trivialized, or misrepresented in education research (Milner, 2007). This phenomenon is best studied using a qualitative method as the primary research inquiry to ensure that the voices are elevated and placed in a position of power to tell their own stories (Milner, 2007).

### **Methodology**

The chosen methodology for this study, Educational Criticism & Connoisseurship (ECC) was chosen because this model allows the researcher/connoisseur to bring their full selves into the research space as they delve deeply into the research topics (Vars, 2002). Vars (2002) states, “although connoisseurs or evaluators may be expected to consider guidelines and criteria, the standards used in reaching their judgments derive primarily from their experience as professionals and upon the collective experience of the profession” (p.71). Because of my years of experience, it is important to me that I was permitted to speak from my practitioner expertise and not be expected to “bracket” my experiences as a Black teacher and coach from this study.

ECC posits and examines five dimensions: the intentional, structural, curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative dimensions of a classroom, school, or unique area of focus (Kramer, 2015). Although each of these dimensions was considered, the *intentional* dimension was the guiding frame for my research because it refers to explicit and non-explicit but actuated aims or goals of the educational setting, its people, and institution as a whole (Kramer, 2015). That is, my interest lies in the explicit and non-explicit goals of the coach as they work to coach Black teachers. Are their aims intentional or

happenstance? Do they consider cultural dynamics that may impact their coaching relationships?

Independently, the two areas of the methodology allow for their own areas of focus: 1) connoisseurship focusing on the art of appreciation, and 2) criticism focusing on the art of disclosure (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). This relationship and interplay on the two meanings reminds me of a quote by James Baldwin. He stated that he loved America more than any other country in the world and, exactly for that reason, he insisted on the right to criticize ‘her’ perpetually (Baldwin, 1955). It is because of my love for the educational profession that I seek ways to support its advancement in the area of cultural responsiveness for Black teachers. Through this study and due to this methodology, I can demonstrate a deep understanding of culturally responsive coaching practices and provide critiques to improve and support growth and development within education.

A major component of the ECC research method is the notion of an ‘Instructional Arc,’ described below. The focus of the arc will highlight the components as they relate to culturally responsive coaching. This culturally responsive focus is made of three types of ‘curricula’ that, although distinct, still have an important interdependence on the overall research outcomes of a study. The three components of the instructional arc are:

the intended curriculum:

- What does the coach plan/desire to happen, how are aspects of culture considered in the planning, and

the operational curriculum:

- What happens in the coaching the teacher receives, and the received curriculum:

- What did the teacher take away from the coaching experiences as it relates to cultural responsiveness?

In coaching conversations, the coach and the teacher leave the coaching session with next steps for the teachers' instructional practice. The enactment of these instructional next steps is a component of the instructional arc that was not a focus of this study.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Freire defines humanization as the process of becoming more fully human as social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons who participate in and with the world (1970). The notion of humanizing theory shapes who I am in all facets of my life, as a wife, mother, and friend, but particularly in my professional space as a teacher-coach. Throughout my career, I have experienced spaces where teachers were highly valued and appreciated, and some unfortunate spaces where teachers were not. It is my desire to create a space for teachers to not only feel valued but be truly valued. A space where they can grow and develop their instructional practice and where they are able to receive support to navigate the many layers of the educational landscape.

According to Freire (1970), to become fully human, people must be liberated from the oppressive systems and structures that lead to their oppression. I have found that some of the systems we have in place for coaching and supporting teachers, especially teachers of color, are oppressive and not intended to liberate. Milner (2006) states Black teachers were often ridiculed for being too radical and not being 'players' which led to them feeling isolated, not liberated to share their stories. It is from a true desire to liberate people, teachers, and myself, that I seek to humanize the teacher coaching profession, not

just for teachers of color, but with a strong emphasis on teachers of color as they are heavily impacted by the dehumanized coaching practices in many schools (Bailey, 2015).

I have served as an instructional coach in the public schools' system for over 15 years. As a way to improve my craft and branch out beyond the traditional school setting, I decided to become a certified life coach. I felt it was a great resource to add to my toolkit, as I was working towards this new approach to humanizing the coaching experiences for teachers, especially because none of the training I had received in the schools fully aligned with a humanizing approach. Through my professional training to become a certified life coach, I sought out a curriculum that honored people and saw them as fully capable of liberating themselves from whatever issues or circumstances that seemed to have them bound. The coaching model's core beliefs centered around a mindset that people are "naturally creative, resourceful, and whole" (Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, & Whitworth, 2018). In essence, people/teachers are not empty or broken vessels waiting to be filled or fixed with my coaching expertise, but they possess the skills to push themselves to improve their lives or instructional practices and create sustainable outcomes (Kimsey-House et al., 2018). I express my positionality in my research from the stance that all whom I encounter are capable beings able to identify places for growth and can enact practices to ensure sustainability.

I have a deep desire to know people fully, connect with them intimately, and challenge them to move towards the person they wish to be. Through deep connections with the people I coach, I am able to 'gently nudge' them to places they may be apprehensive about going. Through these relationships, I am able to engage in



challenging conversations about equity, culturally responsive pedagogy, social justice focused issues, and support teachers of color in navigating a sometimes-oppressive landscape.

### **Theoretical Context**

As I thought about the topic for this study, I was reminded of the multiple times in my career where I felt voiceless or unable to adequately express my feelings as a Black educator who has only worked in urban settings with mostly Black and Latinx students. Culturally responsive instructional coaching was a component missing from my teaching experience. I recall having ‘feelings’ about the way some of our Black boys were treated but felt that my expressions would not be understood by my coaches and leaders, all of whom were white. Similarly, the school structure (a white normative discipline policy that was reminiscent of a zero-tolerance, ‘3-strikes and you’re out’ policy) that existed during my time as an educator did not align with my educational philosophy. At that point, as a teacher with less than 3 years in the classroom, I did not feel empowered to express my beliefs or speak out against the inequitable policies. The fear of being labeled as “not being a team player” or not aligned with the vision of the school paralyzed me and impeded my desired advocacy. I felt my inquiries would be dismissed. I think of the lack of cultural responsiveness not only in the way discipline was carried out, but also in the way that I was treated as a member of the team. My coaches and leaders did not make space for my voice to be heard. They did not create avenues for cultural dialogue to take place. There were times that I did not feel seen, heard, or valued. As Hird et al. (2001) and Brown (2018) assert in their research, supervisors cannot be afraid to bring up

cultural topics or supervisory issues around culture. It is clear that my supervisors did not push themselves in this area. They did not attempt to address concerns that I may have had connected to my identity or how it impacted me in my practice.

As I transitioned into a different school setting, now with a couple of years under my belt, it was evident that there was something different about the leaders and their beliefs. This leadership team demonstrated a desire to bring cultural conversations to the table and sought to address them in a proactive manner. The noticeable difference initially manifested itself as a simple statement. My school leader expressed concern that our school's discipline structures seemed to be disproportionately and adversely impacting our Black students. This opened a door to a rich, but challenging conversation. We talked about the subject she initially brought up and so much more came of that conversation. This simple conversation gave me a voice and allowed me to feel humanized in a school space where I had not felt valued before. I felt free to share my thoughts and offer suggestions about my lived experiences, and my personal connections. This was a first. In my first school, as a new teacher, I was not equipped with the skills to challenge the system, I did not have the words, and the environment was not set-up for this kind of inquiry to take place; therefore, I remained silent. Unfortunately, my previous leaders did not have the skills to support me in navigating the system in a manner where I felt free to push or express my feelings without fear of retaliation. Thus, my research question emerged because of my experiences as a Black educator who did not feel culturally 'seen' or valued by my coaches/leaders. These feelings were inextricably connected to

my Black identity and what I felt was a forbidden topic or space to journey to with many school leaders.

Looking back, I can now name my introductory teaching experience as one where my school leaders lacked cultural competency and awareness in their coaching. Ancis and Marshall (2010) state cultural competency is essential to effective and ethical practice, particularly in the area of supervision. Goodyear and Guzzardo (2000) suggest that supervisors should center race or culture in their conversations as a first step toward establishing a constructive relationship based on mutual respect. My former coaches would have benefited from this philosophy in supporting me, and other teachers, as we worked to navigate the educational landscape.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“I get it. These conversations are hard. In some cases, they are intimidated, they don’t know what to expect, and sometimes I understand, but you never know until you try.”

—Donald

My personal coaching philosophy embodies the belief that Donald shared during his interview. The conversations are hard, but they are necessary. Supporting the teacher, in every facet of their being, which includes discussions about culture, underscores my personal philosophy and how I approach my coaching relationships. This belief is also supported by various practitioners in the field of psychology. Toporek et al. (2004) found that it is important for supervisors to communicate their willingness to discuss cultural factors in initial supervisory sessions. Hird et al. (2001) indicated that discussions about culture might be most powerful when the supervisor initiates, integrates, and revisits the topic throughout the supervisory relationship. During my years as an educator, there have been very few conversations initiated by my supervisors regarding race or culture, as it pertained to me as the teacher, or my cultural connection to the work environment. As Donald mentioned, maybe this was due to intimidation or fear of the unknown. Whatever the case may be, this study serves as a challenge to the silence around this topic to support frequent and less challenging entry points into the much-needed conversations.

In a time of seemingly large cultural division in the country, where people are marching in the streets for racial equality and demanding social justice, schoolteachers and leaders are charged to address race and culture within the school and classroom, and the impact of both in the school setting. In Parkside School District, the focus on cultural competency has existed for a number of years. The district established a department whose mission is to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion among school personnel. Through their various professional development offerings, the focus is targeted at teacher and leader development for adults and the manner in which adults enact these practices with students. For this study, I aimed to discuss cultural competency from the lens of coach to coachee, particularly by analyzing the instructional coach and teacher relationships.

### **Literature Review Purpose**

The purpose of this literature review is to summarize the impact of cultural competency components in the workplace, discuss the current research on the instructional coaching of Black teachers and their experiences in the public-school setting, and the impact of Black teachers and the need for retention focused practices. I conducted a systematic review according to the procedures and parameters below.

### **Search Strategy**

The search strategy for this study started with establishing a literature review component outline (see Table 2 below), which guided the keywords used in search databases. Keywords included but were not limited to ‘culturally responsive practice’ or ‘culturally responsive pedagogy’ in conjunction with search terms ‘coaching,’

‘supervision,’ or ‘evaluation.’ The ProQuest ERIC and PsycINFO databases were searched. Google Scholar was also leveraged to search for information. Sources of information included peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government statistics, theses, and dissertations. Over 66 sources were identified for review. A subset of the sources retrieved, as listed in the reference section of this dissertation, was identified as the most relevant source material for the study and provides the foundation of the literature review.

### **Thematic Literature Review**

Table 1. Systematic Literature Review

<p>Inclusion criteria:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● K-12 US-based educational institutions</li> <li>● Implementation of a broad definition of culturally responsive pedagogy (see below)</li> <li>● Quant, qual, mixed, case study, single case design</li> <li>● Peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, books, dissertations</li> <li>● Related to Black Teachers</li> <li>● Specific focus on coaching, supporting, supervising, or evaluating teachers</li> <li>● Written between 2010-2021</li> <li>● Fields of education and psychology</li> </ul>
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Boolean Search	(“culturally responsive practices” or “culturally responsive pedagogy” or “cultural* relevant p*”) AND (coach* OR support* OR evaluat* OR supervis*)
Results	66 Articles selected for initial review; 33 articles met criteria and were selected for further analysis
Search methods	ERIC and PsycINFO databases

In my systematic search limited results were retrieved using the inclusion criteria of ‘culturally responsive coaching practices.’ There are a number of articles on culturally responsive practices, which includes culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995), leadership (Khalifa, 2010; Khalifa, Gooden & Davis, 2016) and instruction (Hammonds, 2014); a number of articles on coaching practices (Kohli, 2014, 2016, 2018; Kolhi et al., 2015); and a plethora of studies on teachers of color (Kohli, 2008, 2009). However, none of these articles addressed the three phenomena together. Based on the initial search, I extended my criteria to include adult learning theory in hopes of finding examples of adults of color receiving intentional culturally responsive coaching, teaching, or support in their chosen fields. With this search, Culturally Responsive Supervision and Multicultural Supervision and Consultation emerged within the field of School Psychology. Due to the lack of substantive resources on Culturally Responsive Coaching, I was led to draw parallels within the two fields of study as there

are a number of similarities within the two fields. In alignment with these areas, cultural competency emerged as an area to delve deeper into.

### **Significance of Diversity in Teaching**

Urban districts largely serve students of color. In these districts, retaining teachers, with a great emphasis on teachers of color, must be a priority for all stakeholders. For teachers of color, the attrition rate is higher than that of white teachers (Farinde et al., 2016). Although Black teachers persist in urban settings at higher rates, we are losing more Black teachers overall. Whipp and Geronime (2017) suggested that increased retention and diversity can positively influence student achievement. There is significant value added in retaining teachers of color to support academic outcomes for all students, particularly students of color (Farinde et al., 2016).

Black teachers are essential to the educational institution for multiple reasons. They serve as advocates and role models for students of color (Farinde et al., 2016). Irvine (1989) asserts that Black teachers also serve as cultural translators, counselors, parental figures, and mentors who advocate for their students and give a voice to the voiceless. Many scholars credit Black teachers with an ability to innovate in the classroom through their teaching of critical perspectives. Due to their lived experiences in the larger historical, political, and economic realities, they present content that is relatable to the lives of the students they teach (Foster, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Milner, 2006; Farinde et al., 2016).



## **Retention of Black Teachers**

According to Cherng and Halpin (2016), “having a more diverse teaching force can help close longstanding racial achievement gaps” (p. 417). Haddix (2017) states, “...a continued agenda to understand the experiences of current teachers is warranted” (p. 144). This study serves as a contribution to the field through the amplification of Black teachers experiences and connections to the field. One area of focus in the literature is the economic impact of teachers leaving, particularly in high need, hard to serve school populations, where teachers of color have a higher concentration. The purpose of this section is to provide context for the value add of Black teachers. The potential impact of Black educators has been studied by a number of scholars and is worth investigating for this study.

This is important because, since the mid-1980s, our nation has focused attention on seeking ways to diversify the teaching force (Villegas et al., 2012). Through this focus, districts have increased their financial expenditures to recruit teachers of color to serve in our increasingly diverse school districts. Recruitment has improved the number of teachers of color entering the workforce, however, retaining them has been a challenge, therefore, school districts are seeking explanations for why teachers are not staying in the profession (Ingersoll & May, 2011).

Nationally, 40 to 50% of all new teachers leave the profession within five years, and the turnover rates are much more profound in urban schools, with nearly 50% of new teachers leaving within three years (Ingersoll, 2003). Teacher recruitment, new teacher

training, and personnel hours used to rehire for open positions have a tremendous monetary impact on urban schools.

“The Alliance for Excellent Education has concluded that a conservative national estimate of the cost of replacing public school teachers who have dropped out of the profession is \$2.2 billion a year; if the cost of replacing public school teachers who transfer schools is added, the total reaches \$6 billion every year.” (Shakrani, 2006, p. 2)

One negative impact of teacher turnover is that many classrooms within these districts are taught by novice teachers who are hired to fill the vacancies left by those leaving the school (Duncan, 2014). These novice teachers typically possess minimal instructional skills, and are placed in settings with limited resources, working with the students with the highest need (Duncan, 2014). As a nation concerned about the academic success of the students in urban settings, it is imperative that the US take steps to retain teachers in our urban schools (Partee, 2014). I assert that intentional retention practices in coaching is one of the highest leverage practices that may help slow down the revolving door of teachers coming in and out of the most vulnerable schools. Teachers who stay in a school can continue their learning of the school’s professional development initiatives the leadership has selected to impact student achievement (Partee, 2014).

In addition, continuity in a school setting allows families and the overall community (businesses, organizations, other community leaders) to develop relationships with staff members which is supportive of partnership building. These partnerships can be used to leverage the cultural capital of the community to aid the students in the classroom.

Because teachers of color are more concentrated in urban settings, we can draw some conclusions that increasing retention in urban settings will also support the retention of

teachers of color (Partee, 2014). Partee found that the trickle-down impact means we will increase the number of qualified teachers of color and that, in turn, will support our growing number of students of color.

### **Culturally Responsive Practices**

In 2015, a comprehensive study written by Dr. Sharron Bailey about the experiences of Black teachers in Denver Public Schools (DPS) found that these teachers identified high-quality coaching as essential support for their growth and development as educators (Bailey). The Bailey Report, as it was called, detailed the teachers concerns about not receiving high-quality coaching and mentoring support while working for the district. Dr. Bailey conducted the research study at the request of the superintendent because the district had lost a substantial number of its Black educators in a relatively brief period of time, and the district felt it was essential to find out why. Many of the findings align with existing research on the topic of teachers of color and the issues of retention. Participants in the Bailey report, as it is referred to within DPS, shared an area of concern in their experiences that was connected to a deficiency in instructional coaching support and adequate mentorship. This deficiency is consistent with deficiencies mentioned in the literature.

Another factor highlighted in the report was that over 70% of the participants rated the level of institutional racism in their respective schools at eight or higher (out of ten on a Likert scale). Related research states that teachers shared that they often struggle in schools, also referred to as 'sites of Whiteness' (Matias & Liou, 2015; Sleeter, 2001) because of the ways these spaces operate. The concerns addressed by the teachers in DPS

and other teachers of color speaks to the lack of cultural competency in the way the system is structured and operates as oppressive institutions.

### **The Need for Culturally Responsive Work Environments**

Through the use of Criticism and Connoisseurship, I sought to center the voices of the teachers in the study to better understand how they make meaning of culturally responsive practices within their supervisory relationships in schools. These types of narratives need to be told but often have been dismissed, trivialized, or misrepresented in educational research (Milner, 2007). This phenomenon is best studied using a qualitative method as the primary research inquiry to ensure that the voices of Black teachers are elevated and placed in a position of power to tell their own stories (Milner, 2007).

### **Why Coaching**

Coaching is defined as individual PD sessions where teachers receive specific feedback on their instructional practice (Kraft et al., 2018). In this section, I will review key concepts related specifically to instructional coaching, and the requests from Black teachers regarding coaching. The discussion of various coaching models will also be included in this section.

### **A Request for Coaching**

The research mentioned above makes clear that Black teachers are dissatisfied with their work environments for a variety of reasons. Understanding the nuances of why they leave the profession is multi-dimensional, but some research points to critical factors such as a) lack of adequate coaching and development (Bailey, 2015); b) working in white normative settings that are inflexible to changes that do not align with traditional

white, middle-class values. In these spaces a teacher of color may have an ideology that does not align with the traditional normative structures (Calderon, 2014; Huber et al., 2006); and c) experiencing varying levels of racism in the workplace without support to navigate the system (Kohli, 2018). These reasons (and others), all connect to cultural competency in structures and supports, the lack of which leads to the exodus of Black teachers from the profession. While there is no singular root cause for teachers leaving the profession, the aforementioned reasons triangulate to significantly impact turnover.

Although the emphasis of this study focused mainly on teacher coaching, it is also important to briefly address the other critical factors identified as reasons why teachers of color leave the profession. These other reasons are intertwined with and connected to components of the cultural responsiveness of the system, or the lack thereof. Rita Kohli (2018) is a key researcher in the area of teachers of color and retention, and her research points to the struggle for teachers of color to work in white normative settings without support to navigate the structures, as having a profound impact, which can slowly erode the spirit of even the most dedicated and determined teachers of color.

Kohli (2018) and Villegas and Davis (2008) make references to teachers of color and the cultural capital that they bring into the school setting that is often overlooked and undervalued as a tangible asset. One example of a value-add of the cultural capital they possess is connected to the increased level of achievement of K-12 students of color when their teachers share their racial, cultural and/or linguistic background (Villegas & Davis 2008). Another example is when a teacher speaks the same language of their students. This ability to connect with families and community members, removing the

language barrier, is an important and valuable asset. Delpit (2003) in her seminal work discussed the importance of valuing the language of the students and knowing how to leverage it in the classroom. Working in schools where the number of teachers of color are relatively small, teachers of color feel more isolated and these spaces have a higher probability of devaluing the cultural capital the teachers of color bring (Kohli, 2018). These “sites of whiteness” are steeped in white normative structures that continue to marginalize the voices of teachers and students of color (Kohli, 2018). These factors, along with others, express the value add of Black teachers in their classrooms and schools, and echoes the various struggles of retention.

A byproduct of working in a “site of whiteness” is a school culture where the curriculum mandates reify Eurocentric frames (Calderon, 2014; Huber et al., 2006), and the school culture espouses middle-class, white values (Olivos, 2006). These environments can be steeped with microaggressions (Kohli, 2018), and hostile racial climates (Kohli, 2018), making it challenging for teachers to continue to work, grow, and develop in these spaces. These factors contribute to the dwindling numbers of Black educators. My research aims to support coaches in understanding their role as culturally responsive leaders to help teachers of color work to navigate these spaces and make recommendations to the leaders to correct/modify the school culture to be more inclusive and less fatiguing for teachers of color to operate, grow, and thrive. Black teachers made their positions clear in the Bailey report (2015): they desire coaching and mentor support to be successful in their roles as teachers. The support of a coach would be invaluable as Black teachers work to navigate this educational system.

### *Types of coaching and supervision*

Teacher coaching has been implemented in school settings in various forms: mentoring, peer-coaching, collegial coaching, and through professional learning communities (PLCs). These formats allow teachers to receive feedback on their practice that increases awareness of effective instructional moves while teaching (Duchaine et al., 2011). According to Cornett and Knight, instructional coaching impacts teachers' attitudes, practice, and efficacy (2008). This is consistent with Knight's description of coaching as a partnership, collaboration between equals; consequently, coaching relationships are key to the success of the partnership (2007). Trust is foundational to the coaching relationship, as it lays the groundwork for teachers' implementation of the coaches' recommendations for instructional changes (Knight, 2007). Kerness (2014) describes the coach's role as integral to the successful implementation of the school's instructional goals. He describes an effective coach's disposition as a "compelling combination of personal humility and professional will" (p. 104) to maintain a strong and successful relationship with teachers to achieve significant improvements in the schools.

Teacher-coaches spend time in classrooms observing their coachees with the expressed purpose of identifying areas to provide targeted support connected to the highest leverage areas for classroom improvement (Kraft et al., 2018). The intensity of coaching varies from school to school and is based on the teachers' needs. Teachers who are new to the profession are often given the most support, often observed weekly by the school principal, peers, and instructional coaches.

In much of the literature, instructional coaching falls under professional development practices and has proven to be one of the most effective practices to support teachers and improve outcomes of academic achievement (Kraft et al., 2018). The Kraft et al., meta-analysis is one of the most comprehensive methodological studies focusing on the academic impact of teacher coaching. It is not surprising that coaching produces the highest outcomes, as coaching fits all the criteria outlined by Hiebert et al. for high-quality PD (2002). Hiebert (2002) asserts that “high-quality professional development yields the best results when it is long term, school-based, collaborative, focused on students learning and linked to the curriculum” (p.3). The instructional coaches interviewed for this study described the district's coaching philosophy in alignment with Hiebert's definition.

Within Parkside School District, school leadership team members provide instructional coaching through the evaluative matrix set up by the district. This matrix was mentioned throughout the interviews and has an evaluative component. Whereas the goal of mentoring, peer-coaching, collegial coaching, and PLCs are non-evaluative (Duchaine et al., 2011). Rhodes and Beneicke (2002) purport that coaching, mentoring, and peer-networking have many benefits including an increase in collegiality, sharing of strategies, and a greater impact to the classroom than other PD strategies. For the scope of this paper, evaluative coaching and mentoring will be reviewed, however, the other tenants (peer coaching, collegial coaching, and PLCs) are outside of the scope of this study.



### ***Relay coaching model***

In formal evaluative coaching experiences, coaches follow models to guide their coaching meetings and observations. Some of these coaching models are well known in the education world and are hailed as best practices in the coaching arena. The most popular model used in Parkside School District is the Relay coaching model. This model is based on two books by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, *Leverage Leadership* (2012) and *Get Better Faster* (2016). In 2013, Relay launched its National Principal Academy program to improve the instructional leadership skills of school principals (Klompus, 2016). Through this program, leaders are trained to implement the strategies outlined in the program to increase the capacity of leaders and coaches on instructional moves determined to be the highest leverage strategies as determined by Bambrick-Santoyo and other leaders of the Relay organization.

The Relay coaching model utilizes a *See it, Name it, Do it* approach to supporting teachers in their growth and development in the classroom. Teachers are observed by a coach and provided feedback based on a pre-defined effectiveness framework outlined by Bambrick-Santoyo. The framework is based on seven replicable levers of effectiveness that leaders and supervisors must employ (Klompus, 2016). This coaching model is very prescriptive and directive by nature and has been developed and honed by leaders in various school networks across the US. My study will highlight possible implications that such a model can have on Black teachers within the Parkside School District.

