Summer 2015

Obtaining Cultural Competency Skills: Perceptions from Supervisors in Higher Education

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OBTAINING CULTURAL COMPETENCY SKILLS:

PERCEPTIONS FROM SUPERVISORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Individualized Studies
Intercultural Communication

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by

Veronica Gomez Vilchis

August 2015

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

OBTAINING CULTURAL COMPETENCY SKILLS:

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A program evaluation was done on the supervisor training at Central Washington University to obtain the perceptions of supervisors on cultural competency. Eighteen supervisors were interviewed. The results demonstrated supervisors' support of incorporating cultural competency as part of their professional development. However, supervisors indicated the current supervisor training does not give them tools to interact effectively with diverse populations. Implications for including cultural competency skills for supervisors in higher education are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to begin by dedicating this degree to the man who I know is with me in spirit. He always pushed me to do better and believed that education was the best inheritance he could leave his children. Gracias, papa. Te extraño.

Secondly, I dedicate this to all the Latina women who decided to beat the odds and pursue their Master's and Doctorate degrees. May you excel and become thriving leaders in your communities.

I would like to thank my graduate committee who have been the fuel in making this major accomplishment come into fruition: Dr. Delores "Kandee" Cleary, Dr. Jesse Nelson, and Dr. Michael Ogden. You reinstalled in me faith and confidence in myself.

Thank you to all the women in my life who embarked in this journey with me and provided me the support, who cheered for me on the sidelines, and who been there for me during my ups and downs. This goes to my mother who has role modeled what it is to be a hard working independent woman—who gave me wings to fly. And that when life throws curve balls you hit them out of the park. Te quiero mucho mamá. To my sisters who are fighters and always see the humorous side of things. They live and breathe the motto "when life gives you limes, you get a bottle of tequila, and call the girls." To my friends and colleagues, your unconditional support and words of wisdom will forever inspire me. Each of you mean a great deal to me. I have learned from you more than you realize.

To my brothers who I love dearly and respect. You will forever be my connection

to the patriarch of the family.

Thank you to the four men in my life who have been my pillars in life and in this journey. To my husband for providing the foundation and kept the household afloat during my time away buried in research and writing. For being my sounding board and giving me peace in my heart and mind so I may complete my dream of getting a Master's degree. And for keeping your promise that you made to my dad. Te amo mucho mi amor! To my sons who would stay up with me in my long nights of writing. They made me laugh and were a constant reminder of why I took this journey. Thank you all for your patience. Each of you mean the world to me. Los amo hasta la luna y de regreso.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Investment in professional development for supervisors and leaders can be costly

to organizations. Laird (2001) found in a study that, depending on the size of an

organization, it will spend up to 6% of their employees' salaries on professional

development. According to Boyatzis (2009), ". . . billions are spent trying to develop

competencies each year [,yet] the results have been less than satisfactory" (p. 439). That

statement has support from other scholars who mention specific amounts spent on

professional development. Hrivnak Jr., Reichard, and Riggio (2009) found that

organizations in the United States spent between $30 billion and $50 billion on

professional development in 2005. Clark (2010) reported that the training budget grew to

$58.5 billion in 2007 to provide professional development for managers, supervisors and

executive teams. These numbers demonstrate that organizations consider professional

development valuable for their staff.

However, those numbers did not seem to spill over in higher education. For

example, in 2009, Central Washington University (CWU) eliminated the training

administrator position and each human resources representative had the task of providing

training due to lack of funding. Human resources staff have their assigned duties that are

not limited to, but include, hiring, helping with discharging employees, negotiating

contracts with unions, and meeting employees' needs. The additional task of providing

employee training caused them to slow down the turnaround time in contacting

employees and processing paperwork. Therefore, the university community did not capture their human resources representative's full attention.

Washington State requires that supervisors who are state employees go through a training program that includes a minimum of twenty-four hours of instruction, must be taken during the past five years, and must be sponsored by post-secondary institutions, professional organizations, or state agencies per the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Title 357 Chapter 357-34 §357-34-065. Furthermore, the Central Washington University Policy on Training and Development (CWUP) 2-30-260 (6) indicates that supervisor training must occur within 6 months of being hired into the position and must address five major topics: (a) the role and legal responsibilities of a supervisor/manager, (b) performance management, including employee performance evaluation, development, counseling or coaching, and discipline, (c) compensation practices, (d) recruitment and selection processes and practices, and (e) labor relations practices and processes. It also states, "in addition, supervisors and managers may also receive training on other topics identified by the employer."

The Human Resources partners could no longer continue to provide training in addition to their job responsibilities. In 2012, CWU Human Resources created a professional development program and hired two staff members to spearhead the program. The staff members proposed contracting a facilitator for the supervisor training program. One staff member would continue to offer compliance training, *Preventing Sexual Harassment*, and *Preventing Discrimination in the Workplace*. The institution

was able to locate funds to support the new initiative. The supervisor training program, titled *Leadership Development for Supervisors*, became a two-day, 16-hour supervisor leadership program that covered the topics listed in CWU's Policy on Training and Development (CWUP) 2-30-260 (6). New supervisor program contains a plethora of information to cover in only two days. However, there is a perception that cultural competency is not part of supervisor training and is not offered now as part of the professional development program for all CWU employees.

Therefore, through a program evaluation approach on the current supervisor training at Central Washington University, this study will look to answer the following questions: What do supervisors perceive the rationale is for obtaining cultural competency skills? Does the current supervisor training support those perceptions? This will examine whether supervisors feel they obtained or not obtained intercultural communication skills through the current supervisory training program to meet the demographic changes of the institution.