## **Culturally Responsive Theoretical Framework**

I have chosen to utilize the multicultural competency framework developed by Pedersen (1994), combined with humanizing pedagogy, as defined by Salazar (2013) and CRP, as defined by Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2010), as lenses with which to view my research inquiry and develop a model for Culturally Responsive Instructional Coaching (CRIC). Although not currently defined in the literature, CRIC is derived from drawing parallels between multicultural consultation in school psychology, and the instructional coaching disciplines. CRIC can be defined as a teacher-centered coaching approach that seeks ways to modify instructional practice to improve educational outcomes for students and support teachers with nurturing student and parent relationships, all while being responsive to the teachers' culture and cultural values.

## **Multicultural Competency Framework**

The Pedersen framework for multicultural competence is described in a three-level development sequence illustrated below (see Figure 1). The first level, awareness, encompasses one's ability to be aware of their own culture and the interconnectedness of it with other cultures (Pedersen, 2002). After awareness, the next level is knowledge which includes gathering facts, knowledge, and information to develop an understanding behind your own behavior and the behavior of the people you interact with in the coaching environment. The final level, skill, is to develop appropriate expertise to create space for dialogue and positive culturally responsive interactions.

Foundationally, one must have an awareness of oneself and understand one's cultural identity. Developing sensitivity and understanding of another ethnic group is a

characteristic of awareness (Alizadeh & Chavan 2016). This usually involves internal changes in terms of attitudes and values. Literature suggests that supervisor self-awareness and genuine attention can contribute to a culturally responsive supervisory relationship (Soheilian, et al, 2014). Instructional coaches have a responsibility to, at minimum, develop an awareness of their coachees culture to work towards a culturally responsive coaching practice.

Knowledge, the second level of the cultural competence pyramid, is defined as having a familiarization with selected cultural characteristics, history, values, belief systems, and behaviors of the members of another ethnic group (Alizadeh & Chavan 2016). Some of the attributes of this level addresses the coach's ability to demonstrate a familiarity with the value systems of diverse cultural groups and display an understanding of how culture, ethnicity, and race influence supervision/coaching and education (Wong & Wong, 2003).

Lastly, the skill level encompasses the coach's ability to listen, observe, evaluate, and view the world from others' perspectives (Alizadeh & Chavan 2016). This is the highest level of competence on the Pedersen competence model because it requires a coach to put into action all the things they know about their culture and its intersection with the culture of their coachees. Wong & Wong (2003) make distinctions between this level and the knowledge level through the incorporation of supervisors/coaches intentionality in the initiation of discussions surrounding culture, race, and ethnicity.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Cultural Competency**

For the past two decades, several professions have been concerned with cultural appropriateness and cultural effectiveness of services offered to ethnically diverse

audiences (Lum & Lu, 1997; Lynch & Hansen, 1998). Some of those professions have included education, health, counseling, social work, and psychology (Alizadeh & Chavan, 2016; Shen, 2015). In the educational arena, CRP came to the forefront in 1994 as the seminal work of Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings. Ladson-Billings introduced the idea of culturally relevant teaching as critical pedagogy aimed at empowering students of color. Ladson-Billings (1994) defines culturally relevant teaching as “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 382). Over time, other scholars such as Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995, 2009), Gay (2010) and Klotz (2005) have researched and built upon the work of Ladson-Billings.

It has been widely suggested that cultural competence is an individual’s core requirement for working effectively with culturally diverse people (Alizadeh & Chavan, 2016). However, there is not a definition of cultural competence connected to adult interactions in educational settings and based on my systematic review of the literature, no models exist for how this is enacted in an educational supervisory or coaching capacity. There is an abundance of literature on CRP, as it is a widely used and referenced practice in urban education today. For CRP practices to take place in a school or classroom, the leaders and teachers must possess some level of cultural competence. The definition of cultural competence is not agreed upon, nor are the dimensions, however, many researchers have identified three dimensions that make up a comprehensive cultural competence model; awareness, knowledge, and skill (Alizadeh &

Chavan, 2016). As mentioned, for this study, Pedersen's model will be utilized to ground our understanding of cultural competence.

CRP is a learner-centered approach to teaching in which the educator uses the learners' unique cultural knowledge and strengths to make learning encounters more relevant (Gay, 2010). Much of the research on CRP aligns most appropriately with the teacher-to-student interactions as opposed to a direct emphasis on the supervisor-to-teacher relationship and interactions. The teacher-to-supervisor relationship is where my research interests lie. Due to the lack of a culturally responsive model in adult education, it was imperative to find a comparable framework that is applicable to the education field. In the areas of nursing, counseling, and other health-related fields, there has been an adult-centered cultural competence focus since the early 1960s by Dr. Madeleine Leininger as a part of her theory on cultural care in nursing (Shen, 2015). This study served as a springboard for other researchers to investigate how CRP, coupled with concepts from the cultural competency frameworks in various fields of study, can be enacted for an adult audience, from a supervisory lens, in an educational setting.

### **Humanization and Humanizing Pedagogy**

Supervisors and leaders of organizations are often interested in knowing what variables impact staff productivity and loyalty. Minarik et al. (2003) cited a Gallup Poll report that indicated the single most important variable is the quality of the relationship between staff and their direct supervisors. Consequently, it was not pay, perks, benefits, or other extrinsic factors that had the most impact (Minarik et al., 2003). Teachers valued caring supervisors, environments that supported their growth and development, and

leaders who recognized their unique talents (Minarik et al., 2003; Tehseen & Hadi, 2015). It is in these spaces that teacher retention is fostered (Minarik et al., 2003). In many school settings, the instructional coach serves as the closest supervisory position to teachers. The notion that teacher retention is directly linked to the partnership they develop with their supervisor/coach drives my research inquiry.

Drawing parallels to teacher retention and the need for the supervisor to have a skillset that shows teachers that they are valued, supports their development, and recognizes their talents (Minarik et al., 2003), leads me to link these skills to Paulo Friere's conceptualization of humanization. Humanization is the ontological vocation of human beings (Freire, 1970; Salazar, 2013). This means every human has a desire to be fully known, valued, and appreciated. The goal of humanization in education is to promote the development of the individual as an individual and the development of the individual as a teacher (Ignatovich, 2016). According to Minarik et al. (2003), supervisors who possess the skills described above are able to center the interests of the person beyond the role of the teacher, which is a component of humanization. According to Salazar (2013), humanizing pedagogy is essential to the success of teachers and Minarik et al. (2003) assert that teachers stay in the profession when they are valued and supported; essentially when they are humanized.

Humanizing pedagogy and CRP are uniquely interconnected as a means of viewing coaching practices and the necessary relationship development to establish a partnership between a teacher and their coach. The coaching dynamics are an important support for a teacher as they seek to learn and grow their practice and navigate the educational

landscape (Minarik et al., 2003). Freire's (1970) work describes humanization, or the act of humanizing, as creating space for people to live liberated lives where justice and freedom are actualized, and one where people are not robbed of their humanity.

Experiences where people are not afforded the rights of humanity exist in many areas: education, health, employment, the criminal justice system, and countless others, and the beauty of the humanizing theory is its application in multiple disciplines. When teachers are not afforded the rights of humanization within the field of education, they leave the profession. This is a great loss to schools and communities.

### **Tenets**

The strength of Humanizing Pedagogy Theory lies in the five tenets outlined by Salazar (2013) as she explained humanizing pedagogy and its connection to the educational system. The five tenets are: (1) The full development of the person is essential for humanization, (2) To deny someone else's humanization is also to deny one's own, (3) The journey for humanization is an individual and collective endeavor toward critical consciousness, (4) Critical reflection and action can transform structures that impede our own and others' humanness, thus facilitating liberation for all, and (5) Educators are responsible for promoting a more fully human world through their pedagogical principles and practices.

Connecting tenets one, four, and five to Pedersen's (2002) cultural competence model provides an alternative view of the work of coaches and leaders. This view allows the coach to navigate between being an instructional leader and meeting the cultural needs of the teacher to fully support them as individuals. Starting at the base of the pyramid, in

linking awareness (see Figure 1) with tenet five — educators promoting a more human world — we see the ways for the coach to reflect on their own cultural lens and acknowledge that their lens could impact the ways they engage in their role as a coach. Salazar (2013) discusses the links between liberation, oppression, and humanization. Freedom from oppression can embody many forms, one of which connects to the coach's ability to see or be aware of the ways in which the institution and the people in it can be oppressive. The coach's awareness of the existence of unintentional racism or the coach's awareness of their own implicit biases allows the coach to progress up the pyramid towards implementing liberating practices (Pedersen, 2002; Wong & Wong, 2003).

The knowledge level of the Pedersen model can be linked to the fourth humanizing tenet, critical reflection and transformative action. As coaches, there is a charge to be reflective about one's own actions that work to transform structures in service of liberation of teachers (Salazar, 2013). An example of a structure that impedes liberation, according to Wong & Wong's Multicultural Supervisor Inventory (2003) is connected to a coach displaying a lack of understanding of the problems of racial stereotyping in coaching and education. This is an example of a knowledge-level behavior where a coach being informed of their own cultural competency would be of service to the teachers of color that they work with. Another component of the fourth tenet is that the teacher can actively take part in their own liberation through their reflection and action (Salazar, 2013). As coaches develop their cultural competency, they will have the knowledge and understanding of their responsibility to support the teacher through the various coaching strategies they employ.



The top level of the cultural competency model is aligned to the coach having a deep understanding of cultural competency behaviors and their ability to take action to demonstrate those skills. Considering the premise of tenet one, the full development of the person, coaches and leaders must move past their current focus of only supporting the instructional development of teachers. Although supporting strong instructional practice is important, ignoring or not addressing other components of the human condition is not supportive of the whole person. However, coaches can and must center their attention towards the full development of the teachers they coach through the incorporation of cultural competencies, leading to a more culturally responsive coach/coachee relationship.

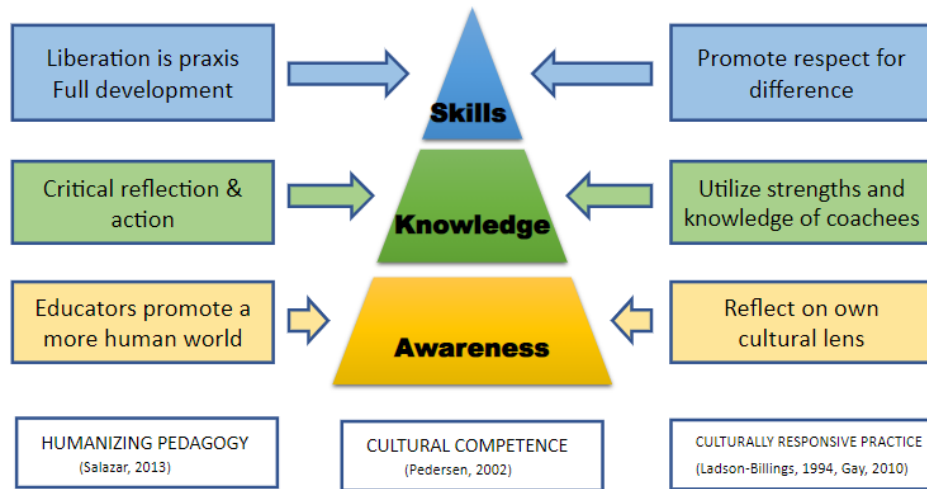
Balcazar et al., (2009) assert that “becoming culturally competent is an on-going contextual, developmental and experiential process of personal growth that results in professional understanding and ability to adequately serve individuals who look, think and behave differently from us” (p. 15). Through humanizing practices, we develop an environment that enables both the teacher and the coach to be fully known and empowered to critically engage in the coaching relationship.

#### Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the interconnectedness/relationship between the three humanizing tenets, the components of the cultural competency framework, and CRP indicators. The three frameworks work together to support an instructional coach as they work to improve their cultural responsiveness towards Black teachers.

Figure 1. Culturally Responsive Instructional Coaching

## Culturally Responsive Instructional Coaching



### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

In this chapter, I expand on my research design. My study used a standard Likert Scale survey to collect quantitative data. The quantitative data informed the participant interview questions for both the coach and the teacher interviews. I used common qualitative research practices of conducting interviews, coding, and annotating for analysis (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). I also shared my background and positionality as a researcher, and how the connection to my coaching experiences shaped and informed my study. Finally, I explain my data collection process and intended analysis plan.

It was my goal to use the current research on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, and other cultural competence models, and draw parallels to the importance of applying culturally responsive principles to the relationships teachers have with their instructional coaches. The application of culturally responsive principles in turn has the potential to support the retention of Black teachers. The underlying purpose here is to identify intentional coaching practices that are supportive as Black teachers work to navigate the systems and structures of the educational landscape. This is important because, since the mid-1980s, our nation has focused attention on seeking ways to diversify the teaching force (Villegas et al., 2012). Through this focus, districts have increased their financial expenditures to recruit teachers of color to serve in our increasingly diverse school districts. Recruitment has improved the number of teachers of color entering the

workforce, however, retaining them has been a challenge, therefore, school districts are seeking explanations for why teachers are not staying in the profession (Ingersoll & May, 2011).

### **Research Question**

In this study, I investigated culturally responsive supervisory practices, through the coaching relationship, using educational criticism and connoisseurship. The participants were identified through convenience sampling, while the data was analyzed through an iterative process to generate themes based on annotations. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

What are culturally responsive coaching practices and to what extent are they present [or not present] in the coaching relationship between Black teachers and their coaches?

- a. What are the intentions of educational coaches when coaching Black teachers?
- b. What are culturally specific practices enacted in coaching relationships?
- c. How do Black teachers make meaning of their coaching experiences?

### **Research Design**

#### **Setting**

In phase 1, I sent a Qualtrics Survey to Instructional Coaches and Black teachers via a link posted on various social media platforms, through emails to school and district leaders, and to interview participants.

In phase 2 of this study, I interviewed teachers and instructional coaches from Parkside School District. Parkside is a large urban district in a western state in the United

States. According to the Department of Education for this district, the number of Black teachers remained steady while the number of white teachers has increased over the years. In 1999, the number of Black teachers was 299, while there were 3140 white teachers, with a total of 5018 total teachers in the district. In 2021, the number of Black teachers was still 299, while the number of white teachers grew to 4619. During that same time, the Black student population increased at higher rates than the white student population in Parkside. Due to the COVID restrictions put in place by both the University and Parkside School District

### **Participants**

The survey sample was drawn from a population of Black teachers currently teaching in K-12 school settings within the United States. The teachers' years of experience or type of school setting (charter, public, rural, etc.) was not part of the exclusionary criteria, therefore, Black teachers teaching in any K-12 school setting, in the US, with varying years of experience were considered eligible.

Participants were recruited through existing professional networks via email and social media posts. Emails were sent to contacts in various school districts requesting leads to Black teachers that fit the above listed criteria. Social media groups that are designed specifically for Black teachers were targeted for various requests for participant notifications. Alumni associations of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) received communication requesting assistance from their organization and permission to post information on their website, within a blog, or other suggested means

of communication to the alumni members. The participants' completion of the study served as their informed consent.

For the interview portion of this study, I maximized my connections within the school district to recruit Black teachers and their instructional coaches (referred to as participant pairs throughout this study). Through personal emails and face-to-face communication, I solicited participants to engage in the interviews. I secured 8 interview pairs who agreed to participate in the study. An informed consent form was required from each participant prior to engaging in the study.

### **Methodology**

Educational criticism and connoisseurship (ECC) was developed by researcher Elliot Eisner and his students in the early 1970s. He believed that for the education system to improve for students, educators needed to fully know the system and actively critique its structures, pedagogical practices, and overall ecological make-up (Eisner, E., 2017; Uhrmacher et al., 2017). The methodology draws from the criticism of arts and promotes researchers to use the power of words to help others see and understand (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). The act of fully knowing the system or particular domain is referred to as connoisseurship. Connoisseurship has three sources; discernment, appreciation, and valuing (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). As a person develops a deep level of knowledge about a particular domain, they are then able to engage in the process of criticism.

Connoisseurship is described as the ability to “make fine-grained distinctions among complex and subtle qualities” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 9). To fully discern the complex and subtle qualities, the educator must be attuned to their senses of hearing,

seeing, touching, smelling and tasting, to make sense of the subject being studied.

Through sensory experiences from observations and lived experiences, the connoisseur can relate to and influence structures within the educational system (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). The educational critic engages in a subjective mode of inquiry to “enhance the [reader’s] perceptions and understandings of the qualities that constitute an educational performance or product” (Flinders & Eisner, 1994, p. 355). Through both connoisseurship and criticism, the educational critic describes, interprets, and evaluates the educational environment (Eisner, 2017).

Although the word connoisseur may give an air of elitism, this word is used to reflect a person’s ability to deeply understand and be aware of the experiences that have shaped them and their understanding. One might become a connoisseur through formal training or instructional support. But a person may also become a connoisseur through lived experiences and intentionally seeking additional knowledge about a subject.

Connoisseurship requires an interest and “belief in the importance” of the topic or setting involved (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 11).

According to Eisner (1998), people develop their connoisseurship by accessing a setting or topic, honing their awareness, and making connections broadly. Eisner asserts that there are degrees of connoisseurship. The depth of understanding of a topic is dependent on the person's level of commitment to the craft. Merely occasionally watching a sport, like basketball or football will not yield the same level of understanding as a person who watches, plays, coaches, and referees the sport. The latter person has taken the time to hone their awareness of rules and strategies of the game. They have put

in time and energy trying to learn the game at an expert level, demonstrating their appreciation and valuing of the sport and its value. My approach to and experience with education aligns with the latter.

Over the past 20 years in education, I have worked to become a connoisseur of instructional coaching. During the first few years of teaching, I was merely a spectator being coached but not understanding any principles of the practice. Once I became an assistant principal, I was expected to coach others although I had not received any formal coaching on how to coach teachers. Over the years, I began attending training sessions to develop my coaching skills. The training session included Cognitive Coaching, Relay Coaching, the Art of Coaching, CoActive Coaching to become a certified life coach, Transformational Coaching, and other sessions focused on coach development. Over the past 15 years, I have attended over 600 hours of training, earned certifications in various coaching styles, and facilitated development sessions for others. It is because of these various experiences that I have the “ability to notice and differentiate qualities” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 12) within coaching models and relationships. The ability to discern effective coaching strategies, the appreciation of the craft of coaching, the art and science of coaching, if you will, and the ability to discern the important components of the coaching dynamics, has come through years of training and a deep commitment to honing my coaching craft.

Connoisseurship on its own is not sufficient. Criticism is also required to effect change. Criticism is the “disclosure of what we learned through our connoisseurship” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 2). The word “criticism” has origins from the Greek language,



meaning to judge (Welleck, 1981). While criticism or judging usually has some negative connotations, the act of critiquing in education has a long history and has served to make improvements in the area of literature, dance, theater, and film (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). Eisner (2004) asserts that we must critique the field to improve it. Through connoisseurship, one is positioned to make well informed critiques, or recommended modifications to improve components of the educational institution.

As an instructional coach, trained in various coaching models, I utilized my connoisseurship to render a critique of the coaching practices for Black teachers used in many schools within the school district of study. According to Eisner (2004), one of the great virtues of criticism is that it affords multiple perspectives. I anticipated the perspectives being different for the teachers I interviewed, as well as the instructional coaches who engaged in the study, and their perspectives were different, but we also shared a number of similarities. Seeking the perspective of the teachers had not been a focus in other studies but provides a level of understanding of the coaching experience that has not been shared before.

Although connoisseurship is a private act of appreciation, criticism is the public act of disclosure (Uhrmacher et al., 2017), where this public disclosure may be met with affirmation or refutation. For this study, the public critique of a coaching model that has deep roots in the school district, might prove to be problematic. Criticism acts as an appraisal, where there are multiple perspectives or interpretations of an educational enactment (Eisner, 2017). I seek to identify the manner in which a coaching style may or may not support a humanizing/culturally responsive teacher experience. It is possible that

the opinions of the various teacher/coaching pairs may differ. But the beauty of criticism and connoisseurship lies in its ability to *make the strange familiar* (Uhrmacher et al., 2017) through a closeup look at the way coaching practices are received by the coachee. This will provide context for how they feel or don't feel supported with the coaching methods used.

Instructional coaching, like other social and educational experiences, is complex and multilayered. To make this complex practice more *familiar* the use of descriptive language is utilized to provide a “behind-the-scenes perspective” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p.5). To provide an in-depth perspective, educational criticism and connoisseurship focuses on four elements to adequately report the findings from the interviews and artifacts collected during the study: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematic (Eisner, 1998). Each of these focus areas help the educational critic transform the qualities of teaching or leading into a public form that illuminates, interprets, and appraises the qualities of that practice (Eisner, 1998). Through the act of criticism, utilizing the first dimension of this method, description, we can support people to see and understand complex and subtle objects, things, or events, with the use of intentional, descriptive language (Eisner, 1998). A vivid description of coaching interactions allows the reader to “see” the nuances of instructional coaching and the impacts it has on Black teachers.

The second dimension of criticism is interpretation. This dimension provides an in-depth account of what is experienced through observation and fully details that experience with descriptive language. The interpretation helps to explain what all the

words mean. “If description can be thought of as giving an account of interpretation can be regarded as accounting for” (Eisner, 1998, p. 95). As MacNeal-Harris states:

“The writer’s [writer of the description] obligation is not to provide a step-by-step explanation of what the experiences mean, but to provide enough interpretative description to allow the reader [audience] to fully ‘see’, raise fresh questions, and deepen their understanding of the interactions and exchanges to allow the reader to come to develop their own interpretation as well.” (MacNeal-Harris, 2014, p. 48)

Description brings forth the “what” for the reader, the interpretation contributes to the understanding of the “how and why.”

Generally, criticism carries with it a negative connotation and so does the third component of criticism, evaluation. Evaluation can be equated, in the minds of some, with a potentially negative outcome for teachers due to the judging of someone's performance for an annual review, tenure, non-renewal, promotion, et cetera. The focus on evaluation demonstrates the educational critic’s goal of contributing to the improvement of an educational situation (Eisner, 2002). Eisner (2002) describes evaluation as being constructively critical while highlighting both exceptional practice and opportunities for improvement. For this study, it is important to identify where instructional coaches may focus efforts to improve their cultural competency in the teacher supervisory role. Through centering the voices and experiences of Black teachers, the goal of the evaluation component of this study is to provide the context needed for potential improvements to the field.

The final dimension of criticism allows for a summary of shared commonalities within educational settings. These shared commonalities are applied to other situations through a process known as naturalistic generalization (MacNeal-Harris, 2014). Eisner

(1998) warns that generalization in education criticism is not to be confused with the way that the sample population uses generalizations in quantitative research. Instead of generalizations, themes emerge from the data. These themes are reflective of what the researcher observes as reoccurring messages during the interviews and identified through the annotations. Educational criticism generalizations are more organic and individualized, putting the responsibility on the reader to draw relevant conclusions. Themes are formulated as an outcome of educational criticism and are realized through the investigation, not prior to it.

Criticism has the aim and primary function of adjusting one's perception. The researcher has the challenging task “of learning to see and hear” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 10). Simply listening to coaching conversations allows one to be passively engaged, pulling out buzz words, key phrases, or checking off the list of coaching best practice moves. But really hearing the dialogue, picking up on the nuances of supportive language, relationship building exchanges, and humanizing components, requires the type of skills and knowledge that lead to connoisseurship (Uhrmacher et al., 2017).

### **Data Collection**

Data collection consisted of two phases. Phase one was a survey issued to Black teachers and instructional coaches across the US. The coach can fall within any demographic, age, race, school type, but must have coached a Black teacher in the past two years. Phase two consisted of interviews of 8 Black teachers and their instructional coaches (Saxe & Uhrmacher, n.d.), in an effort to ascertain the types and characteristics of coaching experiences that are supportive of Black teachers.

The use of the Likert scale survey serves as phase one of the data collection. The primary goal of the survey was to collect information from a large sample of Black teachers and instructional coaches, across the US, to inform the interview questions for the Criticism and Connoisseurship methodology. The instructional coaches who completed the survey were not expected to fall into any particular racial or cultural category. Surveys that fit into the Likert scale model have rating scales that are varied, though typically contain five, seven, or nine-point agreements, and always assume their indicators are on a linear continuum (Taherdoost, 2019). The survey used a rating of 1-5, with 1 being Never, 3 being Sometimes and 5 being Always. Survey participants were asked a series of questions to determine to what extent they agreed or believed they were impacted by the information in the question. The survey for this study allowed me to examine various facets of culturally responsive interactions between Black teachers and their coaches. This formal Likert-scale survey did not produce measurable quantitative data but was still used to inform the interviews that took place in phase two.

The survey has four sections: teacher and coach demographics, attitudes and beliefs, knowledge and understanding, and skills and practices. In the first part, participants were asked to provide demographic and professional data. This section provided context for the frequency of coaching sessions, as well as information on the type of school, number of years in teaching/coaching, and foundational understanding of culturally responsive coaching. In the other three sections of the survey, they recorded their actual experiences with the cultural competency categories and to what extent the various behaviors were important to them as a recipient or as a giver.

## **Phase 1.**

I recruited Black teachers and instructional coaches to complete a Likert scale survey. The participants were selected based on convenience, snowball sampling through various online platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and University listservs. Although teachers must have identified as Black, instructional coaches could identify as any race and ethnicity for eligibility in this study. This survey was modified from an established tool used in the psychology field developed by Paul T. P. Wong and Lilian C. J. Wong (2000). The original survey is called the Multicultural Supervision Inventory (MSI). The modifications did not alter the intent of the original questions but changed words such as ‘supervisor’ to ‘coach’ and ‘supervisee’ to ‘coachee’ or ‘teacher.’ An additional modification to the survey was the deletion of a section. The section titled Relationships was omitted to align with the original Pedersen pyramid more closely, which contains only 3 tiers. The three tiers are: awareness, knowledge, and skill. The survey was sent out via various online platforms requesting volunteers from the US who met the criteria outlined in the survey. The survey was electronically sent and administered via Qualtrics. The original survey gathered information from participants about culturally competent behaviors enacted on the supervisee or by the supervisor. The modified version will utilize the original questions and incorporate additional questions aimed at collecting data on the level of importance of the behaviors when enacted in coaching relationships.

Example of original question with sub question:

1. Demonstrates openness and respect for culturally different teachers.

1a. How important is it that a coach: Demonstrates openness and respect for culturally different teachers.

### **Demographic Questionnaire.**

I have designed two online demographic questionnaires; one for Black teachers and one for instructional coaches. Participants were asked to provide their: (1) age range, (2) gender, (3) Race/Ethnicity (4) amount of teaching/coaching experience (5) frequency of coaching sessions, additional open-ended questions, and the modified questions of the MSI survey (see Appendix D, Appendix E).

### **Phase 2.**

I recruited Black teachers and their instructional coaches from schools within the Parkside School District. I secured eight participant pairs to agree to the interviews. For one teacher, her unique coaching dynamics afforded me the opportunity to interview two of her coaches. Therefore, I had nine coaches participate in the study. The sample size of eight allows for both depth and the ability to find themes based on data collected through multiple interviews and survey responses (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). The teacher/coach pairs had to meet criteria of having worked together for a minimum of one school year prior to participation in the study, making this their second year working together. Having a past coaching relationship will allow for the teacher to have multiple coaching experiences to reflect upon during the interview.

After finding eight teachers interested in participating, I received permission from the teachers to recruit their instructional coach to participate in the study. My hope was to find diverse coaches: diverse in gender, race/ethnicity and coaching experience (see

chart, p. 70) in chapter four. The criteria for teacher participant selection were a) Black teacher working in Parkside School District and b) the teacher had a minimum of 2 years teaching experience and c) must have an instructional coach willing to participate in the study and d) the teacher and coach have at least one year of working together in a coach/coachee relationship.

Table 2. Data Collection

	Participant(s)	Actual Number	Action	Time Needed
Phase 1	Black Teachers	10	Complete Survey	30 Minutes
	Instructional Coaches	14	Complete Survey	20 Minutes
Phase 2	Black Teachers	8	Zoom Interview (2)	45 mins - 1 hour each
	Instructional Coaches	9	Zoom Interview (1)	45 mins - 1 hours



Table 3. Selection Criteria

	Participants	Inclusion Criteria
Phase 1	Black Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify as Black</li> <li>● Had/has an instructional coach</li> <li>● Works in a K-12 school setting</li> </ul>
	Instructional Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Coaches or has coached a teacher that identifies as Black</li> <li>● Works in a K-12 school setting</li> </ul>
Phase 2	Black Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify as Black</li> <li>● Currently has an instructional coach whom they have worked with for at least 2 years (currently and previous school year)</li> <li>● Works in Parkside School District as a K-12 educator</li> </ul>
	Instructional Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Currently coaches a Black teacher who has agreed to be in the study</li> </ul>

## **Interview**

Eisner (2017) believes interviews are powerful resources for learning how people perceive their work-based relationships. Through the interviews, I gained a greater understanding of the ways Black teachers perceived their coaching experiences. The interviews also revealed the intentions of instructional coaches as those intentions align (or do not align) with the tenets of CRP and humanizing theory.

During data collection, participants engaged in open-ended, semi-structured interviews. Interviews were between 30 mins to 1 hour. Due to COVID-19, the interviews were conducted via Zoom and recorded for transcription. Through the semi-structured interviews, I asked follow-up questions to get both depth and detail from the participants. The initial interview was used to build rapport between the participants and the researcher. Relationship-building was essential to gaining trust and to ensuring that their privacy would be maintained. The initial interview was also used to gather information about the operational curriculum, what the coachee believes happens in the coaching they receive. The coaches had one interview that was completed in around 30 minutes. The coach interview focused on the intended curriculum and their understanding of culturally responsive coaching. We delved into what the coach plans/desires to happen in the coaching sessions that they conduct with their coachee.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Survey**

To analyze the quantitative data from this survey, I looked at each question pair (question one (Q1) and question two of the pair (Q1a)) as one data point and determined

the difference between the two indicators. Q1 questions are answered in relation to how often a practice happens. Q1a questions are answered based on how important the practice is to the teacher. Finding the mean for Q1 reveals the average of culturally responsive practices as they actually occur for teachers. The mean for Q2 reveals the average of culturally responsive practices as they are desired to take place for teachers.

Questions were separated into three categories: large difference (4.0-3.0), medium difference (2.9-1.8) and small difference (1.7-0). The questions with a small difference were flagged as potential questions to ask the instructional coaches and teachers during our interviews. These questions demonstrate that a) a practice is occurring, and it is important to teachers that such an action is being enacted OR b) a practice is not occurring, and it is not deemed as important to teachers. Medium difference questions signify that there is little difference between what is occurring and desired in schools regarding culturally responsive coaching practices. These questions will be removed from the interview question pool. Questions with a large difference, where the importance level is high, and the implementation level is low, were added to the interview bank of questions.

### **Annotation as coding**

For this research study, I used an iterative, circular process to generate themes based on my annotations. Coding comes from the sciences and is more technical in nature in that it seeks specific phrases and their frequencies. Annotation, on the other hand, has roots in the arts, and seeks to annotate text by looking at components such as voice and tone versus isolating phrases for coding (Meister, 2020). The researcher identifies

relationships between phrases to provide a “coalesced picture to form a coherent story” (Uhrmacher et al., p.34). Annotation allows for the nuances of emotions, context of statements, and nonverbals to be captured, allowing for a fuller picture to be painted of the participants' responses to questions. Through the annotation process, I identified themes by using a color-coding system and coding/annotations through the TAMS Analyzer software used to support the coding process. The TAMS Analyzer software allowed multiple iterations of identifying themes that illustrated emerging patterns. I used pattern-finding annotations to look for “configurations of meaning” (Uhrmacher et., 2017, p. 57).

The first step of criticism is description. The description takes place via the survey and the interviews. I gathered information from participants about what culturally responsive practices are enacted in their coaching relationships and which ones are missing, as well as the importance of the various practices. The participants identified the strengths and weaknesses of their coaching relationships through the lens of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. The interpretation (the second stage of criticism) of the strengths and weaknesses, based on survey data, was incorporated into the interview questions to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the various Culturally Responsive Instructional Coaching practices on Black teachers. The use of descriptive statistics provided important information about the teachers' experiences. I focused on the mean of the data and categorized the questions according to the Likert scale indicators (never, always, etc.). Guided by Lichtmans's (2013) circular model, I gathered data, analyzed the data, found meaning in the data, and asked questions of participants in subsequent

interviews. I transcribed and did round one of annotating interviews within a 3-5 day window. The information shared during these sessions was analyzed to identify patterns and emerging themes.

Finally, the evaluation stage (the third stage of criticism), is the description of a phenomenon. Through my evaluation, I sought to show how my study may improve the educational environment, particularly through the recognition of how culturally responsive instructional coaching can impact Black teachers. In this stage, I determined if primary objectives have been met. In this study, the research question “what are the intentions of instructional coaches when coaching Black teachers?,” aims to address some of the primary objectives of coaching.

### **Ethical Concerns**

Ethical considerations were a top priority for this research study. Interviewing teachers and their instructional coaches required that strict anonymity processes are followed and ensuring the participants’ privacy is of utmost importance (Mitchell, 2010). This was particularly important in this study due to the current status of the teacher-coach relationship. Each person received a pseudonym, and I am the only reviewer of the raw data. Participants played a key part in the validation of the study through member checking, which involves the participants’ informal or formal feedback (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). A member checking component was included to allow for participants to review and validate the various data collected during the interviews. The participants signed a letter of informed consent that was confirmed prior to each interview. Therefore, the risks to human subjects were minimal.

## **Reflexivity**

High-quality research must address issues of validity, relevancy, and rigor. One way to do so is for the researcher to adopt an analytical and self-consciously critical approach to capturing data (Finlay, 1998). To achieve the necessary critical approach is to incorporate a reflective method. Finlay argues that reflexivity enables richer understandings, involves thoughtful analysis and disciplined self-reflection (1998).

There are two parts to reflexivity: 1) the researcher identifies experiences with the phenomenon and 2) the researcher discusses how these experiences shape the researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). As the researcher identifies their experiences, they do so through four subjective elements: the researcher's assumptions, expectations, behavior/emotional reactions, and unconscious responses (Finlay, 1998). As a researcher with experiences as a teacher and teacher-coach trained to utilize the various coaching models used in the district of study, I acknowledge my potential presuppositions and the subjectivity I bring to this study. I intend to monitor and track my potential biases through thorough review of my field notes.

For this study, I was an instructional coach interviewing other instructional coaches. I also identify as a Black woman and will be interviewing Black teachers. These are two spaces in which my insider (emic) positioning affords me a unique perspective to engage in this research study. According to Porter (1993), reflexivity in research allows the researcher to put their energies productively towards trying to understand the effect of their experiences rather than trying to figure out how to eliminate them. I appreciate this

perspective and exert my energy to effectively incorporate a reflexive practice in my analysis (Ahern, 1999).

Ahern (1999) suggests several ways to proactively plan for potential bias areas. Identifying one's personal value systems and acknowledging areas in which one is likely more subjective, these are areas to frequently revisit during data analysis. Hanson (1994) states that this is an important strategy in developing a critical perspective through continuous self-evaluation. Another proactive reflexive measure to pay close attention to is during the analysis phase. It will be important to critique my analysis by examining who I am giving voice to and who I might have silenced. Am I favoring certain respondents over others, if so, why? It is in these reflective moments that I am exercising a constant cycle of reflective action and can modify my behaviors accordingly.

### **Summary**

The goal of this chapter is to outline the research method used to answer the research questions. Study participant recruitment, data collection processes, and data analysis procedures were discussed in this chapter. The use of Criticism and Connoisseurship as a methodology supported the theoretical development on what behaviors are foundational to culturally responsive coaching practices for Black teachers.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Introduction to Findings**

In this chapter, I present my findings on the culturally responsive supervisory practices, through coaching relationships among Black teachers and their coaches. The theoretical frameworks that I employed for this investigation included multicultural cultural competency, humanizing pedagogy, and culturally responsive practices. The findings are shared through the lens of Black teachers' experiences as they navigate the educational system, develop relationships with supervisors/coaches, and leverage those relationships to support them in their growth and development. Their experiences were shared through two personal interviews and one interview with their instructional coach. The teacher interviews focused on the teachers current and past experiences in coaching relationships, the coaching structures used, along with their perspectives on how the coaching structures support and humanize their experiences, and what their teaching trajectory looks like. For the coaches, the questions centered around their coaching philosophy, current coaching structure they utilize and their perspective on how the coaching structure works with their Black teachers, as well as ways they can enact the three levels of the cultural competency pyramid in coaching.

I present the data through description, interpretation, and evaluation in accordance with the educational criticism and connoisseurship methodology. The intent is to allow



the voices of the participants to speak through the data while pairing the data with my interpretation as an educational critic. The conclusion initiated through my description and interpretation of the data foreshadows the themes I present in Chapter Five.

I sought out Black teachers teaching in diverse school settings within the Parkside School District. The eight teachers work in different schools and hold various roles within their schools. Some have teacher leadership roles where they teach and serve as coaches to other teachers. All have been with their coach for at least two years and their coaching relationship spans from weekly coaching conversations and observations to periodic observations and brief ‘check-in’ conversations.

The three frameworks, multicultural competency, humanizing pedagogy, and culturally responsive practices shaped the lens for me to interpret the surveys and interviews. These frameworks guided the survey question creation and initial interview drafts and shaped the development of the design phrases of description, interpretation, and evaluation. I began my data analysis by looking for patterns and themes in relation to the research questions through the reading of transcripts and watching the videos of our interview's multiple times. I intentionally scheduled my interviews in a systematic sequence to allow for each interaction to inform the subsequent interaction. Eisner (1991) suggests “information becomes data only if the researcher is able to make meaning of it” (p.185). I used the following sequence to make meaning of the data and inform interview questions throughout the data collection process.

Table 4. Data Collection Sequence:

Steps	Action	Method
1	Review of survey data	Qualtrics
2	Develop teacher interview #1	
3	Conduct teacher interview #1	Zoom
4	Annotate interview, prepare for coaches interview	
5	Conduct coach interview	Zoom
6	Annotate interview, prepare for coaches interview #2	
7	Conduct teacher interview #2	Zoom

Each interview had prepared questions to start the conversation. The initial set of questions served as a guide, but I did not allow them to serve as a restraint for the flow of our dialogue. The first section of the online survey, as well as the first section of interview # 1 consisted of demographic questions. The second section of interview questions corresponds to the different domains that make up the research questions. This

set of questions served as a guide to understand the coaching experiences, ways the participants interpret cultural competencies within their coaching relationship, and the connection to coaching and retention in the field of education. For the teaching interview, we discussed more questions aligned to the research domains but with specific connections to statements made in the coach interviews. Due to the organic nature of the interview protocol, during the first teacher interview, we discussed Dr. Bettina Love's abolitionist coaching questions. From that point on, those questions became a part of the teacher and coaching protocol, and answers are reflected in write ups.

According to Love (2019), abolitionist teaching is built on the creativity, imagination, boldness, ingenuity, and rebellious spirit and methods of abolitionists to demand and fight for an educational system where all students are thriving, not simply surviving. From this belief, abolitionist coaching emerged with a core set of questions for coaches of Black teachers to consider as they strive to create an environment where their Black teachers are thriving, not simply surviving. While not a major component of the study, some of the questions were asked during the coaching interview and teacher interview.

The framing for the questions that were directed at teachers was "if your coach asked you the following questions at the start of your coaching relationship or the beginning of the year, how would these questions land with you:

- What can you tell me that helps me better understand you as a person?
- How can I be the best instructional coach for you?
- How can our coaching relationship be a place where you feel seen, valued, and excited to learn [and grow together]?

To these questions, the teachers overwhelmingly responded positively and expressed that they would feel seen and valued if their coach initiated these conversations as their coaching relationship commences.

For the coaches, the questions were a little modified. The same three questions above were asked of the coach with the framing “have you asked comparable questions before? If not, how would you feel asking these? If so, how were they received by teachers?” Many (7) coaches shared that they had not had conversations like these but that they would like to, and some (5) said they would use these sentence frames in the future. The coaches were also asked the question from the abolitionist coaching questions “How do I embody the spirit of Black teachers mattering in everything I do in my coaching relationship.” I made sure to provide the disclaimer that this is not about the Black Lives Matter movement but that the spirit behind the question is about how Black teachers matter and the ways we embody this sentiment in our coaching practice.

### **Data Coding**

A program called TAMS Analyzer (Text Analysis Markup System) was used to code the data. TAMS is a qualitative research software tool designed to assist researchers in coding and analyzing text data. This program allows for videos and transcripts to be uploaded, then the researcher can highlight various parts of the transcript and assign codes to the section. This process involves identifying themes, patterns, or categories within the data and supports annotation, a key component of Criticism and Connoisseurship. The topics from the Culturally Responsive Coaching Framework served as initial guides for coding the transcripts. Words or concepts that arose from the

different conversations and surveys were added to the codes. TAMS provides various tools to analyze data. It allows for the running of reports based on the researcher's area of need. For this study, reports on frequency of codes and transcript quotes connected to those codes were the primary reports reviewed. After reviewing the frequency of codes, several themes emerged as well as some subthemes. One additional review of transcripts, alongside the recorded interview, was done to provide context to quotes captured during the initial coding process.

The introduction of each teacher and their coach shares salient points taken from the conversations and helps to make meaning of the coaching relationship. The narrative also highlights 1.) the desired relationship the teacher wished to experience with their coach 2.) how the coach can support a culturally responsive relationship and 3.) ways the coach can meet the needs of the coachee. The components I selected in the Culturally Responsive Instructional Coaching framework are highlighted and meaning and context are provided for how the components manifest in teacher/coach relationships. While each participant shared components of the entire framework through their answers, some statements stood out and are captured in the introductions as the salient theme of the conversation. Although collective themes will be discussed more in Chapter Five, I wanted to touch upon the most salient individual themes of each participant. The major focus is on the teacher, so much of the narrative highlights their words, thoughts, and perspectives, as I work to center them in this study. However, the words of the coach provide context and understanding for how the teacher receives or longs to receive various coaching experiences.

Table 5. Participants Information:

Pseudonym	YRS Ed	Race	Role	School Pseudonym	School Type
Julia	4	Black	Middle School Teacher	Shawline	Innovation
Tiana	7 years	Black	Middle/High	Chambers	Traditional
Stephanie	4 years	Black	Middle/High	Chambers	Traditional
Linda	4 years	Black	High School	Goodyear High	Alternative
Faith	5 years	Black	High School	Spring Ridge	Charter
Sonya	8 years	Black	Elementary	Orange Grove	Traditional
Angela	12 years	Black	High School	Spring Ridge	Charter
Donald	13 years	Black	Elementary	Ranger	Traditional

Ashley	Coaching 5 years	White	Assistant Principal	Shawline	Innovation
Allen	Coaching 12 years	White	Assistant Principal	Goodyear High	Alternative
Melanie	Coaching 3 years	White	Instructional Coach	Spring Ridge	Charter
Keith	Coaching 7 years	White	Instructional Coach	Spring Ridge	Charter
Sidney	Coaching 4 years	Black	Assistant Principal	Chambers	Traditional
Sarah	Coaching 8 years	White	Assistant Principal	Chambers	Traditional
Melissa	Coaching over 10 years	White	Principal	Orange Grove	Traditional
Diane	Coaching 5 years	White	Instructional Coach	Ranger	Traditional

Kayla	Coaching 5 years	Latina	Instructional Coach	Chambers	Traditional
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**Julia, Middle School Language Arts**

**Introduction: Safety**

Julia teaches Language Arts in a middle school within the district. The school is an innovation school, which means it runs as a district supported school but has a high level of flexibility around its budgeting, expenditures, and curriculum (DPS online). This is Julia’s third year at this school and fourth year of teaching as the primary classroom instructor. Her school services students in grades six through eight. The demographics of the school represent a diverse student body which includes 48% of students of color. The teaching staff does not reflect the diversity of the school, but Julia shared a lot about the school’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work and the level of comfort she has as a teacher of color in the school.

Julia has an interesting perspective on her teaching job. She states “teaching is not a job for me anymore, I call it my hobby. It is my hobby because I love coming up with new ways to teach a lesson or new ideas for something that keeps kids engaged and intrigued to learn” (interview one). Both Julia and her coach discuss how creative and engaging she is with her instructional delivery. She started her career as a paraprofessional at a school in her neighborhood. She talked about how she walked her son to school as an ECE student and then walked to her paraprofessional job at a local



school in the same neighborhood. During our conversations she highlighted her strong relationships with her students. On the schools' website, she is quoted as saying "*I love being able to build long lasting relationships with students and families.*" This belief echoed through the conversation and the way she beamed when talking about her students. She discussed the unconventional way she approaches instruction. Her approach has yielded great academic gains and lands her on the Effective category on the teacher effectiveness rubric the school uses for observations and evaluations.

Ashley is Julia's coach. They have worked together for two years. Julia shared one of the many things she appreciates about her relationship with Ashley is the push for Julia to "put her Ms. Bell spin" on her lessons. Ashley serves as a constant support for Julia's growth and development through frequent coaching meetings and observations. Due to the relationship they have established through their observation and feedback cycles, the open and honest manner in which they communicate, and the years they have worked together, the duo has cultivated a working relationship where Ashley knows Julia's practice well and can support her to dig deep and pull out the "Julia pizzazz" to incorporate into lessons. Because of Julia's unconventional approach, Ashley sometimes gets push-back from parents who are not used to this style of teaching. When this happens, Ashley is usually the point of contact as Julia's coach. A specific situation shared during our interview leads me to one of the identified themes that arose from the data. The notion of safety was shared by several participants, but Julia and Ashley described safety in a way that resonated with the researcher to help tease out a deeper meaning connected to Culturally Responsive Coaching practices.

Safety in connection to CRC practices is demonstrated, according to Julia and Ashley, by a level of protection and an ability to be free to be the type of teacher she wants to be. When parents, who are unfamiliar with Julia's style, reach out to the administration to 'share concern or complain' about some of her 'unconventional' ways, Ashley is a layer of protection for Julia. Ashley fields the call, reassures the families that they are in good hands and fills Julia in on the call as an FYI, not as a rebuke or reprimand. This level of support was greatly appreciated by Julia. The lack of this support caused her to seek a different working environment, therefore leaving one school in hopes of finding a more supportive and affirming environment.

In connecting to the idea of 'freedom to be the kind of teacher she wants to be,' Julia and Ashley made connections to the concept of 'authenticity.' Although not explicitly named as such, statements were made that connect to this concept of being able to show up as one's authentic self in an environment that may or may not be ready/open to receive such in the moment. Julia shared that Ashley would encourage her to 'put her Mrs. Smith spin' on the lesson. Or suggested that 'the lesson did not have enough of Julia's personality in it.' These words of encouragement were Ashley's way of encouraging Julia to bring all of her into the classroom. They both shared a push for Julia to step into her leadership space more authentically. There was a concern from Julia she would need to be reserved for fear of people not being ready to receive her in the space, but Ashley assured her that it was the right next move. Ashley talked about PDs that take place at the school and the intentionality behind creating a safe environment for diversity to fill the space in whatever way possible. Connecting back to the comments of "putting a Ms.

Bell spin” on her lessons, this strikes me as the way Ashley tried to encourage Julia to be authentically Julia. “With Ashley, I don’t have to be anything else but me.” (interview 2)

In chapter five, I will expand on the theme of Safety as it - in various constructs - comes up in each conversation and throughout the survey. Safety, as defined by Webster, is the condition of being protected from undergoing or causing hurt, injury, or loss. The way harm and injury manifest itself in schools for Black teachers may not be in the physical but there is constant harm, hurt, and loss taking place within schools across the nation (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020).

Julia parallels her experiences between her two different school sites and the different ways the two coaches coached her. The link between safety in the two spaces was clear. Her first coach, Debbie, was supportive and caring. Debbie helped Julia grow as a teacher, but Julia did not feel as safe with Debbie as she does with Ashley. Debbie made it clear that meeting specific visual markers was most important.

“Debbie was a great coach, but she was a coach where rules and regulations were most important. If I made a relationship with the kids too, great, but posting the learning objective was most important. But with Ashley, I was allowed to be me. The focus with Ashley felt more humanizing.” (interview 2)

Julia received high ratings on the performance framework in both school environments but the feel of the two coaching approaches were quite different.

### **Ashley, Instructional Coach**

Ashley has been coaching for five years. Her coaching philosophy is built on the notion that one size does not fit all; therefore, she understands the need to adjust based on

the person in front of you. There are constant components that she incorporates with all coaches. She desires for each coachee to leave their conversations with their idea of what the classroom space looks like, student outputs and their desired outcomes. Through that shared understanding, they co-create their coaching focus. Ashley expressed an understanding that every classroom is not going to look a certain way and that is acceptable. She acknowledges that most of her teaching and coaching ways are learned from a white way of being, but the way the classroom functions under Julia is different and amazing. She stated that through observations of Black teachers' classrooms that she saw practice that was

“not traditional but was working for kids. Kids were leaning in, captivated...all students, also students who did not look like our Black teachers were fully engaged, so it was working for everybody. It was telling to me that this was a cultural thing I was not aware of. It may not work for what was in my mental model, but I was learning a lot about Black educator presence in the classroom.” (interview one)

The coaching feedback is rooted in the district's teacher effectiveness framework. This serves as a great conversational point to jump off. She does not align solely with one coaching model but toggles between Cognitive Coaching © and Relay Coaching depending on the coachee. Relay's planning template is helpful, but she finds Relay to be “rigid & stale.” Whereas CC tends to be “too loose and takes a little more time to get through.” When thinking about one coaching style over the other, in terms of which, in her experience, has worked better with Black teachers, she could not definitively state one, however, leaned more towards the CC style due to the conversational nature of the

approach. “The dialogue between me, as the coach, and the teachers of color I coach, has been foundational to create a trusting coaching relationship” (interview one).

The notion of safety arose in our conversation when Ashley talked about the coaching relationship, she likes to develop with her coachees. She desires her coachees to feel loved, safe, and trusted in their coaching relationship. She admits that her philosophy is a little unconventional but strives to create this space through her coaching style of asking questions, conversation, and accountability.

Ashley stated that her coaching of Julia had to include a realization that Julia was a Black educator, not just an educator.

“Being a Black woman is a part of who she is, and as her coach, I have to be aware of this to fully support her. Julia has helped to make a safe space for the partnership to grow together and develop the coaching relationship because of our honest, open conversations.” (interview one)

Ashley noted, in past coaching relationships with Black teachers, she is not sure that they received the most out of the relationship because there was not any “friction.” Friction, in this instance, is defined as

“difference between how they taught or managed the classroom and the way I believed a classroom should look. Either they were not being their authentic selves, or they operated under the white normative school structure...so there was not a misalignment that necessitated conversation around culturally responsiveness.” (interview one)

She did not take pride in this. It is not ideal that her coachees did not feel present their authentic selves or felt that they could not be with her. She shared that she appreciates Julia for helping to push her to be a better coach. “It is my goal to see teachers as experts in their craft, lift up the greatness that they bring to the school community, their classroom, and the effort they make to ensure our students get the education they deserve” (interview one). This is reflected through authentic relationships developed as a true partnership.

### **Angela, High School Special Education**

#### **Introduction: Protection**

Angela is a High School Special Education teacher working at a local charter school in the district. She is new to the district and mentions how different her current and former school settings are from each other. In her former placement, she shared that she did not have a consistent coach and did not receive feedback on her practice often.

“This year has proven to be one of the most impactful and rewarding experiences because I am being validated for my expertise and receiving clear next steps on how to improve my practice. I must say that this is super sad because this is my tenth year in education. Having been in the profession for this long and to finally have a partner to support me is refreshing, but disappointing that this is not the norm in every school across the US.” (interview one)

Her coach has a lot of experience in Special Education and wants to learn from Angela and share his knowledge. Angela appreciates the collaboration.

She describes Keith's coaching style as collaborative and protective. Because he understands the workload and government rules and regulations, he can support the team in real ways. During their weekly meetings, he checks up on areas of concern expressed by Angela in past meetings. For example, Angela shared a struggle she was having contacting a parent. Keith offered support by doing a home visit to get the necessary paperwork signed. As a long-standing member of the community, he leveraged his relationships with families to get over a hurdle Angela was having difficulty navigating. The protective aspect comes into play because Keith makes sure to shield the special education team from having additional roles and responsibilities added to their already full plates by school and district admin.

Keith is mindful of federal requirements and helps the team to plan accordingly to meet deadlines. He has had conversations with various members of the admin team to ensure they are aware of deadlines and how the special education team members may be impacted. He has requested that the team members be excused from staff meetings to work on required paperwork for upcoming deadlines. These actions and others are what help to make Angela feel protected in her current school. Again, this is quite different from her past school district and is very welcomed.

When looking at the Cultural Competency Pyramid, Angela describes Keith's protection and safety behaviors as a skills level attribute. She says

“He has created a space and grown to know my abilities. He knows what I can handle and am capable of. He also listens during our conversations, makes notes, and follows up to make sure I feel supported. He has made sure I feel safe to share when I need

help. It does not mean I am incompetent or incapable of doing my job; it just means he is there to support me when I need it. He never questions my work ethic or work quality because I need support. This creates a sense of safety.” (interview 2)

Authenticity of self has been a privileged space where Angela has comfortably been able to be in at Spring Ridge. She does not feel as if she has been able to do that before.

“We look forward to our weekly meetings to have free and open discussions. This past week, we had to meet in the hall because all the offices were taken due to testing. We joked that being in the hall has stifled our freedom to speak. I value the ability to be so free, especially because this was not my story prior to coming to this school. I do not have to second guess what I am saying. I do not have to worry if I am going to hurt somebody's feelings if I say this.” (interview 2.

She believes that it is due to Keith’s vulnerability within their relationship that has paved the way for them to have such an open and safe partnership. In past supervisory relationships, she was not free to discuss weaknesses or areas of uncertainty. With Keith, sharing these things with him will not come back to “bite her in the butt.”

“I believe he is genuine in his care for me. I can tell him that I have too much on my plate and he hears me and provides a solution that is supportive. It is not abnormal for him to encourage me to take a flex day because I am overwhelmed with all the additional tasks or upcoming deadlines.” (interview 2)

Angela notes these experiences as being one of the more humanizing experiences for her in education. She felt dehumanized most when administrators in her other schools disregarded her feelings of being overwhelmed by commenting “everyone has a lot to



do.” She felt like her leader did not care or want to help solve it. Her feelings were disregarded and minimized to a place of “so what or what makes you special when everyone else has a lot to do too.” (interview 2) She believes that this kind of dismissive behavior sends the message that teachers, herself included, were dispensable and not valued.

When asked about mindsets/attitudes that a coach should have, Angela touched on an area that others did not explicitly name but touched on throughout the interviews.

“Societal factors impact teachers of color on a daily basis, and it is sometimes a trigger. And as a coach, you must be aware of them and be willing to discuss them with your coachees. Not talking about them is somewhat dismissive of what I am experiencing, and these things have an impact on me as I do my job. I know it is sometimes uncomfortable but pretending that they don’t have an impact on me is a missed opportunity to support, lend an ear, or simply acknowledge my daily struggles.” (interview 2)

While coaches may not know what to say to help the teacher ‘feel better,’ the avoidance of the conversation sends a message that may not be the intent of the coach but impacts the relationship, nonetheless.

Angela shared her concluding thoughts to coaches encouraging them to be inquisitive. “Ask questions and have an open mind. Know that everything is not going to look the same for everyone. People have different teaching styles and that does not make the style wrong, it is just different. See how it is working for the kids. Find out the why behind things before making a judgment call.” (interview 2)

These words of caution can be echoed by many others in this study. Black teachers feel as if they must be a clone of other teachers, in particular, a clone of white teachers to be deemed effective. Angela and others caution coaches to check their biases and be open to diverse ways of teaching.

**Coach: Keith**

Keith has been a coach for over 7 years. His coaching philosophy is to coach the human being first.

“Knowing who they are and what they are needing in their work life and personal life. I believe that the teacher knows what they need to work on, they are very self-aware. They might not know the pathway for how to get there, but they have an idea of the areas needed for growth and development. I support them to get there but they own the development. This just works better than me coming up with the things. They are more bought into the areas of focus that they determine for themselves.” (Interview one)

When he starts his coaching relationships, he shares his areas of growth and where he is focusing with his coach. He believes this creates a safe space for both to share, learn and grow.

When asked if coaching is race neutral or if race and culture play a part in his coaching dynamics, he admitted that he had not thought about it before. But reflecting, he would say that he noticed that his teachers of color were not always in alignment with the Relay teaching structure. He had not realized that his method of teaching was Relay style because he had fully adopted the structure when he was a classroom teacher and had

good data, therefore, this was the style he felt comfortable with. He came to realize that his teachers of color were not fans of this style because

“it doesn’t feel authentic to them. It feels like they are given a prescription versus guidelines given. It was given more as ‘these are the things you will do to reach student outcomes instead of here are the student outcomes we are striving for; how do we get there together” (interview one).

He shared that he feels like this has been a miss in our coaching model and is not culturally responsive to some teachers.

“I learned so much from one of my coachees about how to be intentional about asking questions and listening. The way this teacher approached teaching was very relationship focused. I had to put aside my view of teaching from how I was taught in college and what I learned through practice and really listen so that it is not like I am trying to fit them into a mold of some sort” (interview one).

It all comes back to relationships. Relationships that are intentionally nurtured through the coaching relationship where the coach listens to the teacher to understand who they are, what their needs are, and how they want to be supported.

## **Faith, High School Mathematics**

### **Introduction: Authenticity**

Faith has been teaching for over three years at her current school. Prior to coming to Spring Ridge, she taught math and physics in another country. Because the school systems are so vastly different, she has spent a lot of time learning the curriculum to ensure she is teaching the information her students need to be successful in the current

school system. She feels as if she has had to adapt her teaching style to fit a certain way of teaching here. She values the coaching relationship she has with her coach, Melanie, because Melanie has a math background. Faith appreciates the content knowledge support she receives and the observation feedback she gets during the coaching debriefs.

“She gives me information that I might not be seeing in class. Having input from an outside observer, it's the best thing that I can ask for because sometimes I might not be able to see minute details about students, but they can give accurate insights based on observations” (interview one).

During the coaching debrief, they discuss the lesson and other areas of focus that are determined by Faith. This has helped to improve Faith's teaching and classroom environment.

Culturally responsive teaching has been a focus area at Spring Ridge.

“I think that in school, in general, we think of how to be culturally responsive in classrooms, how to add a student experience to a lesson, how to make them feel seen and valued. But we don't talk about that, in the way that we treat staff or the way that we treat each other. So, it's not something that is on the school's radar. If there is a coach, treating you differently, seeing you, seeing your race, seeing you as a person, unique in your own way, it's something that is a very individual decision. It is not the network culture and not part of school culture to just spread this way of thinking to see staff as they are. The push is on teachers to do that for students, not for admin to do this for staff” (interview one).

If the admin focused on doing this for teachers, seeing and valuing them for the unique attributes they possess, it would look like, according to Faith, allowing her to teach in a way that feels more natural to her style. She would not have to teach math in a box, where every math classroom looked a certain way or had to teach math in a specific way. Ideally, Faith would see culturally responsive teacher related practices as one that gave her some freedom to add her own personality to teaching, and right now, she does not see that as an option in her current school.

Faith admits she has a good relationship with her coach and thinks she would support her being more authentically in the classroom. But Faith is still fearful of moving forward in such a way. The math classroom structure is so ingrained in the school culture, that she feels that her efforts would not be received well. “Authenticity is a space of privilege that many black people struggle to navigate even when they seem to have ‘permission’” (Martin, R., 2023). If the leadership team made it clear that the culture of the school and district would support a movement in the classroom, Faith would feel more comfortable and would try new ways of teaching. She would incorporate her own style, which she had before coming to Spring Ridge.

When asked if Faith saw herself as a teacher or as a Black teacher, essentially, she sees a distinction in these two spaces as a teacher. Faith was passionate about the reason behind her affirmative perspective on this question.

“I’m a Black teacher that advocates for Black rights, Black culture, Black teachers, and Black staff in their roles for them to be viewed as valid. So, it must be different, because if I’m only to consider myself a teacher, I’m not able to do that because I’m

not seeing those differences. So yes, there is a teacher version of me and a black teacher version that advocates for what I think we should get and how we should be treated” (interview one).

Faith highly values and appreciates the coaching relationship she has with her coach. She feels that the coaching relationship can impact her desire to stay in school and can push her to leave a school if the relationship is not supportive or helping her to grow. Faith does not want to be stagnant. Being the best math teacher for her students is her top priority. She also credits the other teachers at her school for being supportive and encouraging. This has a part to play in her deciding to stay in a school as well. At her current school, they have a number of team meetings, so a good collegial relationship is very important. Money comes in as a distant third place for consideration in staying in a school or education. She values relationships with her coach as number one and relationships with her team as number second.

Faith describes her ideal coaching relationship as one where

“I have the freedom to say what I want. Having a safe space to say what I want and what I need is important to me. In terms of observations, I need my coach to give me feedback on what I need to do to improve.” (interview 2)

Because of the long-standing coaching relationship that Faith and Melanie have, Faith feels as if they have progressed to this ideal coaching relationship.

### **Coach: Melanie**

Melanie has been in education for over 12 years. She was a high school Math teacher for nine years before becoming an instructional coach in her school district. She always

knew she wanted to be a coach or in some sort of leadership position but really wanted to focus on knowing her content, inside and out, prior to transitioning to such a role. The opportunity presented itself in year nine, so she took the leap into school leadership. She doesn't know if she could really pinpoint a coaching philosophy for herself but she "enjoys partnering with teachers and solving problems alongside them" (interview one).

Melanie further describes her coaching style as adaptable to the teachers she works with.

"I wouldn't necessarily say that I am fully a relay style coach, but rather I use some principles with some of the people I coach who I feel the style works well with. I have several teachers who went through the relay model and that works well. And then with others it's just about asking questions, seeing what they need and what support that they need, and seeing how I can support them" (interview one).

She goes on to explain some of the determining factors connected to how she coaches her teachers. It is not a hard and fast rule that she follows but in general, she has a couple new teachers that were coached with Relay during their student teaching, so she continues using this method with them.

"I have several teachers who are in their third to sixth year of teaching. For them it's more like 'here's something that I noticed, tell me more about this', it's more of a question style of coaching. And then I have several teachers who have 10 plus years of experience. With those teachers, it's more 'what is it that you want me to watch for, and I will give you feedback on that thing and how do you want to be developed. I will research and develop you in that way" (interview one).

According to Melanie, at their school (and others in the district) there is an expected way of teaching. Lessons are to follow a specific structure and style of delivery. This is something Faith mentioned in her interview as well. Melanie's perspective on this style addresses the lack of cultural competency within this model.

“Spring Ridge has a coaching model, and way of coaching so that lessons look a certain way, and I don't know that that's always culturally responsive to people of color. In this style of teaching, I don't feel like Black teachers were represented, historically, in developing the way that we teach in the network. They have shared that they don't feel heard when discussing the way these lessons look. So as a coach, I think there's this place where coaches just need to be open to something different than the structured Spring Ridge way of teaching. And I would say that I probably coach to make sure that the lessons look like what the district wants them to look like” (interview one).

Hence, perpetuating a somewhat oppressive teaching environment for teachers of color that Faith alluded to.

When asked to elaborate on the previous comments from Black teachers regarding their perception of the lesson plan structure and current coaching model (Relay), she shared concepts around 1.) White savior mentality, 2.) Rigidity and 3.) Hierarchical/top down.

“Our network and structure can sometimes feel like we have a white savior mentality and that we're pushing that on teachers to then push onto students. Teachers are forced to assimilate to this structure and there isn't much flexibility in how this is



done. Black teachers are leaving our district partly because of lack of control in the classroom to be their authentic selves. Another reason for leaving is connected to the feeling of white people telling you how you have to do it and this is the way that you have to do it in order to get kids to learn, often Black and Brown kids. And this is coming from the top down to the classroom, not influenced by the people in the classrooms, or at least the Black teachers don't feel as if they have a say so in the structure" (interview one).

Over time, Black teachers decide to find schools where they are not forced into a specific box but are allowed to teach in a manner that is effective but not so constraining.

When thinking about the three levels of the cultural competency pyramid, Faith believes that her coach excels in the area of attitudes/mindsets. Melanie has an open mind and genuinely wants to know about Faith's culture and encourages her to bring her full self into the classroom and the school community. Faith has shared aspects of her culture during whole school meetings with the encouragement of her coach and other people in the school. Faith appreciates that Melanie respects the classroom environment and values inquiry-based approach that Melanie has.

### **Sonya, Elementary Special Education**

#### **Introduction: Competence/Proof of Worth**

Sonya has an extensive teaching career. She has taught music outside of the public school system for a number of years prior to transitioning into elementary education as a special education teacher. She was a student teacher at Orange Grove Elementary school and was hired on full time at the end of her student teaching year. This year is her eighth-

year teaching in this school district. She credits her longevity in her current school to the support of the school leadership, professional development opportunities from the district, and the leadership opportunities she has been afforded as a teacher leader.

Sonya has had the same coach for the entirety of her time at Orange Grove. They meet weekly for coaching conversations, but her coach is accessible more frequently if needed. During their conversations they discuss the data from her progress monitoring and develop action steps for support. She describes the coaching philosophy of the school to be very student-centered. Coaching is focused on student data and is outcomes driven. The coaching conversations also include discussion about the teachers who Sonya coaches. Sonya receives coaching support for Jen to build her skills as a teacher leader.

An area that makes Sonya feel valued and appreciated with her coach is when she is acknowledged for some of the things she has done and does on a daily basis. As a team lead, coach of others, and as a teacher, simple acknowledgement of her contributions to the school community would go a long way to make her feel appreciated. Sonya went on to say that her coach does a good job of doing this already. Her coach's efforts don't go unnoticed.

When asked how you would define Culturally Responsive Coaching, she was unsure how to answer that question. I probed further to get at the heart of the matter, what is needed from a coach to support you developing a positive coaching relationship where you feel seen, valued, and heard. Sonya shared an example from a recent experience to provide an exemplar of an off-putting relationship starter with a district leader assigned to their building.

“We have a new district leader who has come in with a ‘my word is the word’ disposition. And to make matters worse, what she's saying is not even accurate. She has this ‘my way or the highway’ mentality and isn’t even right with the things she is saying. It’s bad enough to have that attitude, but then to be wrong, that makes it worse. She had no idea of my background or expertise, she didn’t bother to ask. It’s the lack of inquiry or a lack of even caring to inquire that feels gross. Here you have a whole bunch of people that have expertise in their own field, and you don’t acknowledge that in other people. Find out what people bring to the table. It’s a small way of showing respect and to say I see you and I value you” (interview one).

Sonya desires a partnership with her coach and those who are assigned to support her. When administrators approach the relationship in a hierarchical manner, it doesn’t feel like they are going to be able to establish a partnership. The top-down approach leaves Sonya feeling as if the coach is saying “I’m telling you what to do, how to do it, now go fetch and do it” (interview one). The impact on the coaching relationship leaves Sonya feeling like she has to prove her bio, which is connected to her value add in the school, but the coach can move freely without demonstrating their competence in the position.

In education, culturally responsive teaching practices can be employed with all students. Not only will students of color benefit from the practices but so will their white peers. For example, incorporating the students' culture into the learning environment or forming meaningful relationships or activating prior knowledge...all are practices called out in the literature for CRP. Any of these practices will be well received by all demographics. Similarly, there are coaching practices that would be supportive and

affirming for any educator, but an intentional focus on Black teachers appears to be necessary according to Sonya.

“Historically, Black teachers have had to prove that they know things and are capable of doing the job, there needs to be specific attention to culturally responsive practices for coaches when coaching Black teachers. One manager questioned my data and asked how I was able to have such gains. I showed her and it was like she was shocked that I could do it. Why be shocked? My resume speaks for itself but because she did not know because she assumed that I did not know things. I used to feel like I had to prove myself. Now I do my job and it has to come back around where you get to see it” (interview one).

Sonya feels safe and seen in her current coaching environment and plans to stay for the long haul. Her current coach understands Sonya’s skillset, knows the level of expertise she has in Special Education, and values her contributions to the team. She shared that if her coach changed and they were not culturally responsive, and did not approach their relationship as a partnership, she would consider looking elsewhere for employment.

When it comes to growth and developments, she shared that a Teacher of Color cohort established by the district has been a great space to be safe and learn from each other. The group members are able to share freely and provide advice to one another. The feeling of "not being in this alone" has been supportive as some of the teachers are the only teachers of color in their teaching domains (for example, the only 2nd grade teacher of color).

Sonya shared two instances where she felt most humanized in her position. For Sonya, humanizing feels like validation and appreciation. A few years ago, Sonya's principal came to her and shared his desire for Sonya to become a teacher leader. He made it clear that he did not understand why she wasn't already a teacher leader with such stellar performance over the years. She felt validated and seen. Another instance was with a teacher she was coaching. Initially the teacher refused to implement Sonya's feedback. The teacher pushed back on the suggestions as unnecessary. Sonya provided examples of how to execute the practice and explained the rationale. Sonya moved on to other coaching feedback areas. Sometime later in the year, the teacher came back to Sonya and apologized and shared that she had finally implemented the feedback and saw the impact on her practice. This was another time where she felt validated, and her expertise acknowledged.

She shared a few more examples where her leaders and peers have acknowledged her value add to the school community. She was nominated anonymously to be interviewed by a radio station for exemplary teaching. The district's teachers of color leadership cohort required a nomination to participate. Sonya does not know who nominated her, but she is grateful as it has been a great training space for her growth and development. These examples show her that she is seen for her hard work and dedication to the profession.

When asked what the biggest retention strategy is to keep Black teachers, she believes it is making sure that Black teachers feel valued and to make it a priority to hire other Black teachers. She knows that she does a good job, her evaluations and resume show

that she is great at her job. But it goes a long way to have this be expressed from school leaders through small gestures. Hiring other Black teachers shows that you value and appreciate diversity. Valuing and appreciating diversity is important to her as a Black person.

**Coach: Melissa**

Melissa has been with the school district since 2003. She has had a number of roles prior to being the school leader at Orange Grove Elementary School. She has been Sonya's coach for several years and feels that they have a good working relationship. Melissa credits her coaching style to years of great coaches she has had as well as leadership training, she has been involved with. Her collective description of her coaches included characteristics of inclusivity, a great example of someone going through their own challenges but able to model how to effectively lead through those challenges. These leaders modeled connection and the importance of relationships. It was also important to connect as a team and grow from one another. She mentioned the need for attention to the human piece with a few of her past mentors. Getting into the work was important but taking time to understand the humanism was valuable.

The core of her coaching philosophy is to "focus on the relationship and the human first. Distributed leadership and the importance of distributed leadership coming through some vein of empowerment, high expectations with supports" (interview one). She notes that her core belief is solid, but she knows that changing and adjusting the coaching approach might have to shift based on what the person needs. "How we wax and wane from that and what your employee or your person or the person you're behind right now

needs is for you to be able to flex between those different spaces” (interview one). Her comfortable leadership space is as a nurturer but understands that sometimes being more directive may also be needed.

During her explanation of her coaching philosophy Melissa mentioned that as a school, they don’t use Teach Like a Champion (a text used with the Relay coaching model) much because they don’t find it to be

“equitable. I feel like we were just recreating prison. Like, I'm in charge. I'm going to use my power to control this room, to control the situation, to control anything. I'm not here for power. I'm here for influence. At the very most. So, for us it was like, we don't want to already come in as a faculty where, we are handing a bunch of white affluent teachers a book, or some theories or some practices that are saying, use power, use power to control that room, use power to control that situation. We already have a disconnect between the representation in our building (mostly white staff, mostly Black and Latino students). The last thing that we need is to fuel that fire by giving them a set of things that are going to make them feel like we are the warden in the room” (interview one).

She does say that Relay has given a number of protocols for instruction that can be used to help facilitate conversations and does not have to be used a certain way. She feels like she can modify those protocols as she sees fit. She wanted to be clear that she was not bashing Relay; she just realized that the training she received wasn’t who they wanted to be and wanted to ‘dial it back’.

Melissa described her ideal coaching relationship as one where “there are clear expectations for me and for them, for us together. I want it to be authentic. My hope would be that it would be consistent enough for us to see the success of it and see some growth for both of us. I think at the end of the day. I want someone to feel like they're not alone in this work. To me, it's a collaborative consultative partnership. Summed up as: authentic, genuine, consistent and clear.” (interview one).

When asked if she felt culture played a role in the way in which she interacts with her coachees, she said it absolutely does. She goes on to say that the culture of her students, staff culture, school culture all come into play. “This has been my blind spot and is a constant work in progress” (interview one). Because of her upbringing, she has been intentional about doing the work of expanding her cultural competency. Living in a rural town with limited racial diversity, she realized that she had to do the work for herself and has been on the journey since moving from her small town. Melissa's work started with her acknowledgement that she had a savor mindset early on and worked to start digging into her own white privilege. Starting with understanding herself, before trying to understand others around her, was an important part of doing the work.

### **Donald, Elementary Educator**

#### **Introduction: Feedback**

Donald teaches 5th grade at Ranger Elementary. This is his 13th year teaching at the same school, 15th year in education. Ranger serves a unique population of students. Its demographic compilation makes it one of the most diverse elementary schools in the



district. The school prides itself on creating systems that support their transient student population.

A Black male in his 40s, the only Black male in his school, Donald is confident in his craft and works to improve for his students and families. He grew up in this school district and volunteers as a coach of one of the high school teams. Donald's family has a long history of working in the district, serving in the district, and raising their own kids within this district. He considers himself a lifer in the district and plans to retire from the classroom because he does not want to do any other job...this is where his passion lies.

I asked Donald about his current coaching relationship. He shared that he and his coach have been a pair for over 3 years. But he has known her for many more because she was a teacher in his school prior to becoming a coach. He values the coaching relationship because he craves feedback that is designed to help him grow. "I need feedback to fix the mistakes I make; this is how I get better. Feedback that will help me grow is what I thrive off of" (interview one). This is one of the main roles of a coach, according to Donald. Along with providing feedback, the coach is there to show the teacher what they are doing wrong and follow up to ensure teacher success. Donald goes on to say, "providing feedback is one step, but going the extra mile to show what the feedback looks like in practice, is the most helpful." (interview 2) The demonstration is not always needed but only telling what needs to be done, in theory, does not help to build a good coaching relationship according to Donald.

As a teacher of color, Donald expressed that his current coaching experiences were fairly race neutral. When asked "what would it feel like to have experiences where your

culture was acknowledged and what does that look like, sound like?” he answered enthusiastically “that would be awesome” (interview one). The way the school leaders train teachers to be culturally responsive with students, these practices can be applied to teachers, according to Donald. The ability to understand who the person is, not just as a teacher, supports the relationship. “We are asked to figure out more about our kids, how they work, what they want, what makes them tick - it's the same with us” (interview one).

Donald shared that the absence of conversations that involve race, ethnicity and/or culture is not helping to create trusting relationships and does not feel humanizing. I asked why he thought these needed dialogues are lacking in coaching spaces. “In some cases, they are intimidated, they don’t know what to expect, and sometimes I understand, but you never know until you try” (interview one). There is a missed opportunity to create an authentic, genuine relationship where the coach can get to know the teacher as a person. The fear of crossing boundaries is understandable, but it is a barrier that needs to be torn down. “I understand that some want to ‘keep it business-like’ but this is not the field where you should do that. You have to take the risk and get to know me as a person. Most of all keep it authentic (interview one).” Authenticity comes out in the questioning and dialogue where both share in the discussion.

When starting at his school, he shared that he was not always comfortable being his authentic self. He felt prohibited from doing so due to

“what are they going to think about me, think about what I do and how I do it, what I look like, and even how I talk. These things impacted how I thought about teaching

and how I taught in my classroom. When people were in my room, I thought about what other teachers looked like teaching and it shaped my teaching. I just wanted to fit in, get in with the program.” (interview 2)

Over the years, he has developed his own style and way of teaching. It took time to get to this place, but he now feels like he shows up as his authentic self. He credits some of his evolution to his neighboring teacher. He says that she encouraged him by saying “you have to bring your intangibles to the plate. It’s not about what everyone else is doing. What can you bring to add to what everybody is doing? How can you stand out?” (interview 2)

Donald states that he has a great relationship with his coach. He expressed that they are friends. However, he also shared that he does not feel that they have had genuine conversations about race or discussions where he has had the opportunity to share who he is as a Black male or his experiences in teaching as a Black educator. This seems to be a missing component of their relationship, although having worked together for over 3 years. He restated that there is a piece of him that would appreciate the acknowledgement but understands that ‘race’ is the elephant in the room. “Being the only Black male in the school brings a level of diversity, diversity in thought, perspective, experience, that no one else can bring to the community” (interview one). Therefore, acknowledgement and hearing how much one is appreciated is helpful and meaningful.

He shares that he initially did not see the distinction between being an educator and being a Black educator. However, as time has gone on, he has shifted his perspective.

“It is important to make the distinction and my colleagues should as well. My coach sees me as an educator, not as a black educator. There's a part of me that is not seen. It is important to me to be [fully] seen and valued. Acknowledging the work put into being a better educator goes a long way. Something like that could make my day” (interview one).

This same sentiment was shared by multiple respondents expressing that there is value in being fully seen in the workplace.

When asked “what is the best retention strategy,” Donald had a quick response to share. “Just saying ‘having someone who appreciates you’ is too broad, but it is true. Also, having someone who has your back is very important. Having people who will push you to be better but do it with love, that tough love.” (interview 2) In alignment with his past statements, appreciation is shown through acknowledging all he brings to the table and through providing strong feedback to help him grow. Knowing his practice by coming into his classroom and holding regular meetings allows the coach to know what he is doing and be able to support/” have his back” when anyone questions or challenges his methods.

## **Diane, Instructional Coach**

### **Coaching Philosophy**

Diane is an 11-year veteran at Ranger Elementary. She has served as a coach for 5 years and taught kindergarten and third grade. I begin the interview by asking about Diane’s background and coaching philosophy. She states that her coaching philosophy is one of collaboration. Her focus is to be a problem solver alongside her teachers. What is

working well and what needs to be improved. Ideally the pair would work from a side-by-side place instead of a top-down position. She appreciates the alignment of her philosophy and the expectation of the district when it comes to the collaborative approach being key.

When asked how the district's coaching philosophy and model aligns with her philosophy, she shared that the Relay coaching model has multiple components to follow for a coach to implement with teachers. Diane shared that the part of the model that resonates with her is utilization of the questioning template.

“This template fosters collaboration through the use of questioning focused on the observation and feedback from the DDI (Data Driven Instruction) focus areas. The way the Ranger team uses the questioning template allows the teacher to develop their own bite-sized next steps and plans of action to improve their practice, versus just being told what to do” (interview one).

The rigidity of the Relay model does not work well for the coaching team at her school. The day-to-day changes that occur in a school impact the fidelity to the model.

When asked about her experiences with how specific coaching models are received from different coaching groups (new, experienced, Black, etc.) she did not see a difference in the way the different demographic groups received the coaching or a difference in how she coached. She believes she “asks the same style of questioning and brings the same format to the coaching sessions” (interview one). She does, however, believe that what they focus on changes based on experience levels but not based on race or cultural factors. Diane strongly believes that

“it boils down to the trust and the relationship you build with the individual teachers. I have a hard time fitting people in molds because it comes down to the individual and each individual brings their own set of difficulties, problems, strengths, and personality” (interview one).

Her responses led me to probe deeper about her perspective on how culture plays a part in coaching and staff dynamics and how she engages in these spaces as a culturally responsive coach.

Diane strongly believes that relationships are the key to a culturally responsive relationship.

“Developing relationships to understand who you are working with. Listening and learning about the teacher's story, who they are and what they bring to the table, essentially what is their story. The other part of being culturally cognizant is to find out how they want to receive feedback because ultimately your job is to help them grow. How do you provide feedback to support them to grow” (interview one).

Another key factor is holding teachers to high expectations. The support you provide to meet the high expectations that are set. She finds that with her teachers of color, that they hear the statement about high expectations, and they take it to the nth degree. This has been the situation with her small teacher of color sample but has been consistent.

We had an interesting conversation about the nuances of culture and the importance of discussing these nuances to ensure the cultural beings we serve are receiving the best coaching experience possible. An example of a nuance we discussed was connected to her experience with Black men and women in her building.

“I notice that Black women have had experiences being misinterpreted for sharing their legitimate concerns or something they need to voice. Their concerns are often taken as an attack versus as a vent or concern. But when you don’t have a relationship with the person, or the building blocks it takes to work through that. It becomes toxic on both ends. This causes the person to shut down” (interview one).

This notion of ‘tone-policing’ was shared by many of the Black teachers in this study. They shared how this has happened to them on multiple occasions. And the impact is just as Diane shared, the Black teacher eventually shuts down or doesn’t feel valued in the work environment. Diane goes on to share an observation she has made regarding Black male teachers in her building.

“I notice that they don’t speak up to share the great experiences they have. They are often so amazing in their own work, but they have such a gift, talent and skill that needs to be shared. In my experience, with the Black men I have worked with, they are so humble and good men and are afraid of coming off too strong or preachy or coming off the wrong way. So, they don’t speak” (interview one).

When discussing the abolitionist coaching questions (referenced in Appendix C), Diane found alignment in the first 3 questions. She felt that the questions could be asked to any teacher, not just Black teachers, but she was comfortable with them and felt the questions would resonate with her teachers. We shifted to the questions focused on how the coach could reflect on their own practice and the way they think of their coaching relationships with Black teachers. When asked “how do I embody the spirit and the goals

of Black lives mattering in everything I do in my coaching relationship”, she shared that the question

“throws me off a bit, because of the Black Lives Matter piece that is in there. I struggle with this because feedback I have gotten from my African American friends hasn’t been positive [in regards to Black Lives Matter]. They shared that the slogan/movement is kinda like a slap in the face or demeaning. Apart from the Black Lives Matter part, which is kind of a buzz phrase because of the different possible meanings in one phrase. It really is a good question to ask myself ‘how am I valuing and thinking about my coachees that are adults of color and what am I doing to make sure I am embodying and valuing them specifically’. So yes, it’s a great question but the Black Lives Matter piece in there...it’s just that it’s such a buzz right now” (interview one).

We ended our conversation chatting about the need for me to modify the Black Lives Matter question so that others won’t get distracted from the main focus of the question. We agreed that the heart of the question was to address the need for coaches to recognize that they are working with cultural beings, not just teachers. All the teachers in this study have stated that they see a distinction in being a teacher and in being a Black teacher. This delineation is not clearly definable by the participants but fully resonates with each participant as they shared examples from their experiences of being a Black teacher.

Diane had some final thoughts she wanted to reiterate as the most salient part of her coaching philosophy.



“The biggest key to coaching is the relationship piece and seeking understanding. Because in my mind that does embody the pieces that you bring from your own culture, from your background, the issues that you're facing today. So much of that stems from your cultural upbringing, your gender, your beliefs, your religion also come into play. It's all those components [that make up a person]. [This makes it] hard to put labels on people because so many people have so many different pieces that they bring, and so I think that's the one thing I've learned in the five years that I've done this, is that, yes, we need to be cognizant of race and gender and religion, and all of these pieces, but at the end of the day it's about having a conversation with somebody and truly getting to know them for and why they do this work. And you know what they're hoping to get out of there out of this job. To really make the change you need to know and value the people you're working with” (interview one).

When asked where she felt this type of relationship would fall on the Cultural Competency Framework, she initially said “all three.” But when asked to select just one, she declared “it starts with a mindset. Valuing somebody else starts as a mindset. The core of culturally responsive practices is relationships” (interview one).

### **Stephanie, Middle & High School Special Education/GT Education Specialist**

#### **Introduction: Groomed to be passive/White Comforting/Censored**

Stephanie is in her 4th year of teaching at Chambers, a local high school in the district. This was her school of choice upon graduating with her Master's in Education and completion of student teaching. During her time at Chambers, she has been a SPED teacher in the middle school, high school, and currently serves as the gifted and talented

coordinator for both the middle school and the high school. During this time, she has only had one coach. But has made sure to seek out support when needed, from various school partners and leaders in the building or in the district.

We started the interview discussing her definition of culturally responsive coaching and how she has experienced or not experienced a culturally responsive coaching relationship.

“I would define Culturally Responsive Coaching as the coach taking the time to, not only acknowledge, but also get to understand and celebrate my culture, my religion, all aspects of myself. Then asking ahead of time, how they can best communicate with me to ensure that I am being honored” (interview one).

She paused to ponder, “this is a challenging question because I've never had a coach ask me anything really about my identity and it's never informed any of our dialogue” (interview one). You could hear the disappointment in her voice after sharing that statement. During our conversation she shared multiple examples of how her culture shapes who she is as an educator and community member. She beamed with pride sharing how she comes from a long line of educators and how her grandfather, former educator and retired military veteran, has come to speak to her students sharing about his experiences as a Black man during the civil rights movement. She states that her identity is an important component of who she is. She does not feel fully seen or appreciated for who she is and how she is a value add to the school community when her identity is not acknowledged.

When asked “what does acknowledgement of your identity look like, sound like or feel like”, she was able to quickly come up with a non-example to share that has happened to her on multiple occasions. This example resonates with her because it is one of the many ways she has been tone-policed and devalued as a member of the staff team.

“My coach has tried to coach me on how to be cooperative or a team player. This has been where my identity has come into play because I had to share with my coach why I am uncomfortable or why I don't want to interact with this person, usually because of a cultural offense or some sort of educational violence that has taken place between myself and that professional. I'd share that I don't feel that they understand me or have our students' best interest at heart. I'd share how I plan to directly confront this professional about this issue. And instead of the conversation being around what the interaction was, which I consider educational violence, she was more concerned about coaching me to be more of a team player. Which really meant not expressing myself, not addressing the problem, but instead, saying nothing” (interview one).

The challenges of tone policing that Stephanie mentioned have occurred several times with her coach and others suggesting she shrink down to be perceived more favorably by others.

Stephanie shares that when her coach focuses on correcting Stephanie's approach to these types of situations, it is very oppressive to her as a Black educator in the building.

“My coach's discomfort with addressing conversations about race, culture or identity shows up as her upholding some of the systems and structures that cause not only our students' oppression but mine as well and doesn't understand the importance of

addressing culture and identity in a working relationship. I think it is unconscious and she doesn't recognize she is very white comforting through her discouraging me from being courageous or speaking my truth and grooming me to be more passive” (interview one).

These examples have been dehumanizing to Stephanie and are not culturally responsive according to the definition she shared.

As we discussed further, she shared how she has sought out other leaders in the building to supplement the missing parts that her coach is unable to provide because her coach is stretched thin and very busy. Because Kayla is so busy, Stephanie shares that she seeks out people who could support her continued growth as an educator and leader in the school. My follow-up question caused her to hesitate for some time as she pondered “what an ideal coaching relationship would look like for herself.” She thought of the characteristics of the school leader she reaches out to the most to identify the components of their relationship that are most appreciated, valued and causes Stephanie to repeatedly seek out the counsel of this person. She describes the relationship as one where the person

“has a skill set and their availability of time. I feel like my current coach is so time poor, she's not able to dedicate any time to any sort of conversation like this but is also not able to dedicate the time to the actual coaching that I need whereas, this person will make time and spend as much time as needed to get to understand what my needs are. They also get to see me (through classroom observations) and understand my relationships with students and the nature of the relationship for

students. And also, this person is not well versed in special education stuff. But, however, it takes the time to learn that from me. And I feel like this person is also receptive to feedback in regards to. If I am trying to advocate for students or pushback. This person takes the time to understand what I'm trying to say. For example, if I am saying that this teacher is showing a bias against our black boys and particularly trying to refer them to special ed all the time. And I feel like this admin, even though she's not coming from a sped background, she will take the time to actually learn about what I'm trying to talk about. And she would have my back. I think I respect that a lot. My current coach would have my back but only to a certain degree. So, I think in an ideal coaching relationship, one, there's that availability which is very basic but man like I just feel like my coach is very unavailable. And they're so busy that I just feel bad even reaching out... like I know you're doing 10 other things. I feel like there is a respect there and there's also a willingness to engage and learn and self-reflect" (interview one).

This description of the ideal coaching relationship paints a vivid picture of the support Stephanie desires and seeks out from others outside of her coach to learn and grow.

As a school, they focus on the Relay coaching model. Because Stephanie is a teacher leader in her school, she has also been trained to use the Relay model with the teachers she coaches, so he is familiar with the process when being coached using the framework. She described the Relay coaching model as

“robotic and limiting. The structure of scripting is supposed to be helpful, and the conversation is designed for the teacher to name their gaps but doesn’t seem to support a two-directional conversation. It’s like ‘yes, we both agree on the gaps and here’s what you need to do to fix it’. The model is missing space to discuss areas that might bring in conversations about culture” (interview one).

When asked what could be done differently to make the conversations more culturally responsive, she struggled to put her finger on it, but was able to identify a few examples. Shifting away from the template to engage in more in-depth conversations about the culture of the classroom, how the teacher and student relationships look and what ways the teacher can be mindful of their interactions with students. This is something she feels was lacking in her coaching interactions and helped to form her opinion that the Relay model is robotic.

When asked if she saw herself as a teacher of color or simply as a teacher, she responded that she sees herself as a teacher of color.

“As a teacher of color, I feel like my lens is different and my desire and knowledge for being here is different than that of just somebody who's just been a teacher. I think the attitudes towards our community, towards the kids is different than that of just a teacher. I also think that the things that I want to do for students and the way that I am able to connect with kids, and just love our kids, it's different to me than like those who just identify as a teacher. I think the sense of purpose is different” (interview one).

All the teacher participants in this study have shared similar sentiments about their feelings as a Black teacher working in urban settings.

Stephanie has worked at different school sites over the course of her teaching career. At her last school, she shared that she did not feel free to ‘show up as her authentic self’, she felt “censored.” (interview 2) She talked about not knowing how she would be received if she wore her head wraps and felt she had to ask permission to wear it. “I feel like I was under a microscope at that school.” (interview 2) The transition to her current school has proven to be a vastly different experience. She is much more comfortable to be herself.

Due to the coaching relationship that she has developed with her coach, Stephanie feels comfortable being open and honest and showing up as her authentic self in her coaching conversations. She feels comfortable with Kayla to share openly what her challenges are, advocate for support, and share frustrations. This is partly due to the number of years of experience and the longevity of their coaching relationship. Stephanie also seeks out coaching from other administrators in the building who have skillsets she needs to tap into to develop as a teacher and team lead. She is cautious with the other administrators because of past experiences that have led to conflict. She caveats this with a disclaimer of “with my white peers, I am careful to keep it professional. Professional in a sense that I don’t share my personal feelings because it will get back to someone's ears. I have learned that they don’t respect my privacy.” (interview 2)

**Coach: Kayla**

Kayla has been a coach for five years. She describes her coaching philosophy as one where she supports teachers to enhance what they are already good at, things that are a part of their passion. Her ideal coaching relationship is described as one where her coachees view their relationship in a non-hierarchical manner, they are not embarrassed to make mistakes, and they know she is here to support them to learn and grow. She uses the Relay coaching model and the district's observation tool to support her teachers.

Kayla took her time thinking about the question on her definition of Culturally Responsive Coaching. She acknowledges the need for the coach to understand their own biases and potentially limited understanding of their coachees culture. She shared that this has been an area of growth for herself and a space where she had to become knowledgeable to be more supportive of her coachees. To develop her coaching relationships and to get to know who her coachees were, as cultural beings, she engaged in conversations and asked questions to gain more understanding to enhance her knowledge of her coachee.

"I don't have all the answers. And even though I might be her coach, I am learning. I literally asked her what she would do in this case or how would you handle this situation. I got to know her and where she was coming from. I shared that I would not have thought of that, because of my upbringing or experiences" (interview one).

Her recognition of the importance of asking questions and being transparent in one's own areas of growth was echoed through multiple teacher interviews. She went on to



share that not being defensive and monitoring your tone during these difficult conversations matter and support a healthy dialogue.

Areas of growth Kayla identified for herself was one of the spaces Stephanie shared during our interviews about Kayla. Kayla points out her need to speak up more and have the courage and confidence to be able to support my teachers of color when issues arise around conflicts that may be cultural. Pushing herself to address the issue and hold myself accountable to learn and grow instead of letting it go is a space for continued practice.

### **Tiana, High School Language Arts, Ethnic Studies**

#### **Introduction: Authenticity**

Tiana has been teaching at Chambers for seven years and has had a few coaches during this time. When I asked her if she would be a participant in this study and upon agreeing, I would reach out to her coach to also participate, she shared an interesting suggestion. Her request was that I include two of her coaches because both had very unique perspectives on coaching and her experiences with them were uniquely different, for varying reasons. Because both coaches met my inclusion criteria, I extended the invitation to them both. Sidney was Tiana's coach for 3 years but was not her coach of record during this current school year but is someone she still goes to for coaching on a regular basis. Sarah is her current coach and had been her coach, prior to Sidney, for two years.

Tiana opens our conversation with words of adoration for the coaching relationship she has with Sidney. She shared how there was a mutual respect that defined their

relationship. He valued her firmly established relationships with students and families and how she taught from the heart. He understood that she needed conversations and coaching on the theoretical side to push her, but not much support with content as that was not an area of development, according to her formal evaluation scores. “His feedback was easy to implement because he was not trying to change me as an educator, he respected my style and did not try to adjust that to fit a specific mold” (interview one).

In contrast, the coaching relationship with Sarah is different because the respect for Tiana’s teaching style was not established when they started their coaching relationship seven years ago, with Tiana as a new teacher. According to Tiana, it felt like Sarah did not appreciate the style and tried to coach her to change the culture in her classroom. Now, with Tiana being a veteran teacher, as they come back around full circle, to having a coaching relationship, there is a level of tension. According to Tiana, the tension comes from a feeling that there’s a cookie cutter way of teaching and since Tiana did not fit into that, Sarah did not coach to Tiana’s needed area of development but instead to the way the book said it was supposed to be done. This was dehumanizing to Tiana.

“She will provide me with see it, name it, do it type feedback (referring to the Relay framework coaching model). She will provide me with all the book stuff. Like because you're afraid to understand what I'm doing in my space, you want to go to the text. And the text is a universal tool that you are not using as a space to understand and how to calibrate your responses to me. Instead, you are using it as “here's the Bible read this and do it” (interview one).

As we started talking about culturally responsive coaching relationships and what she feels she needs out of a coaching relationship. Tiana shared

“I need my coach to see me for my passion in education. There is sometimes envy of the relationships I have with my students. Just respect the relationships I have with my students and come in and teach me and support me by pushing my understanding of teaching. I want you to accept me for everything that I'm coming with and support me as a professional to better my craft. That looks like putting the books aside and understanding my why. That means when you come into my classroom early on, just come in and observe and see, so that you understand how to coach me because coaching me is different than coaching the teacher down the hall. Coaching me is almost like catering to my confidence, while also pushing me to be a better educator, because I got a lot of confidence in my craft. Don't break that down in order for me to be a textbook example. Let me be in my craft, but also push me to be better in my craft” (interview one).

It is clear from our conversation that she has had a number of experiences where she felt as if her coaches had tried to change her style and push her towards a more universal way of teaching. These experiences have left her feeling dehumanized as a Black teacher trying to teach as her authentic self.

She talked about the ‘see it, name it, do it’ approach used by her coaches. It is evident by her tone and body language that this is not a preferred method of coaching. When asked about her take on this method, she giggled and said

“makes me feel like you don't think I'm competent. For some teachers I definitely think it works. But this goes back to getting to know the classroom, getting to know the teacher. I would use ‘see it, name it, do it’ with some of my coachees. However, I'm not going to use it with all of them. Because for me, you could talk to me and tell me what I need to do. And I'm going to repeat what I need to do in the way that I feel I need to do it. And then that's it. Don't have me get up here and act it out and pretend and do all this stuff. I don't need that. It annoys me and it makes me feel like you want me to be a carbon copy of what your debrief notes, that you had taken before we even talked, are. Let's sit down and have a conversation. Let's digest these coaching moments. Let's digest what you've seen in order for you to understand. Then the conversation is ‘oh, okay, this is why you did that so let's discuss how to fix that’. It's great for our teachers who are coming to a space that is not familiar, who are uncomfortable, and they need to gain their voice, or they want to understand how to execute a strategy, but I don't need that. Don't give me a ‘see it, name it, do it’ because I feel like I'm just trying to say it to sound just like you and it's not authentic (interview one)”

These sentiments have been shared by others, regarding this model. In my training, as a Relay coach, I recall other coaches sharing apprehension about how their coachees would receive this type of feedback. Granted, many coachees appreciated the model for the structure and focus on high leverage instructional moves. However, several shared that the approach would not land well with some of the people they coached. This speaks to the points Kiara shared regarding knowing your teachers and adjusting accordingly.

When asked the question regarding if she sees a difference between being a teacher and being a black teacher, she exacerbated an emphatic yes. It is interesting the spin she took on this question in comparison to others. Her interpretation led her to answer the question from the outsider's perspective of her as a teacher versus her perspective of herself.

“Well, it's the worst difference ever because I'm a black teacher. I can deal with the tough black kids because I'm a black teacher. It's almost like I am expected to be like a disciplinarian like a dean in the halls. My black students are walking past white teachers, who are afraid to speak to them. So not only does that take away from my planning time or take away from me trying to get from my classroom to a meeting, because somebody doesn't want to deal with a student who was difficult. When it comes to classroom management, because I am black, it's like they think “your management's going to be great.” You cannot just give a black teacher the trust of knowing they're able to build relationships with students. You can't do that. It's not something that's God given to us. No, just like any other teacher coming into a space that is foreign to them, we've got to calibrate ourselves and understand where we're at but as a black teacher, we don't get that opportunity, nor do we get that grace. If I'm not good at classroom management, then I'm a terrible teacher. But I may not have been given the tools to live up to this expectation that you have of me.”

Talking to Tiana for her second interview was filled with emotions. She shared that she had a rough day and week. She was faced with challenges in her school where she felt like she was unfairly treated and not afforded the same courtesy as other colleagues

in her same position. Her colleagues were extended the benefit of the doubt, but she was not and was treated very differently. This incident has her considering leaving the school and possibly the profession. Talking about leaving the profession brought her to tears. She feels like she has given fully to the school, the profession, and being devalued in this manner is more than she is willing to take right now.

When asked about ways that the school setting can be more humanizing for Black teachers, she fought back tears again.

“Just because I'm a black woman we're supposed to hold so much, we're supposed to do so much. It's almost like you're expected to because you can or because your ancestors have done it for so long, like ‘you guys are so strong’, like you're just supposed to hold everything, and nobody checks on you. Nobody asks, ‘how can we help’. It's like we have to do more just to be included, just to matter. Also, I can't have an off day. It would be the end all be all. It keeps me accountable to be my best self at all times but it's overwhelming. I know that my job is never protected. My space is never protected.” (interview 2)

She ended our interview time by sharing that her tears, frustrations and honest words are

“the impacts of not supporting and not seeing your Black teacher leader for who they are and what they contribute to the school. It's a dangerous spot to be in on both sides. You can lose someone by having them leave the field of education, and someone can truly become depressed from not getting the adequate support that they need.”

She apologized for the tears and for the transparency in her frustrations. It was important for her to know that she did not need to apologize, and her feelings were valid and worth hearing.

**Coach: Sidney**

Sidney has been at his school for most of his teaching career. He has been at Chambers for 12 years, eight of those years were in the classroom as a teacher and team lead and four years as an assistant principal. As team lead, he served as an instructional coach to his colleagues which is where his coaching philosophy was developed. Being a teacher for nearly a decade shapes his perspective of the coaching role.

“I definitely understand the demands of that position. I understand what it's like to be doing, not only teaching, but other things. Just before I became a Senior Team Lead (STL), I was in a graduate program. Teaching, earning my Masters, was a grueling experience and I know a number of educators that do that or some other things. So, I completely understand the demands. From a coaching perspective as a, you know, as a former teacher when I go into teaching, the first thing I do is try to just establish a relationship with the teacher. My goal is to find out how they like to be coached so I can adjust to meet their needs.”

His coach training started as an STL with Cognitive Coaching ©. This was the model he used for his first two years in his new role. The district later added the Relay Coaching model, so he utilized this model along with Cognitive Coaching with his teachers. Although he feels a push from his administration to utilize Relay’s model, he prefers the Cognitive Coaching model and holds onto its practices.

“I’m being asked to coach in more of a Relay style but I’m trying to implement more cognitive coaching. I’m more comfortable with it and I think it humanizes the person more. Relay can be a little bit robotic at times and kind of like an assembly line, to a certain degree, and so I prefer to just be using that cognitive coaching approach that is really trying to help the individual and understand where the individuals are coming from and move forward” (interview one).

We talked more about the differences between the two coaching models. He was careful to let me know that he was not trying to take a “dig” at Relay. He elaborated on the comment about it being robotic.

“The model just doesn't seem like there's a whole lot of room for me to be me [as a teacher]. The best way for me to explain that is like when you are a teacher right like somebody can tell me how to teach. But I can't necessarily go and teach exactly like that person because it's a very personal thing and it's something you have to experience to really understand. But for me to go and try to teach like teacher ‘A’ is not necessarily genuine to who I am. I could do similar moves, but I have to do them in a way which is comfortable for me. I have to find a way that I can be effective in what I'm doing, rather than me trying to fit a model. I think Cognitive Coaching definitely lends to that a bit more. It's not so ‘you need to be doing this at this minute, kids need to be doing this at this moment.’ There doesn't have to be a timer with everything, things can flow” (interview one).



Through his various trainings on the Relay model, he has been left with the same understanding. The notion that good teaching has to look a certain way seems to be the prevailing message. “I have a hard time conforming to that” (interview one).

Sidney acknowledges that he considers the cultural components that go into how his coachees show up and engage in their coaching relationship. The beginning of the year conversation and questionnaire is designed to tease out the various intersectionalities that his coachees show up with. He seeks to understand who the person is and how they communicated to best support throughout the relationship. He hopes to avoid misunderstandings by gaining clarity early on. He feels that this approach to knowing his coachees is culturally responsive and he credits the Cognitive Coaching model for helping to facilitate more culturally responsive relationships.

“Cognitive Coaching lends itself to being more culturally responsive than a Relay Model. Of course that's also subjective in itself. It relies on the coach helping push the thinking of the coachees. If you are already a person that doesn't have a lot of experience outside of your particular cultural domain then you're not necessarily equipped to help a variety of different folks. I'm not saying that you couldn't be but that could be lacking in your approach. If you just came from a particular neighborhood, a particular city and you've only had that experience, then it might be hard to understand, to empathize and sympathize with other folks that are coming from other parts of the world. And as we know in teaching people come from all over to insert themselves into communities. So, it's definitely important for not only

coaches but teachers to be flexible and to be understanding of perspectives and adult experiences” (interview one).

His final thoughts for our time together centered around him developing in the skills area of the Cultural Competency pyramid. His focus is on making sure his teachers feel valued and appreciated. Many of his teachers are intermediate to advanced in their teaching abilities and they have shared that they feel as if they have plateaued. He wants to be a thought partner for them to be able to support their continued growth and development. This comes through strong relationship building and valuing who they are.

**Coach: Sarah**

Sarah has been a teacher and assistant principal at Chambers for 11 years. She became a coach in her school about 8 years ago. Her philosophy is centered around leveraging the strengths of the teacher and supporting them to meet the demands of the school, district and community, while balancing their own emotional wellbeing. This has been more relevant since returning back from COVID closures. Receiving feedback from her teachers has helped to shape her philosophy as it has changed based on the changing times and conditions.

She shares that her school utilizes the Relay coaching model. Not only does she use this model with her coachees but she also trains coaches in this model. With the emotional challenges teachers and students are facing, she has taken the liberty to modify the model to support her teachers.

“I’ve done a lot of thinking on how I could maybe switch up Relays' six step process.

And I think to a certain degree, all coaches have switched it up to help their teachers.

For example, with the Relay style of coaching you start with praise on the previous action step. Then you pretty much jump right into probs leading to the next action step. What I've found this year is that we have to spend more time on that first step. We've raced through that in training and then right away teachers feel like, damn now I did something wrong, and I get an action step. It's kind of viewed as wrong, and not enough of a back-and-forth conversation" (interview one).

This change in perspective has seemed to permeate the entire coaching team because of the feedback from multiple teachers in her building. Teachers were struggling meeting the demands from the district, from teaching, and any other outside responsibilities. She emphasizes that this does not mean they are getting rid of Relay but more so making sure that the coaching is more collaborative in nature. "The coaching needs to be a conversation back and forth and not so cookie-cutterish in nature. I can't have this Relay cookie-cutter way of coaching everybody and be like I respect you as a teacher of color" (interview one). It is unfortunate that teachers were feeling this kind of pressure. The need to differentiate their coaching was more important than ever and they listened to their teachers and made adjustments to support.

When asked about if coaching was race neutral or if she felt there were differences in coaching Black teachers, her perspective was that it is not the same.

"Working with teachers of color, they gave me a lens for coaching that I have not had before. And I've learned through them how to be a better coach because they have given me a lens that I like, quite frankly, and I'm embarrassed to say, for many years I

just didn't have. And that has made me a better coach with all my teachers, not just teachers of color” (interview one).

These interactions have helped her to pause and reflect on her past interactions with teachers of color whom she has coached. She recalls situations where she has tone-policed Black teachers. She cringes at the thought but acknowledges the harm done with instances of microaggressions or coming across as racist thoughts or interactions.

“I gave a teacher feedback around tone, and I'm like, that was a microaggression. And I have apologized to that coach several times because I'm like, how dare I. She is a black woman. She's a damn good teacher, her being a strong black woman, and for me to comment on tone, just like stripped her of who she is. She called me on it, I said you're absolutely right. I can say that now, knowing that I've learned from that. I have coached other people on it, who I have also heard make comments about tone. And so, I think about microaggressions going into coaching, and who am I trying to make somebody be, who am I to tell somebody about tone fixing. I have to think about those things going into coaching teachers of color. I think about that all the time, especially coaching black females because I made that mistake. I heard feedback on it. This makes me reflect on a lot of things I have said in the past that were absolutely microaggressions and caused harm” (interview one).

Tone policing is one of the ways Black women feel dehumanized in professional spaces. It's a repeated trope used to imply that we are angry, unjustly angry. From Sarah's comments, one can tell that she understands the magnitude and impact of these coaching interactions and won't make those harmful remarks again.

We ended our conversation with Sarah sharing one of her most desired coaching moments. Because of her passion for the role, her longing to be the best coach she can be, she is often pondering ways to improve her practice. “I want all of my coachees to feel like I am valuing every single bit of their being all the time” (interview one). This longing gets at an underpinning she named as being valued as a human versus the value placed on her coachees for their teaching abilities. She wants to be better at viewing the teachers for all they bring to the table, not just their classroom management skills.

### **Linda, High School Language Arts**

#### **Introduction: Tone Policing & Acknowledgement**

Linda has been a teacher for four years, but this is her second year at her current school. She teaches English and a college readiness class. Linda has been with her coach for both of her years at Goodyear High. Linda became a teacher leader this year and coaches’ other language arts teachers. She enjoys her coaching relationship with Allen because his coaching style fits with the way she learns. One component of his leadership style that she appreciates is how Allen listens to understand and gives his advice when asked. He does not force his perspectives on his coachees but rather will give when invited to do so.

She commented on Allen’s awareness of how he takes space in the school setting. According to Linda, Allen is attuned to when situations may require him to pull back and allow other voices to speak on certain issues. “He’s constantly questioning his own biases on our team. He will say, this might not be the conversation that I should be the messenger for. He’s always aware of who he is and what that brings to a conversation and

I appreciate that” (interview one). This kind of awareness and transparency is very different from what she has experienced in past coaching relationships.

When sharing components of an ideal culturally responsive coaching relationship, Linda felt that coaches should understand nuances in communication styles. For example, if a teacher gets emotional, it doesn’t mean that they are angry or disagreeing with the coach/leader. It’s a communication style that is part of who I am, it’s cultural for me.

“Just hear what I’m saying, don’t evaluate my tone. Sometimes my tone is because of something that is tweaked inside me, I’ve been triggered by something. It might come down in a minute. But listen to my message and hopefully I can get it together to say it in a way that you can hear it, but I think sometimes people just hear the tone and they don’t hear the message. I think that’s something that you can tie to culture”

(interview one).

Linda, along with several other interviewees in this study have mentioned ‘tone policing’ as a problem in their experiences as Black educators from non-Black coaches or leaders.

We talked about the cultural competency pyramid and what were some ways for coaches to improve their competency when coaching Black teachers. Linda shared a need for coaches to not make assumptions. She encouraged the coach to get to know the teacher. Ask questions for clarity. Sometimes people make assumptions about people, and they could just ask to find out the answer. It is important to build relationships with the people you coach.

One way that Linda shared that she feels valued and appreciated is when her coach acknowledges that she has done well. It is a concrete example of ways she has gone above and beyond for her students or staff members. “It’s the tangible things that they can point to. Not superficial things like ‘your coat is nice’. Allen makes it a point to acknowledge the small things. They have a collaborative relationship and that is greatly appreciated and valued.

**Coach: Allen**

Allen has been in coaching since 2008, where he started with a mentorship role that included coaching of peers in a coaching-lite role. A couple years later, he was launched into a more intensive coaching role. He describes his coaching philosophy as one where “we engage in conversations that recognize the backstory to whatever it is that we’re coaching on, and I want to have a plan and a clear outcome. But how we get there, I never want to carve that out too much. So, in other words to have a plan on the thoughts of the other and to have a clear goal. And then, see where the conversation takes us in terms of getting there” (interview one).

This philosophy has been shaped by some Cognitive Coaching through advanced certification and weaving in some *Courage Conversations* and some of the Relay model. According to Allen, he has developed his own protocol that he follows. He determines which tool he needs based on the person he is coaching at the moment and embraces the flexibility of using the right tool for the person sitting in front of him, versus being constrained to pick a protocol as a one size fits all.

When coaching Black teachers, Allen said that he tends to use more of a Cognitive Coaching approach. “One where I am getting thoughts and perspectives, this seems to be a more natural set of interactions. The outcomes have been more positive when using this model” (interview one). When asked “why he uses that model”, he shared his perspective, which was similar to something that Linda shared about him, his self-awareness.

“I go into those conversations, knowing who I am and what I look like and what I might represent and knowing that that isn't always in alignment with our teachers. Especially if I'm working with a black teacher I want to, not necessarily call that out per se, but come in with the understanding that I don't know everything that went into this lesson, I don't know everything that took place in their classroom previous to this. And I don't know what perceptions, you might have of me and what that might be getting in the way of for us moving forward in coaching, or even might lead to speeding things up so I really want to just hear from them and listen for that opportunity for a deeper conversation about whatever it is that might need discussing.”

This style has served him well as he has developed strong relationships with his coachees. Even through challenging conversations, they have maintained good coaching dynamics.

Based on Allen's other answers, I could tell that he did not view coaching as a race neutral interaction. He shares that he does not make it his initial interaction, but it is at the front of his mind, and he makes sure to check in to ensure there is a good match. If not a



good match, he feels it is his responsibility to adjust to support the relationship being a good match.

In listening to Allen's perspective on the cultural competency framework layers, he shared a perspective that others had touched on, but he articulated it in a manner that was very clearly aligned to one of the seven norms of collaboration, presuming positive intent. This statement has been broken down over the years and made to be seen as a negative in some arenas. Very simply, he said

“I really do believe that teachers are working to their best ability. I want to presume that positive intent and until proven otherwise, that's my attitude going in. I'm not coming in ‘kind of guns blazing trying to shoot somebody down.’ I take on an attitude to try to be a presence and support through that process, even when sometimes that support means we need to have a difficult conversation. We can't be clear on where we're going to go unless we're clear on where we are” (interview one).

We ended our conversation touching on what were some of the trainings, interactions, philosophies, etc. that has shaped his perspective on culture, relationships with people who might be culturally different, and ways to work through those differences. He shared that the first step in his various trainings has been to know who you are and be comfortable with who you are but know who you might represent to other people. “When you're working with people that don't look like you, know that and be okay with it but understand that people may have a response to that” (interview one). He feels some onus in navigating this place of potential tension because he wants the coaching relationship to be productive and supportive.

Additionally, he provides other tips for doing the work to develop as a coach along the cultural competency pyramid of attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

“Encourage a mindset of inquiry, both in yourself, and in the people around you who you intend to support and coach. Don't make assumptions. Don't assume that you know or assume that you understand the reasoning behind things, you just have to inquire. That goes hand in hand with the inquiry mindset, but in creating a safe place is a part of that too. Create a safe space for people to inquire. I haven't always been taken up on my invitation, but I always tried to build an understanding through the invitation. The invitation has included acknowledgment of difference and upfront sharing of the possibility of unintended interactions.”

Additionally, Allen shared,

“I don't have the exact words, but I have said something like ‘We don't look alike, and we have different perspectives and possibly come from different backgrounds.’ I don't ever want to say anything or do anything that would perpetuate any kind of a racist system. My approach is to try to be anti-racist in general. I realize I'm human, I'm flawed. Don't be quiet about it. I hate that I have to burden you with the need to respond but if you don't then I don't know. It's kind of that catch 22. It's pretty crappy that now you gotta say something. I've put you in a position where you got to speak up.”

The conversation would continue, but this is the hard part. Cultural competency is a journey. I know it is cliché to say it, but it is. I go back and forth with this part because it's a tricky place to be. It's not necessarily excusable, but it's understandable when

someone makes that mistake. And what I think is not acceptable is for someone to not say anything from either side. I can understand if I'm the person who's been harmed or hurt by that to now feel like "well now it's my responsibility to say something." This is what I mean by it's a journey. It is not that I read this book, now I'm good. Or I did this training now I'm good. We should continue to always try to sharpen our knowledge of content or pedagogy, the new standards or the new tools that might be helping us in our work. I think that is something that we need to continue to pursue learning opportunities for. You know you will be supporting and potentially coaching people that don't look like you so if you want what's best for them then you have no choice but to continue to pursue that learning.

### **Final Thoughts**

Responses were varied from the 16 participants of this study. Some of the teachers believed that they were currently experiencing coaching that felt aligned with being culturally responsive, while others believed that their coach had no idea how to connect with them in this manner and their coaching relationship was 'strictly business'. All coaching participants shared their thoughts on the importance of finding ways to be culturally responsive with the Black teachers they coach and all teachers of color whom they encounter. The connection to the retention of Black teachers was a strong rationale for developing their craft in this area.

Inside of schools across America there are efforts to support Black students and be culturally responsive within the school and classroom. The focus is on 'how can we see every kid'. From dialogue with the teachers in this study, if school leaders adopted this

same philosophy with staff of color, seeing every teacher, there might be traction gained in our retention efforts. Teachers suggested a need for school leaders to intentionally highlight the strengths of the staff member to support ‘seeing’ them and celebrating the value they bring to the school community. According to the teachers in this study, doing this intentionally, but authentically, can support retention of Black teachers.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THEMATICS & CONCLUSION

### Overview of the Study

Teacher retention is drawing more attention as the rate of teachers leaving the profession continues to outpace other professions and these shortages are impacting daily school operations (Alls, A.L., 2022). After the pandemic, in some schools within Parkside School District, district level leaders were forced to have remote days, or cancel school due to staffing shortages. As noted in the review of literature, teachers are struggling to remain in the profession due to high work demands, hostile learning environments, and low pay, in comparison to other jobs they can obtain within their areas of expertise, specifically math and science teachers (Grant & Brantliner, 2022a). This study specifically focuses on Black teachers and addresses questions around retention and gauges the support structures necessary for growth and development. The interviews and surveys sought to name behaviors that were culturally responsive and supportive to the teacher. The teachers also shared ways they desire to be affirmed in their coaching relationships with their supervisor.

Cultural competency has been discussed in education because of its relevance to the classroom environment as a way to ensure all students are represented in the classroom environment and lessons. Cultural competency has several components, three of which are used for this study. These three components provide a lens through which a coach

should focus their attention and development of coaching for cultural competence. The three areas are: reflection of one's own culture, utilizing the strengths of the coachee, and promoting differences which make up an integral part of the Coaching for Cultural Competency framework. In this chapter, I draw conclusions based on the findings shared in Chapter Four regarding the ways these competencies manifested or did not manifest in coaching relationships and the impact on the teachers and their relationships with their coaches.

In chapter four, I introduced each of the teachers and their instructional coach. They each shared their perspectives on being a Black teacher or coaching Black teachers, being coached using the current coaching model within the district - for most teachers it was The Relay Coaching Model - or using the coaching model with their teachers, and their experiences with the Cultural Competency pyramid and its application in their coaching relationships. We also discussed the components of the Abolitionist Coaching philosophy and how they embody or wish to embody the beliefs in their practice. Through the multiple interviews and intentional interview sequence (teacher-coach-teacher), I was able to gain a very nuanced perspective of how the teachers made meaning of their coaching relationships, the challenges they had, and the celebrations found in the coaching dynamics they co-created together.

Each participant's section contributed to a rich and descriptive depiction of relationships, coaching styles, communication techniques, and the interplays of culture in the teacher/coach pairs. My interpretation in this chapter, which is influenced by my teaching background and work as an instructional coach, led to the following three

themes that I will share in this chapter: Value and Appreciation (sub-theme: Affirmation of Blackness), Safety (subthemes: Authentic Self and Tone-Policing) and Relationships. Through the literature review, there were several studies addressing these three themes, however, some distinct differences are highlighted in this study. In particular, safety, as described by the teachers and coaches, as a form of protection by the supervisor from many of the outside influences was not particularly addressed in the previous literature. Also, there wasn't any mention of 'affirmation of blackness' as described by participants. These areas highlight a missing element of 'coaching of coaches' training, as well as putting a focus on additional cultural competency dialogue that may need to take place.

### **Research Question One**

The first question I sought to answer was: what are the intentions of educational coaches when coaching Black teachers? This question was important because I wanted to know if coaches saw a need for cultural considerations in navigating coaching relationships with Black teachers. Was there intentionality in the way they approached the coaching relationships with Black teachers, or did they deem their coaching as race neutral? How does the coaching model utilized by the district and the coach support the coaching of Black teachers? The following questions from the coaches' interview protocol were posed to answer research question one. Additional questions during the interview also provided insight into the coach's philosophy on Culturally Responsive Coaching. a.) *How does culture play into your conversations with your coachees?* b.) *If you could define Culturally Responsive Coaching (CRC), how would you describe it?* c.)

*All questions connected to the coaching model used and perception of the models' impact on the coaching relationship (see interview protocol).*

When asked “how culture played into coaching conversations' ', the coaches' responses were varied. Utilizing the three tenets of Culturally Responsive Practice (the right side of the Culturally Responsive Instructional Coaching Framework), some of the coaches took a look at themselves and how they have taken time to reflect on their own culture, which connects to the Awareness level of Peterson’s Cultural Competence Pyramid (CCP), and the impact their own culture has on how they show up in relationships with people of color. Allen, Ashley, and Melissa touched on this. Melissa mentioned

“I am aware that I'm always the white woman at the front, talking as the leader of the building. Nope, I'm going to pause. I'm going to hear from someone else. I'm going to intentionally call on maybe some folks from some cultures who aren't bringing their voice to the room, but those little moments have a big impact” (interview one).

These leaders take this foundational tenet and implement it into their practice in intentional ways. The intentionality of incorporation is what moves this to a skills level behavior on the CCP.

As a school district, the main coaching training is the Relay coaching model. There is very little mention of Relay coaching in the literature. There is a lot of discussion of Doug Lemov’s *Teach Like a Champion* and *Uncommon Schools*, where the Relay coaching model was birthed, but little about the model itself. As a coach, I have attended



various Relay Institutes, trained student teachers on the model, and implemented some components of the philosophy in my own coaching practice.

Every coach interviewed has been trained on Relay and has either moved away from its tenants altogether or only utilizes a few components. See chart below for the coaches' perceptions of Relay and how they utilize its tenets in their coaching structures.

Table 6. Relay Use & Rationale

Coach	Use of Relay	Why
Ashley	Does not align with the school's philosophy	“It feels a little bit stale and stern or rigid.” “I would say that Cognitive Coaching has more of a conversation piece. This has been really impactful for understanding the classroom, the vision for the classroom for the teacher of color. This has been the ultimate foundation in a trusting coaching relationship.”
Allen	Uses more Cognitive Coaching	“It has been a much more natural set of interactions for me to use more of a cognitive coaching approach where I’m getting thoughts and perspective from them. This approach has worked better when they are a teacher of color.”

		<p>“I go into our coaching conversations knowing who I am and what I represent.” The Relay style sets up a power dynamic that does not support the kind of collaborative conversations Allen wants to facilitate.</p>
Melanie	<p>Uses some components.</p> <p>Interested in learning about Strengths Based coaching</p>	<p>“I use it with some teachers and with others I use more of a questions approach. I don’t know that it’s always culturally responsive to people of color.” “It can sometimes feel like a white savior mentality that is pushed onto teachers to push onto kids. Basically, it’s like there is only one way to teach in order to get kids to learn.”</p>
Keith	<p>Uses some components but not to fidelity</p>	<p>“It makes people feel overwhelmed and burdened and not seen.” “They have shared that the teaching style doesn’t feel authentic to them. It feels like they are given a prescription of what to do, versus, given the general guidelines of student outcomes we want to have and then a discussion on how to get there.</p> <p>Instead, we are like these are the things you will</p>

		do to get the outcomes which have always felt to have been a miss. I'd say it's probably not culturally responsive.”
Sidney	School uses it.  Working to incorporate more cognitive coaching	“I try to implement more cognitive coaching because it humanizes the person more. Relay can be a little robotic at times and kind of like an assembly line. In watching the coaching cycle happen, it feels too formulaic. It doesn't seem like there's a lot of room for me to be me or for the teacher to be themselves and be genuine.”
Sarah	Uses the model.	“As a team we have seen where teachers are struggling and we need to add in more conversation, have more of a back-and-forth collaborative conversation before going right to the action step.”  “I do realize that I can't have this Relay cookie cutter way of coaching everybody and be like ‘I respect you as a teacher of color’, when I am treating everyone in this cookie cutter way.

Melissa	Likes some of the DDI models	<p>“We don’t feel like it’s equitable. It feels like we are recreating prison with the Teach Like a Champion practices. It’s like ‘I’m in charge. I’m going to use my power to control this room.’ We are not here for power; we are here for influence. It feels like we are handing a bunch of white affluent teachers a book and some theories and saying ‘here, use power to control this room.’”</p> <p>“Where does the teacher agency come into play with this, see it, name it, do it model? I am going to come in and tell you how to fix it.”</p>
Diane	Likes the questions around DDI	<p>“It is very rigid and that may work for a lot of schools but at Ranger it’s not quite the best fit.”</p> <p>“The DDI questions have teachers really dig into their own thought processes and come up with their own next bit size versus somebody telling them ‘you had this, you didn’t have this’. I appreciate those pieces where it’s more of a conversation, questioning and guiding facilitating model.”</p>

Kayla	Uses the addendum to the district's framework	"My teachers prefer to use the system they are evaluated on."
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Many of the teachers had similar perspectives on the Relay coaching model. It was not the preferred method of coaching and for some of the teachers in the study, they felt it was not humanizing and was not a well-received method of coaching. Tiana shared strong feelings about the role-play part of the coaching. "The role-playing is belittling. It's like someone is telling me that there is only one way to teach...the white way" (interview one).

The sense of awareness from the coaches is commendable. They shared their perspectives on the model and there was a lot of alignment between the coaches' analysis and the sentiments shared by the teachers during the two interviews.

**Research Question Two**

The second research question: what are culturally specific practices enacted in coaching relationships? The interview questions connected to this research question solicited some rich responses. The participants provided tangible examples of how coaches can incorporate these competencies into their practice with Black teachers. This list is just a small sample of suggestions from the teachers and coaches in this study.

**Cultural Competency Framework**

For this section, I compiled answers from all the interviews. The answers may be implied, through examples given during the conversation regarding a current practice, not

explicitly stated by the participant as a component of the framework. The below chart also features answers shared from the interview question: *What are some attitudes, knowledge, and skills a coach should have when coaching Black teachers*. The examples not explicitly shared will have an asterisk (\*) next to them. The reason for delineation of the explicit vs non-explicit is to demonstrate the possibly unconscious way coaches engage in culturally responsive ways.

It is important to note that different behaviors, ways of being and thinking, are not neatly categorizable as distinctly a skill, attitude or knowledge-based behavior but that they can flow between each category. For example: In the conversation with Ashley, we discussed her understanding that the dynamics in Julia's classroom and how Julia's style of teaching may not fit into a 'typical mold' but is effective, nonetheless. Ashley said that Julia's style of teaching did not fit into a traditional way of instruction, but kids were captivated, learning, and thriving in the classroom. Ashley had to acknowledge that it did not have to look how other teachers would do it. This would fall under the knowledge and understanding category. Where the skill comes in for this same scenario is when Ashley shares this belief with Julia and pushes for Julia to consider additional opportunities to interject the style into her teaching. Ashley makes comments to Julia like "but where can you add more of Ms. Smith into this lesson." This is a skill that takes the attitude and knowledge and applies it to real world examples that have an impact on the teacher at the moment.

Table 7. Cultural Competency Connections

Awareness (Coach):

<p>“It’s important for the coach to know who she is. At the same time, it's about knowing the teacher and knowing the teacher's experiences. But what are her [experiences], because some of her experiences might stop her from really understanding mine.”</p>	<p>“If she doesn't rid herself of her own biases in her own feelings, she might look at it totally differently. But we don't talk about that, as in the way that we treat each other. So, it's something that is not on the school's radar.”</p>
<p>“Be open to supporting coaches to lead with strengths. We are going to focus on outcomes vs the prescribed path to get there.”</p>	<p>* “I know that I have a part in if we have black teachers and/or staff members who leave. And I want to make sure that we're retaining as many teachers of color as we can. Because I know that that's what's best for students and for them to see black excellence and as well as people of color.”</p>
<p>“As a coach, work to identify the strengths in the classroom. The strengths do not have to be in alignment with the</p>	<p>“Believe that relationship building is key/foundational to developing a culturally responsive relationship.”</p>

<p>‘framework’ or your perceived way of teaching. Good teaching doesn’t have to follow the script.”</p>	
<p>“Having high expectations for teachers, supporting them to meet them and know that they can meet them.”</p>	<p>“Lead with positive intent, there is a reason they do the things they do. Be open minded and supportive. Education is constantly changing so people are still learning every day. Be a support to give the tools to be successful.”</p>
<p>“Understand that it is a partnership, you are not here to dominate. There is a power dynamic (in a coach/teacher relationship) that is engaged in, whether you know it or not. It's [supposed to be] a partnership.”</p>	<p>* “Be accepting of people where they are at. For example, I want people to say it the way they want to. Not implying they need to yell or be disrespectful but to be authentic in what they want to share. No need to sugar coat things for me. I don’t want to stifle communication or jam up their thinking. I’m not going to be offended because it's not about me.”</p>
<p>“The coach has gotta be willing to be reflective on their practice. Pause and</p>	<p>“First you have to understand, that’s the whole first part of the mindset. You're</p>



<p>ask yourself “what is it about you that you can change or control in the relationship.”</p>	<p>going to climb the ladder and draw conclusions based on your own experiences, no matter what. So, if you don't really know who you're working with or who you are, if you don't know who the other part of your team is, then you don't know how to move up the cultural competency pyramid to the knowledge or skill level. If you come in thinking that you need to tell, tell, tell based on your own mindset of who an educator might be, then you've definitely lost the whole triangle. How can you learn more about the person and their experiences to make that the foundation for their learning. Who are we to say that I'm supposed to give you your foundation and then I'm also going to build on it, that's silly of me.”</p>
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Awareness (Coachee)

<p>*I think that when we attend school in general, we think of how to be culturally responsive to students, how to add a student experience to a lesson, how to make them feel seen and valued. Leaders need to do the same for teachers too.</p>	<p>Black teachers have high expectations, it's like they hear that and take it to the nth degree.</p> <p>Part of this comes from the notion that Black teachers always have to prove themselves.</p>
<p>We are not all the same. We were not all brought up the same. Have to get to know the person you are coaching. Know their why, what their educational upbringing is. What do they want to change in education? Our reasons for doing this work may be different.</p>	<p>I think just the way that I see my students and get a connection with them by observing their behavior, and how they see the world. That's what I expect from a coach from any coach or admin to see me.</p> <p>And that starts with connections like, what's your interest, what do you do in your free time, how are you today? Little things that would help them get to know me as a person, not just as a teacher</p>

Knowledge (From Coach): The coach should:

<p>Do work to unpack their own implicit biases</p>	<p>Know where the teacher is coming from...culturally. Seek to gain experiences with other colleagues and understand where attitudes come from.</p> <p>Know the level of support the coachee might need. Learn how the coachee learns...coaches should know if the coachee need to see something modeled or read a script to improve practice</p>
<p>Look at themselves and their educational experience, and ways they did not have to suffer at the hands of educational trauma.</p> <p>Understand behaviors and experiences of black teachers.</p>	<p>Understand that black teachers' lived experiences are real and should be known and understood as true.</p>
<p>Know what is the alignment to the standards? It's great that the teacher can connect to kids but that's not the end all,</p>	<p>Do their own research to be more knowledgeable about history and culture. It is unfair for the coach to think that all the people in their lives must be a resource for</p>

<p>be all. Help coach in the teacher's depth of knowledge if it's not there.</p>	<p>them. The coach has to do it. It is a lot of self-reflecting constantly, asking for feedback and being willing to hear tough feedback, and doing a lot of research on your own.</p>
<p>Learn people's strengths and partner them with people who have complimentary skills instead of focusing fully on the areas of growth.</p>	

Knowledge (From Coachee): The coach should:

<p>Know about my practice to be able to speak about my practice and provide support where needed.</p>	<p>Know that being a black teacher is a spiritual thing</p>
<p>Be willing to do the research to learn about your coachees culture. If your coachee is open to sharing, make sure you are listening and learning. AND it is not their responsibility to teach you everything. Some things you have to research.</p>	<p>Understand some of the nuances of culture. For example, there are sayings that might be misunderstood. "Boy go sit down before I hurt you" ...it's not literal, it's just talk.</p>

Skills (From Coach): The coach should:

<p>Be willing to go to the space that is outside of your own comfort zone or knowledge level to support the Black teacher to be the teacher they want to be in the classroom</p>	<p>Build trust: come in as a true observer, not an evaluator against a system, learn about her.</p>
<p>Develop the finesse to dive into the topics of race and culture.</p>	<p>Understand how to not misinterpret vents and concerns. AA women are allowed to vent or share their legitimate concerns but have seen experiences where the concerns are viewed as an attack when you don't have a relationship to work through these situations. With tone policing, the skill is knowing how to be composed, seek positive intent, and take a moment to think 'how I am going to frame this'.</p>
<p>Know that for AA men, a skill to support them to speak up and share their experiences and expertise. The AA men are so humble and afraid of coming across as</p>	<p>5 types of safety - not left vulnerable with my principal. My coach will protect me, but it has not been fully without consideration. This safety component</p>

<p>preachy or too strong, so they don't share at all.</p> <p>Supporting the nuances of culture...</p> <p>If we don't call out the nuances of cultural components, you will miss opportunities to impact a group of people who are marginalized/disenfranchised</p>	<p>supports retention. Affinity groups amongst staff have been supportive for me as a Black teacher. If all black things were not viewed as othering and embraced it.</p>
<p>*Understand who they are and what they represent: "I'm always the white woman at the front, talking as the leader of the building. Nope, I'm going to pause. I'm going to hear from someone else. I'm going to intentionally call, and maybe some folks are some cultures who aren't bringing their voice to the room, like those that's super meta, but those little moments have a big impact.</p>	<p>Ask hard questions and hard questions that you might not want to know the answers to. Did I mess up? Did I do something? Did I do something that impacted the conversation, our relationship? How can I fix it and doing that without being the victim and crying</p>
<p>Understand that adaptability is a skill that a coach needs. I think adaptability because things may be presented differently with</p>	<p>Support teachers to be themselves and encouraging them to be their authentic selves in the classroom</p>

<p>every person that you coach. I also think another skill is honestly, being able to read people. A huge skill is being able to apologize. We're all going to make mistakes, and I want to make sure that the people that I coach feel like if I make a mistake that I will own up to that mistake and I will apologize and hold myself accountable and move forward.</p>	
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Skills (From the Coachee): The coach should:

<p>Know that there are areas to support the Black teacher and support them to navigate the areas of the white normative space that our school system functions under. While at the same time maintaining authenticity to self and the desired practice they want for the classroom.</p>	<p>Know that not all classrooms have to look like a Relay classroom. People can do things differently and still be effective.</p>
<p>Get off the scripts to get to know the teacher. Similar to how we did home visits</p>	

<p>for a number of years in Parkside. Outside of the school. Break bread together and just talk and get to know each other. The office creates a dominance of space. It's a hierarchy still, and makes people feel like they have to assimilate to the power structure. Get to know us in an element that allows us to be free. The school setting has a whiteness space to it. It causes us to flip and maneuver differently</p>	
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**Theme: Valued & Appreciated; sub-theme: Affirmation of Blackness**

According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, “valued” is defined as “highly regarded or esteemed” and “appreciated” is defined as “to grasp the nature, worth, quality, or significance of” or “to value or admire highly.” In the context of teachers, being valued means that their work is recognized and esteemed as important, while being appreciated means that their efforts are understood and recognized for their significance and worth. Throughout each conversation, the idea that either being valued and appreciated, or the lack of value and appreciation was mentioned by each coach and teacher as significant. From teachers, the verbalization of the appreciation served as confirmation that their efforts are not going unnoticed. Donald said “I want to hear it. That would be good enough...to hear it every now and then how much I am appreciated. That would make my



day. Especially if they shared that they appreciated me as a Black man” (interview one). This statement has other connections to the subtheme, affirmation of Blackness, but it is relevant to value and appreciation as a necessary component of the coaching relationship. From coaches, they stated that they spent time reflecting on how they are intentional with making sure their teachers knew how much they were seen, valued, and appreciated. One coach said, “I am often thinking about what am I doing to make sure that I’m embodying and valuing them specifically” (Diane, interview one). These intentional reflections sometimes took place in leadership meetings as they discussed the teachers they coached or in planning out coaching conversations.

Julia shared how grateful she was to be at her school.

“I have never experienced a school like this, not even as a student. I get shouted out for being helpful and at my old school, I was reprimanded for such. My coach said to me that she was most concerned with ‘if I feel loved, do my students feel loved, and do I trust them and how this system works at our school’” (interview one).

While no school is perfect, to be in a place where staff and students alike are intentionally shown how they are valued and appreciated has come through as a theme to be highlighted. Ashley shared during her interview some of the ways that this is intentionally planned for.

“We talk about how we can see every kid. So, for me, it’s a thought of how I can see every adult today. With staff of color, I have found the relational piece to be helpful. I say ‘here are your strengths and this is amazing, and let’s highlight that’ really intentionally but authentically. We all know when it is not real. This is an intentional

focus of our school and we have had really great retention. We have retained all our teachers of color for the three years we have been a school” (interview one).

To be valued and appreciated also means being seen. Seen for the hard work you do in the classroom, seen for the contributions to community, and fully seen as a Black educator. Connecting back to the abolitionist coaching model, one of the questions asked, “how can our coaching relationship be a place where you feel seen...”, the teachers responded that they would welcome this question and would want to co-create this type of space with their coaches.

***Humanizing Pedagogy: Liberation is praxis.***

We know that Black teachers are not all alike, so there is no magic formula for how to affirm or in general demonstrate appreciation, but a couple of points were shared as common understanding and link to tenant five of the humanizing pedagogy, liberation is praxis.

According to Freire, praxis is an ongoing process of reflection and action that enables individuals to transform their reality. In this context, humanization means recognizing the full humanity and worth of Black teachers and acknowledging their contributions to the education system as a whole and to the school they work in daily. It involves creating spaces for Black teachers to share their experiences and perspectives and teach in ways that are meaningful to them and connect to their students. It also involves valuing and incorporating the unique knowledge and cultural perspectives that Black teachers bring to the table.

A component of humanization of Black teachers is to understand that they see themselves as Black teachers, not solely as a teacher. All the participants shared a common understanding of what it meant to be a Black educator teaching in their district and in their schools. They feel that it is important for their coach to understand the unique position they rest in...between being a teacher and being a Black teacher.

“For my coach to know and acknowledge who I am, not just as an educator, but my background and my culture. It’s a sense of pride (Donald, interview one).

“I am a Black teacher that advocates for Black rights, and Black culture. I advocate for them to be viewed as valid in their role (Faith, interview one).

“My desire for being here is different from that of somebody who is just seen as a teacher. My attitude towards our community, towards the kids is different than that of just a teacher” (Stephanie, interview one)

“It’s important that my coach understands that I have a different way of connecting to kids, of teaching, etc. And he doesn’t expect it to look the same as others” (Angela, interview one).

Some teachers shared a couple examples of when it was made painfully evident that they were in fact seen as Black first and teacher second.

“I have experienced that being a Black woman has meant that I am supposed to be able to hold so much. It’s like you’re expected to be able to carry so much...like you are strong like your ancestors. Since they could do it, you are just supposed to hold everything. Nobody checks on you. Nobody asks how they can help” (Tiana, interview two).

“I see myself as a teacher. Others remind me that I am a Black teacher” (Sonya, interview one). This was in regard to a white staff member’s behavior describing stereotypical components of a Black colleague to Sonya.

These examples highlight that part of valuing and appreciating Black teachers is to acknowledge that they are cultural beings and that their existence in the school is not race neutral. Being fully valued includes being fully seen. “I am coaching a Black educator, because that is who she is and I don’t think there is separation between the two, but she is also a teacher” (Ashley, interview one). By humanizing Black teachers in education, we can work to overcome the structures of power and oppression that have historically limited their participation and contribution. This can ultimately lead to a more just and equitable education system that benefits all students, regardless of their background or identity.

**Theme: Safety; sub-theme: Authentic Selves & Tone-policing**

The second theme identified through the interviews linked to this notion of safety. For most teachers, safety was not connected to the traditional sense of the word. It was not about being safe from physical harm. It was more linked to psychological safety. A sense of protection from unnecessary emotional harm that comes from various directions. For Julia, she shared how Ashley protected her from parents who may have found Julia’s teaching methods as unconventional. For Stephanie, it was how her principal sent an email on her behalf addressing concerns with the way central office staff questioned Stephanie’s work ethic. For Angela, it was how Keith was a buffer from other admin demands where they constantly tried to add to an already overflowing plate of tasks,

duties, and responsibilities. Safety takes on a number of forms for Black teachers trying to navigate the educational system in ways that align with their ‘why’ and continues to be the guiding north star for how they do the work.

As a subtheme to safety, many teachers referred to being safe to be their authentic selves in the classroom and school. Faith shared that she feels constrained to teach the “Spring Ridge way” even though it does not feel authentic to her style of teaching. As an experienced teacher transitioning into the new school, she did not feel safe teaching the way she had taught for years at her last school. She acknowledged that she believed her coach would support her but still remained hesitant. Because her coach has not explicitly shared her support, Faith stays within the confines of the current norm. The lack of permission serves as a restraint. Julia shared that she was encouraged to “put her Mrs. Smith spin on it”, this push from her coach to be her authentic self was supportive and greatly appreciated. Ashley’s push for Julia to “put her Mrs. Smith spin on it” came with some responsibilities as her coach to buffer and protect Julia from parents who might not see the value in the non-traditional way of teaching.

Upon receiving a call from a mother who wanted to question Julia’s teaching style, Ashley intercepted the call and explained to the parent how Julia was meeting the standards and how every student in her class was loved and cared for. “She was still heard. I know there is backlash that comes along sometimes with not doing it the way that the system necessitates as typical” (Ashley, interview one). Ashley did not require Julia to address the concern. Ashley knew Julia’s practice. Ashley knew that students were learning and loved, therefore she protected Julia from a possibly harmful situation.

Donald shared an example of a similar situation where Diane had intervened on his behalf. Diane served as a layer of protection. Dr. Martin in a recent TedTalk shared that “authenticity is a privilege.” This statement resonates with Black teachers as they work to show up authentically in their classrooms and school communities.

Another subtheme under safety is the concept of the tone-policing of Black teachers. Tone policing is a communication phenomenon where a person redirects the focus of a conversation from the content of the message to the manner in which it is being conveyed. Black teachers are asked to be mindful of how they express frustration, sadness or disappointment so as to not sound angry or hostile even in situations where anger is the emotion they feel. Stephanie shared “I don’t think Kayla realizes how white comforting she is. I shared a situation that really impacted me, and her focus was on changing the wording to not make the others feel bad. The focus was not on the harm done to me” (interview two). Linda shared frustration with having to monitor her tone over situations where she was emotional. “It doesn’t mean I am angry at you. It’s a communication style that is part of my culture, it’s part of who I am” (interview one). She is grateful for her coach because Allen understands her because “he’s thoughtful and deliberate in coaching. He listens and paraphrases for clarity. He has taken time to get to know me” (interview one).

For a coach to be self-aware of the impact of tone policing it requires a level of self-reflection, like Linda shared about Allen. Diane and Sidney were also self-reflective listeners. They were intentional about focusing on the content of the message, not the tone of which the message was delivered. “I want to create a space where my coachees

can say what they want to say, however they want to say it. I am not trying to stifle or jam up thinking processes (Sidney, interview one). Diane wants to encourage Black men to share more during meetings because “they have great insights to share but are fearful of coming off as preachy or as too strong. It is important to support them, so they don’t shut down because I miss out on their contributions” (Diane, interview one).

### **Research Question Three**

How do Black teachers make meaning of their coaching experiences?

#### **Theme: Relationship**

The final theme that teachers and coaches repeatedly connected daily examples to falls under the umbrella of relationships. Having a healthy working relationship means that both parties have taken steps to develop a level of mutual respect and understanding for how they will work together. Sidney shared that at the beginning of the year he and his coachees completed a brief questionnaire to get to know each other. Sidney wants to make sure he understands their preferred method of communication so that he can be intentional about adjusting to meet the coachee where they are and provide the best learning environment for them within their relationship. Sidney, along with other coaches, shared a desire to start off the year with the abolitionist questions as this will create a foundation for a strong coaching relationship.

The Multicultural Supervision Survey (MSS) created by Wong and Wong, included a relationships category to “address the importance that interpersonal dynamics play in the supervision [coaching] process, especially within a multicultural context” (2003). Key rationale for a focus on relationships include a belief that relationships help to establish a

sense of trust and safety in the partnership. Good relationships facilitate open lines of communication. This is important in coaching relationships to help reduce miscommunication and misunderstandings, especially connected to cultural misunderstandings. In the MSS, the section on relationships has 19 questions seeking to understand the nuances of multicultural relationship dynamics. The overall goal is to support partnerships to develop so the coachee can grow.

Trust was mentioned as a key component to the coaching relationship starting off on the right foot. For Ashley, it was important that her coachee feel as if they have trust in the systems established at the school.

“My ideal coaching relationship would be for my coachees to feel absolutely loved and safe. I know this is not traditional, but I want them to be able to identify me as a trusted, safe person who is invested in their growth. In this ideal space we can safely push each other towards accountability for kids” (interview one).

Melanie talks about trust as well. “Coaching is about developing personal trust and rapport. This means that I am open to share where my strengths and areas of growth are because we are all growing” (interview one). This notion of mutual growth and development was shared by both teacher and coach. The teachers expressed that the coach needs to create an environment where they also receive feedback regularly throughout their relationship. Coaches felt this was important to help support and develop trusting relationships.



## **Implications**

This study has implications for teachers, coaches, school districts, and researchers. The study brings to light the complex nature of cultural competence as it relates to coaching of Black teachers. These findings of this study can be used to modify current practices that are overwhelmingly deemed as non-culturally responsive to Black teachers. In the Parkside School district, a focus on culturally competent teaching has been a key area of focus for over a decade. Teachers have been through various training focused on how to enact these practices within the classroom with students of color. This study will provide ideas, from the voices of Black teachers, about how to coach them in ways that are humanizing, safe, and supportive of their growth and development. Future professional development sessions connected to teacher coaching and development should have objectives tied to humanizing the coaching experiences for Black teachers.

## **Future Research**

My study demonstrates the nuanced nature of coaching of Black teachers. In the health services fields, research studies have been in place to support culturally responsive supervising practices. It is my hope that this study brings additional researchers to the forefront to provide a framework for school districts across the nation to incorporate as a standard practice. A key area illuminated through my study, which deserves further exploration is the perceptions about the Relay coaching model. Ideally, additional research will focus on the Relay coaching model and provide alternative coaching strategies for teachers of color. Because Relay has a large footprint in the charter school networks and other urban districts, where a large concentration of Black teachers are

found, it would be a great contribution to the field if we were able to reimagine such a strong structure to include more culturally responsive practices for Black teachers (and Black students - but that's a different research study too).

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The strengths of the study lie in the uniqueness of the chosen methodology and the intersection of centering Black voices, including that of the researcher. Educational criticism and connoisseurship calls upon the researcher to be, as its name suggests, a connoisseur of the subject studied. Therefore, the researcher's personal connections to the subject are not isolated from the research but instead are used to inform the study responsibly and carefully (Eisner, 1998; Uhrmacher et al., 2017). This is valuable as I bring over 15 years of coaching experience to the table, along with extensive coach training. My interactions with various coaching models and practices provide insight into teachers experiences with current popular coaching styles currently used in the studied school district.

As shared through the interviews, Black teachers expressed gratitude for having the space to share their lived experience as a Black teacher. They have had limited opportunities to voice their coaching needs or reflect on what was working in their coaching relationships to make them feel valued and appreciated. They shared how this conversation gave them a voice and that they were optimistic that this study could impact the field and support Black teachers to be seen and valued in a way that impacts their growth as educators, share their perspective to impact the students they serve, and be free to authentically bring their full selves into the classroom and school.

Coaches shared that the field could benefit from intentional training on how to be more culturally responsive as coaches. Some shared that their development was not intentionally crafted but happened through the partnerships they developed with the Black teachers they coached or through books they read and worked intentionally to apply in their coaching relationships.

As with most studies, there are potential limitations. Limitations of this study included: survey length, lack of understanding of cultural competency in the context of coaching, and the sample size of the participants. The survey was adopted from a pre-developed survey tool that was administered to school physiology interns intended to evaluate the quality of their multicultural supervisory relationships. The length of time needed to complete the modified survey was about 20-25 minutes. According to Qualtrics, the recommended survey time is 8 minutes to increase survey completion rates. This impacted the number of people who persevered to complete the survey. Coaching Survey: 30 started the survey, 14 completed. Black Teacher Survey: 15 started the survey, 10 completed. I was able to pull information to inform the interview questions but was unable to identify any statistically significant data analysis to be scaled to the general population.

The survey and interview questions asked participants about their understanding of cultural competency. Participants may not have been conscious of how the cultural competency indicators operationalize and/or influence their interactions with their coach. The survey questions are designed to highlight cultural components that may not have been addressed from a teacher's viewpoint before, therefore, the participants may find it

challenging to center themselves and consider the impact of behaviors associated with cultural competency as it relates to coaching/supervision.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Teacher Interview Protocol

#### Culturally Responsive Instructional Coaching: Humanizing the Coaching

#### Experiences of Black Teachers

#### Teacher Interview Protocol

Participant IDNO	<input type="text"/>	Gender: • Male • Female	Researcher Initials
	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>
Date	<input type="text"/>		
<b>Introduction</b>			
I am _____ from _____			
✓ General purpose of the study			
✓ Aims of the interview and expected duration			
✓ Who is involved in the process (other participants)			
✓ Why the participant's cooperation is important			
✓ What will happen with the collected information and how the participant/target group will benefit			
✓ Any questions?			
✓ Consent			

**Warm up [demographic & work history]**

Can I ask some details about you and your job?

Please tell me a little about your background, education, and teaching experiences.

Number of Years Teaching \_\_\_\_ Years with Current Coach \_\_\_\_\_

Are you originally from this area/district?  Yes  No

How old are you?  Under 30yrs  30-40yrs  Over 40yrs

**Now I am going to ask you some questions about your experiences as a Black teacher as your experiences relate to instructional coaching relationships.**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Topic and Probes</b>
<p><b>Coaching</b> <b>(5-10 minutes)</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What experiences as a teacher have helped you to grow and develop in your practice?</li> <li>2. Can you name a specific person that has supported your growth and development as a teacher? How did they help you grow? What was their role in the school or in education?</li> <li>3. Can you tell me about your experience with instructional coaches in the past? Currently?</li> <li>4. What do you see as the role of instructional coaching?</li> <li>5. What position does your current coach hold at your school?</li> <li>6. How often are you coached by them?</li> <li>7. What is the coaching philosophy at your school?</li> <li>8. Describe your coaching sessions?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Cultural Competence &amp; Humanizing</b></p>	<p><i>What does culturally responsive practice mean to you as a teacher? As a coachee?</i></p> <p><i>How would you describe your ideal coaching relationship?</i></p>

<p><b>(15-20 Minutes)</b></p>	<p><i>How close are you to ideal with your current coach?</i></p> <p><i>Have you had a coaching relationship that matched your ideal description above? Explain.</i></p> <p><i>Does your current coach follow a specific coaching model that you are aware of?</i></p> <p><i>Describe it.</i></p> <p><i>What are your thoughts/feelings about the current model?</i></p> <p><i>If you could define Culturally Responsive Coaching (CRC), how would you describe it?</i></p> <p><i>Does the current coaching model align with what you have described?</i></p> <p><i>What knowledge, attitudes, and skills would a coach need to enact to align with the definition of CRC you described above?</i></p> <p><i>What has been most effective in improving your teacher practice?</i></p> <p><i>Do you make a distinction between you as a teacher and you as a TOC? Explain?</i></p>
<p><b>Questions</b></p> <p><b>Connected to</b></p> <p><b>Survey</b></p> <p><b>(20 Minutes)</b></p>	

<p><b>Retention</b></p> <p><b>(5 Minutes)</b></p>	<p><i>How long do you anticipate remaining in education?</i></p> <p><i>Have you considered leaving the profession? Why? Why have you stayed?</i></p>
<p><b>Closing</b></p> <p>Is there anything else you think is important about how you support students that we have not talked about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Summarize</li> <li>✓ Thank participant</li> <li>✓ Provide extra information and contacts to participants</li> </ul>	

Interview Part-Two : Depending on the answer to the last question of the teacher interview.

For the next set of questions, I will ask you to consider them from your teacher lens and then, separately, from your TOC lens.

1. What is most helpful in your coaching sessions?
  - a. Teacher
  - b. Teacher of Color
  
2. What is least helpful in your coaching sessions?
  - a. Teacher
  - b. Teacher of Color

3. What challenges do you experience as a:
  - a. Teacher
  - b. Teacher of Color
4. On a scale of 1-5, how well does your coach help you navigate the challenges you experience as a:
  - a. Teacher
    - i. Explain the rating
  - b. Teacher of Color
    - i. Explain the rating
5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me?
6. Is there a question you thought I'd ask that I didn't?

In addition to particular prompts, the interviewer will follow-up on initial responses and ask

pressing questions using questions such as:

- What do you mean by...?
- How did you do...?
- Tell me more about...
- Is there anything else you'd like to add that we have yet to discuss?

## Appendix B: Coach Interview Protocol

### Culturally Responsive Coaching: Supervision with a cultural lens

#### Coach Interview Protocol

Participant IDNO	_ _ _ _	Gender: • Male • Female	Researcher Initials
	_ _ _		
Date	_ _ / _ _ / _ _		
Introduction			
I am _____ from _____			
✓ General purpose of the study			
✓ Aims of the interview and expected duration			
✓ Who is involved in the process (other participants)			
✓ Why the participant's cooperation is important			
✓ What will happen with the collected information and how the participant/target group will benefit			
✓ Any questions?			
✓ Consent			
Warm up [demographic & work history]			
Can I ask some details about you and your job?			
Please tell me a little about your background, education, and teaching experiences.			

<p>Number of Years Teaching ____ Years Coaching _____</p> <p>Are you originally from this area/district?    <input type="checkbox"/> Yes   <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>How old are you?    <input type="checkbox"/> Under 30yrs   <input type="checkbox"/> 30-40yrs   <input type="checkbox"/> Over 40yrs</p> <p>Now I am going to ask you some questions about your experiences as an instructional coach.</p>	
Domain	Topic and Probes
<p>School Context</p> <p>(5-10 minutes)</p>	<p>Can you tell me about your school?</p> <p>Tell me about your school achievement level.</p>
<p>Demographics &amp; Coaching Philosophy</p> <p>(20 Minutes)</p>	<p>Tell me about yourself and how you became a coach? How long have you been doing this? Etc.</p> <p>What is your coaching philosophy? How did it develop?</p> <p>Does your school/district use a specific coaching model?</p> <p>What are your thoughts/feelings about the current model?</p> <p>How do your coachees feel about the model you use?</p> <p>How would you describe your ideal coaching relationship?</p> <p>How close are you to ideal with your current coach?</p>

	<p>Have you had a coaching relationship that matched your ideal description above? Explain.</p>
<p>Cultural Competence &amp; Humanizing  (20 Minutes)</p>	<p>How does culture play into your conversations with your coachees?</p> <p>If you could define Culturally Responsive Coaching (CRC), how would you describe it?</p> <p>What knowledge, attitudes, and skills would a coach need to enact to align with the definition of CRC you described above?</p> <p>How does your current coaching model align with what you have described?</p> <p>In the area of CRC, where are you in your development (knowledge, attitudes, and skills)?</p> <p>What are your identified areas of growth related to CRC, as you have defined it?</p>
<p>Questions that arose from survey  (15 Minutes)</p>	
<p>Closing</p>	



Is there anything else you think is important about how you support your coachees that we have not talked about?

- ✓ Summarize
- ✓ Thank participant
- ✓ Provide extra information and contacts to participants

## Appendix C: Abolitionist Coaching Questions

Love, Bettina

<p>Abolitionist Coaches can ask teachers</p>	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What can you tell me that helps me better understand you as a person?</li> <li>2. How can I be the best instructional coach for you?</li> <li>3. How can our coaching relationship be a place where you feel seen, valued, and excited to learn?</li> <li>4. What matters most to you (i.e. in life, in relationships, in your community)?</li> <li>5. How can I support you mentally, emotionally, and in your community?</li> <li>6. What is your love language?</li> </ol>
<p>Abolitionist Coaches can ask themselves</p>	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How do I embody the spirit and goals of Black Lives Matter in everything I do in my coaching relationship?</li><li>2. What are my personal goals for continuously engaging in long-term anti-racist professional development that will support my Black, Brown, &amp; Indigenous teachers?</li><li>3. How will I intentionally implement an anti-racist coaching experience that centers the beauty, joy, and resiliency of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people? How will I also learn and teach about the African Diaspora?</li><li>4. What words and actions do I use that should be eliminated since they are harmful or oppressive to our participants of color? How can I replace these with healing centered words and actions?</li><li>5. What specific steps am I taking to ensure my Black, Brown &amp; Indigenous teachers and all my teachers feel supported to practice Abolitionist Teaching in their classrooms with K-12 students?</li></ol>
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## Appendix D: Teacher Survey



### Cultural Competence Survey

You are being asked to respond to this survey focused on your experiences as a K-12 Black teacher. The survey is being conducted as part of a dissertation research study focusing on cultural competency within coaching relationships in school settings. This survey is anonymous. No one will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this survey project. Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the survey should be directed to Jouanna Crossland-Wells, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education, at [Jouanna.Crossland-Wells@du.edu](mailto:Jouanna.Crossland-Wells@du.edu).

The survey should take about 20-30 minutes to complete.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this survey. Your effort is greatly appreciated.

Please complete this survey with regards to your current or most recent instructional coach in mind. Keep this person in mind for the entirety of the survey.

Definition:

Instructional Coach: Designee of the school assigned to observe teachers and provide feedback on instructional practices. This person can serve in the administrative role (principal/AP), as a teacher leader, department chair, or other supervisory capacity.

## **PART 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Please tell us about yourself and the coach you are referencing for this survey.**

**Please indicate the primary racial/ethnic group with which you identify:**

- Asian (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Black or African American (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Native American or Alaskan Native (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- White (not Hispanic or Latino)

**Please indicate the primary racial/ethnic group of which your coach identifies:**

- Asian (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Black or African American (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Native American or Alaskan Native (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- White (not Hispanic or Latino)
- Hispanic or Latino

**Your gender - Please select how you identify yourself to others. Check all that apply.**

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

**Your coach's gender. Check all that apply.**

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

**What is the nature of the site where this coaching relationship took place?**

- K-8 School
- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High School
- Prefer not to say
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the official title/role of your coach within your school?**

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Department Chair
- Teacher Leader
- Instructional Coach
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**How long ago were you coached by this person?**

- Currently
- Last school year
- 2 years ago
- 3 years ago
- 4 years ago

**How long were they your coach?**

- Less than a year
- 1 school year
- 2 school years
- 3 or more school years

**How often were/are you observed by this coach?**

- Weekly
- Bi-Weekly
- Monthly/6-8 times per year
- 4-5 times per year
- 2-3 times per year
- 0-1 time per year

**What was the frequency of your coaching conversations?**

- Weekly
- Bi-Weekly
- Monthly/6-8 times per year
- 4-5 times per year
- 2-3 times per year
- 0-1 time per year

**At the time of this coaching relationship, what was the school location?**

- Urban - Public
- Urban - Private
- Suburban - Public
- Suburban - Private
- Rural

Charter

**Although not defined in the current literature, how would you define Culturally Responsive Instructional Coaching?**

**Based on your definition, would you say that this coach was a culturally responsive instructional coach?**

Yes

No

**Why or why not**

**How long have you been teaching?**

Less than 2 years

2-5 years

6-10 years

11 or more years

N/NI    S/SI    ST/Mi    O/VI    A/EI

## **PART 2: Attitudes and Beliefs**

**Instructions: In the following section, you will find a set of statements about cultural competency indicators. Answer the question based on the coach you referred to above. How often did**



**the coach exhibit the behavior listed  
in each question AND how  
important is that behavior to you.  
Please select a response to each  
statement.**

- 1 N = Never      NI = Not  
                                 Important**
- 2 S = Seldom    SI = Slightly  
                                 Important**
- 3 ST =              MI =  
                                 Sometimes    Moderately  
                                 Important**
- 4 O = Often      I = Very  
                                 Important**
- 5 A = Always    EI = Extremely  
                                 Important**

**1. Demonstrates openness and  
respect for culturally different  
teachers.**

**a.      How important is it that a  
coach: Demonstrates openness and**

respect for culturally different teachers.

**2.** Recognizes the limitations of models and approaches based on Western assumptions in working with culturally different individuals.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Recognizes the limitations of models and approaches based on Western assumptions in working with culturally different individuals.

**3.** Recognizes that what is inappropriate from the standpoint of the majority culture may be appropriate for some minority cultures.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Recognizes that what is inappropriate from the standpoint of the majority culture may be

appropriate for some minority cultures.

4. Dismisses the importance of cultural assumptions in education and supervision/coaching.

a. How important is it that a coach DOES NOT: Dismiss the importance of cultural assumptions in education and coaching.

5. Pays any attention to the demographics of teachers they coach.

a. How important is it that a coach: Pays attention to the demographics of teachers they coach.

6. Has made statements that suggest a racist attitude.

a. How important is it that a coach HAS NOT made statements that suggest a racist attitude.

7. Is aware of the existence of unintentional racism.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Is aware of the existence of unintentional racism.

**8.** Is aware of their own implicit cultural biases in education and coaching.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Is aware of own implicit cultural biases in education and coaching.

**9.** Is aware of their own limitations in working with culturally different supervisees/teachers.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Is aware of their own limitations in working with culturally different teachers.

**10.** Respects the worldview, religious beliefs and values of culturally different teachers.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Respects the worldview, religious beliefs and values of culturally different teachers.

**11.** Has mentioned that race is an important consideration in coaching.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Mentions that race is an important consideration in coaching.

**12.** Exhibits a respect for other cultures without overly identifying self with minority cultures or being paternalistic.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Exhibits a respect for other cultures without overly identifying self

with minority culture  
or being paternalistic.

**13.** Demonstrates an interest in  
learning about other cultures.

**b.** How important is it  
that a coach:

Demonstrates an  
interest in learning  
about other cultures.

**14.** Acknowledges that his or her  
own life experiences, values, and  
biases may influence the coaching  
process.

**b.** How important is it  
that a coach:

Acknowledges that his  
or her own life  
experiences, values,  
and biases may  
influence the coaching  
process.

15. Believes that contemporary models and approaches of coaching are equally generalizable to ethnic minorities.

a. How important is it that a coach: Does NOT believe that contemporary models and approaches of coaching are equally generalizable to ethnic minorities.

N/NI S/SWI ST/NE O/I A/VI

**PART 3: Knowledge & Understanding**

**Instructions: In the following section, you will find a set of statements about cultural competency indicators. Answer the question based on the coach you referred to above. How often did the coach exhibit the behavior**

**listed in each question AND how important is that behavior to you. Please select a response to each statement.**

**1 N = Never NI = Not at all important**

**2 S = Seldom SWI = Slightly important**

**3 ST = Sometimes MI = Moderately important**

**4 O = Often VI = Very important**

**5 A = Always EI = Extremely important**

- 1. Displays an understanding of how culture, ethnicity, and race influence coaching and education.



**a.** How important is it that a coach: Displays an understanding of how culture, ethnicity, and race influence coaching and education.

**2.** Demonstrates an understanding of the problem of racial stereotyping in supervision/coaching and education.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Demonstrates an understanding of the problem of racial stereotyping in coaching and education.

**3.** Demonstrates a familiarity with the values systems of diverse cultural groups.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Demonstrates a familiarity with the values systems of diverse cultural groups.

**4.** Knows that biases and assumptions of Western schooling models can have a negative effect on culturally different coachees.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Knows that biases and assumptions of Western schooling models can have a negative effect on culturally different coachees.

**5.** Shows some knowledge about the cultural traditions of various ethnic groups.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Shows some knowledge about the cultural traditions of various ethnic groups.

**6.** Understands your culture and value system.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Understands your culture and value system.

7. Understands why students of color and their families often distrust authority figures representing the dominant culture.

a. How important is it that a coach: Understands why students of color and their families often distrust authority figures representing the dominant culture.

8. Understands the world views of coachees from other cultures.

a. How important is it that a coach: Understands the world views of coachees from other cultures?

**PART 4: Skills and Practices**

**Instructions:** In the following section, you will find a set of statements about cultural competency indicators. Answer the question based on the coach you referred to above. How often did the coach exhibit the behavior listed in each question AND how important is that behavior to you. Please select a response to each statement.

- 1 N = Never                      NI = Not at all important
- 2 S = Seldom                    SI = Slightly important
- 3 ST = Sometimes              MI = Moderately important
- 4 O = Often                      VI = Very important
- 5 A = Always                    EI = Extremely Important

1. Is able to avoid racial stereotypes by taking into account both the uniqueness of individuals as well as the known characteristics of the culture.                   

a. How important is it that a coach: Is able to avoid racial stereotypes by taking into account both the uniqueness of individuals as

well as the known characteristics of the culture.

**2. Considers**

supervisees'/coaches' cultural and linguistic backgrounds in giving them feedback and evaluation.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Considers

supervisees'/coaches' cultural and linguistic backgrounds in giving them feedback and evaluation.

**3. Has used expressions that are offensive to marginalized groups of people.**

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Has NOT used expressions that are offensive to marginalized groups of people.

**4. Shows sensitivity in**

supervising/coaching culturally different teachers.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Shows sensitivity in supervising/coaching culturally different teachers.

**5.** Encourages discussion of cultural and racial influences in teaching and supervision.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Encourages discussion of cultural and racial influences in teaching and supervision.

**6.** Shows a commitment to learning and enhancing own multicultural competence in supervision/coaching.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Shows a commitment to learning and enhancing own multicultural competence in supervision/coaching.

7. Knows how to adapt knowledge of cultural differences to supervision/coaching and teaching.

a. How important is it that a coach: Knows how to adapt knowledge of cultural differences to supervision/coaching and teaching.

8. Recognizes individual differences in ethnic/racial identity.

a. How important is it that a coach: Recognizes individual differences in ethnic/racial identity.

9. Is very rigid and dogmatic regarding what constitutes the proper approach of teaching.

a. How important is it that a coach: Is NOT very rigid and dogmatic regarding what constitutes the proper approach of teaching.

10. Negatively evaluates supervisees/teachers who do not

conform to supervisor's/coaches own theoretical orientation and approach of teaching.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Does NOT negatively evaluate supervisees/teachers who do not conform to supervisor's/coaches own theoretical orientation and approach of teaching.

**11.** Communicates effectively with culturally different supervisees/teachers at both the verbal and non-verbal levels.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Communicates effectively with culturally different supervisees/teachers at both the verbal and non-verbal levels.

**12.** Is flexible in adjusting his/her supervisory/coaching style to culturally different teachers.



**a.** How important is it that a coach: Is flexible in adjusting his/her supervisory/coaching style to culturally different teachers.

**13.** Criticizes culturally different teachers when they use direct and structured approaches in the classroom with their students.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Does NOT criticize culturally different teachers when they use direct and structured approaches in the classroom with their students.

**14.** Demonstrates sensitivity to conflicts between the generic characteristics of teaching and the values of different cultural groups.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Demonstrates sensitivity to conflicts between the generic

characteristics of teaching and the values of different cultural groups.

**15.** Takes into account cultural biases in assessments.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Takes into account cultural biases in assessments.

**16.** Makes use of every opportunity to increase supervisees'/teachers' multicultural competence/cultural responsiveness in teaching.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Makes use of every opportunity to increase supervisees'/teachers' multicultural competence/cultural responsiveness in teaching.

**17.** Assists supervisees/teachers in formulating culturally appropriate assessments and lesson plans.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Assists supervisees/teachers in formulating culturally appropriate assessments and lesson plans.

**18.** Takes into account racial biases and sociopolitical implications in education and supervision/coaching.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Takes into account racial biases and sociopolitical implications in education and supervision/coaching.

**19.** Is willing to consult or refer to resources available in ethnocultural communities.

**a.** How important is it that a coach: Is willing to consult or refer to resources available in ethnocultural communities.

**20.** Demonstrates competence in a

wide variety of methods of

assessment and interventions,

including non-traditional ones.

**a.** How important is it that a

coach: Demonstrates competence in a

wide variety of methods of

assessment and interventions,

including non-traditional ones.

## Appendix E : Instructional Coach Survey



### Cultural Competence Survey

You are being asked to respond to this survey focused on your experiences as a K-12 Instructional Coach of Black teachers. The survey is being conducted as part of a dissertation research study focusing on cultural competency within coaching relationships in school settings. This survey is anonymous. No one will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this survey project. Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the survey should be directed to Jouanna Crossland-Wells, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education, at [Jouanna.Crossland-Wells@du.edu](mailto:Jouanna.Crossland-Wells@du.edu).

The survey should take about 20-30 minutes to complete.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this survey. Your effort is greatly appreciated.

Please complete this survey with regards to your instructional coaching philosophy and practice.

Definition:

Instructional Coach: Designee of the school assigned to observe teachers and provide feedback on instructional practices. This person can serve in the administrative role (principal/AP), as a teacher leader, department chair, or other supervisory capacity.

## **PART 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Please tell us about yourself and your coaching experiences.**

**Please indicate the primary racial/ethnic group with which you identify:**

- Asian (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Black or African American (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Native American or Alaskan Native (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- White (not Hispanic or Latino)
- Hispanic or Latino

**How many Black teachers have you coached:**

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-10

More than 10

**Your gender - Please select how you identify yourself to others. Check all that apply.**

Male

Female

Non-binary / third gender

Prefer not to say

**What is the nature of the site where the majority of your coaching of Black teachers took place?**

ECE Center

Elementary School

Middle School

High School

Prefer not to say

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your official title/role within your school?**

Principal

Assistant Principal

Department Chair

Teacher Leader

Instructional Coach

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**On average, how often do you observe the teachers you coach?**

Weekly

Bi-Weekly

Monthly/6-8 times per year

- 4-5 times per year
- 2-3 times per year
- 0-1 time per year

**On average, what is the frequency of your coaching conversations?**

- Weekly
- Bi-Weekly
- Monthly/6-8 times per year
- 4-5 times per year
- 2-3 times per year
- 0-1 time per year

**What was the school location where the majority of your coaching of Black teachers took place?**

- Urban - Public
- Urban - Private
- Suburban - Public
- Suburban - Private
- Rural
- Charter

**Although not defined in the current literature, how would you define Culturally Responsive Instructional Coaching?**

**Based on your definition, would you say that you are a culturally responsive instructional coach?**



- Definitely Yes
- Probably Yes
- Might or Might Not
- Probably Not
- Definitely Not

**Why or why not**

**How long have you been coaching?**

- Less than 2 years
- 2-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11 or more years

**Do you follow a specific coaching model or philosophy (ie. Cognitive Coaching, Relay Coaching, etc.)? Describe?**

Never      Seldom      Sometimes      Often      Always

## **PART 2: Attitudes and Beliefs**

**Instructions: In the following section, you will find a set of statements about**

**cultural competency indicators. Answer the question based on your coaching philosophy and beliefs. Please select a response to each statement.**

**1.** Demonstrates

openness and

respect for

culturally

different teachers.

**2.** Recognizes the limitations of models and

approaches based on

Western assumptions in

working with culturally

different individuals.

**3.** Recognizes that

what is inappropriate

from the standpoint of

the majority culture may  
be appropriate for some  
'minority' cultures.

**4.** Dismisses the  
importance of cultural  
assumptions in education

and  
supervision/coaching.

**5.** Pays attention to  
the demographics of

teachers you coach.

**6.** Has made  
statements that suggest a

racist attitude.

**7.** Is aware of the  
existence of unintentional

racism.

**8.** Is aware of your  
own implicit cultural

biases in education and  
coaching.

**9.** Is aware of your own limitations in working with culturally different supervisees/teachers.

**10.** Respects the worldview, religious beliefs and values of culturally different teachers.

**11.** Has mentioned that race is an important consideration in coaching.

**12.** Exhibits a respect for other cultures without overly identifying self with minority cultures or being paternalistic.

**13.** Demonstrates an interest in learning about other cultures.

**14.** Acknowledges that your own life experiences, values, and biases may influence the coaching process.

**15.** Believes that contemporary models and approaches of coaching are equally generalizable to all ethnic groups.

Never      Seldom      Sometimes      Often      Always

**PART 3: Knowledge &**

**Understanding**

**Instructions: In the following section, you will find a set of statements about cultural competency indicators. Answer the question based on your coaching philosophy and beliefs. Please select a response to each statement.**

1. Displays an understanding of how culture, ethnicity, and race influence

coaching and  
education.

**2.** Demonstrates an

understanding of the

problem of racial

stereotyping in

supervision/coaching and

education.

**3.** Demonstrates a

familiarity with the

values systems of diverse

cultural groups.

**4.** Knows that biases

and assumptions of

Western schooling

models can have a

negative effect on

culturally different

coachees.

**5.** Shows some

knowledge about the

cultural traditions of various ethnic groups.

6. Understands coachees' culture and value system.

7. Understands why students of color and their families often distrust authority figures representing the dominant culture.

8. Understands the world views of coachees from other cultures.

Never      Seldom      Sometimes      Often      Always

**PART 4: Skills and Practices**

**Instructions: In the following section, you will find a set of**



**statements about cultural competency indicators. Answer the question based on your coaching philosophy and beliefs. Please select a response to each statement.**

**1.** Is able to avoid racial stereotypes by taking into account both the uniqueness of individuals as well as the known characteristics of the culture.

**2.** Considers supervisees'/coaches' cultural and linguistic backgrounds in giving

them feedback and  
evaluation.

**3.** Has used

expressions that are  
offensive to marginalized  
groups of people.

**4.** Shows sensitivity  
in supervising/coaching  
culturally different  
teachers.

**5.** Encourages  
discussion of cultural and  
racial influences in  
teaching and supervision.

**6.** Shows a  
commitment to learning  
and enhancing own  
multicultural competence  
in supervision/coaching.

**7.** Knows how to  
adapt knowledge of

cultural differences to  
supervision/coaching and  
teaching.

**8.** Recognizes

individual differences in       
ethnic/racial identity.

**9.** Is very rigid and  
dogmatic regarding what  
constitutes the proper  
approach of teaching.

**10.** Negatively

evaluates  
supervisees/teachers who  
do not conform to  
supervisor's/coaches own  
theoretical orientation  
and approach of teaching.

**11.** Communicates

effectively with       
culturally different  
supervisees/teachers at

both the verbal and non-verbal levels.

**12.** Is flexible in adjusting his/her supervisory/coaching style to culturally different teachers.

**13.** Criticizes culturally different teachers when they use direct and structured approaches in the classroom with their students.

**14.** Demonstrates sensitivity to conflicts between the generic characteristics of teaching and the values of different cultural groups.

**15.** Takes into account cultural biases in assessments.

**16.** Makes use of every opportunity to increase supervisees'/teachers' multicultural competence/cultural responsiveness in teaching.

**17.** Assists supervisees/teachers in formulating culturally appropriate assessments and lesson plans.

**18.** Takes into account racial biases and sociopolitical implications in education

and

supervision/coaching.

**19.** Is willing to

consult or refer to

resources available in

ethnocultural

communities.

**20.** Demonstrates

competence in a wide

variety of methods of

assessment and

interventions, including

non-traditional ones.