On a college campus, a supervisor works with various generations that includes students who begin at the age of 18, and sometimes 16 or 17 if they are in a program that allows them to take college level courses, to staff and faculty who are at or past retirement age. Supervisors also are prone to work and serve people from various backgrounds: race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. This provides challenges for supervisors to oversee their areas in a manner that allows for minimal

discrimination, optimal employee performance, and excellent communication between both employee and supervisor.

According to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at Central Washington University, in 2005, the university had 9,857 students, 5,131 were females and 4,726 were males. Of those students 1,809 were minority students (Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, Black, Pacific Islander, Multi-ethnic, and international students). In fall 2014, the university had 9,476 students, 4,831 were females and 4,585 were males. Of those students, 2,732 were minority students, an increase of 51%. In 2005, there were 1,267 employees, 617 males and 659 females. That included 136 employees who were part of the minority population. In 2014, there were 1,306 employees, 561 males and 745 females. The minority demographic increased by 31%.

What can these numbers mean to supervisors on campus? Supervisors should be prepared to lead in their areas with the tools and knowledge of working with people from a variety of cultures. A study conducted by Gatmon, Jackson, Koshkarian, Martos-Perry, Molina, Patel, and Rodolfa (2001) found that supervisors are not having conversations with their subordinates about race, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity, especially sexual orientation. They argue supervisors feel they are not prepared to have those conversations and will avoid them. However, by doing so, avoiding such circumstances can negatively affect the supervisor-supervisee relationship. Inman's (2006) study agrees, "a supervisory relationship that involves an implementation of cultural competence through a mutual agreement on goals and tasks related to a focus on

multicultural issues may provide for greater supervision satisfaction" (p. 81). It is

feasible to say that as a result of positive supervisor-supervisee relationships in relation to

cultural competency can lead to a more productive and inclusive work environment.

When supervisors are culturally competent, it can enhance the campus climate by

demonstrating a supportive leadership team of diversity and equity. Sulentic Dowell

(2012) stated:

> . . . when senior campus leaders have robust understanding of the depth and
>
> breadth of diversity in all its dimensions . . . . the entire campus infrastructure
>
> shifts so that the positional authority and resource allocation necessary to realize
>
> equity and live diversity can be established. Leadership surfaces as central to the
>
> struggle for equity, and essential for the cause of equity. (p. 200)

Professional development can be a tool to aid supervisors in building the skills

that enable employees to work in collaboration with the supervisor and the institution to

meet its goals. Professional development cannot be a training program without a purpose

or unorganized. It must meet the institution's philosophy on what constitutes the

qualifications of a supervisor and connect to the institution's mission. Hrivnak Jr.,

Reichard, and Riggio (2009) argued that it "ultimately needs to be driven by the specific

goals, strategies, and needs of the organization and the salient elements of the

organizational environment" (p. 462). Therefore, the program should have its own

mission statement that incorporates or is in relation to the institution's mission.

Professional development should also be a part of the institution's culture. It can be difficult to ask supervisors to attend professional development courses, even though it is a requirement by the state to do so, if the university does not fully support the program. Fully supporting the program means that employees of the institution are in agreement and equally or close to equally valuing the importance of professional development of all employees. Hrivnak Jr., Reichard, and Riggio (2009) emphasized that:

> First, organizations demonstrate a commitment to leadership development by openly acknowledging the importance of leadership development and supporting the development of leaders from within the organization. . . further substantiated by a significant commitment of resources. . . recognizing that leadership development is a long-term strategic investment. . . . (p. 464)

An institution supporting this type of programs provide an environment of continuous learning no matter how much experience the supervisor has. Professional development can be a venue to address changes and allow for training opportunities for supervisors who have more experience than new supervisors. When higher education institutions instill a culture of continuous learning and provide effective supervisor training for its staff and faculty, it gives supervisors the tools to improve on their supervisory skills to increase employee performance (Senge, 2000).

Cultural competency as a part of supervisors' professional development program can connect to the university's Inclusiveness Initiative and goals of increasing diversity. Dr. James Gaudino (n.d.), CWU President, has a message to the community on the

university's Inclusiveness Initiative website stating that "we must be collectively and individually committed to creating a university that treasures diversity and provides opportunities for all to learn" (para. 2).   Where "all" can mean students, but also staff, faculty, and supervisors, and where diversity can include people with disabilities, gender, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientation, age, race, and religion.

Sensemaking theory will be the theoretical framework by making sense of what are supervisors' perceptions of the supervisor training. In addition, program evaluation research will be the methodology used to obtain the data. Interview questions include references to cultural competence, working in a diverse environment and diversity training. It is with hopes that this study may provide awareness of the need to better prepare supervisors to work in higher education institutions in a diverse environment similar to Central Washington University, and identify if such preparation may benefit employees and students in the institution. One goal of higher education institutions is to provide a learning environment for students that enables students to be stewards of critical thinking and to obtain effective communicators across cultures. Sulentic Dowell (2012) concluded " only in valuing all histories, respecting all cultures, appreciating all experiences, cherishing all voices, and treasuring all stories, will public higher education and the greater public emerge as strong and vibrant" (p. 201).

In conclusion, the purpose of the study is to do a program evaluation on the current supervisory professional development program at Central Washington University to examine if supervisors felt they were obtaining intercultural communication skills.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The majority of scholarly work on professional development for supervisors tends to concentrate on counseling, business, or graduate student-supervisor relationships. Little research considers effective professional development for supervisors in higher education, specifically cross cultural competency skills. This literature review includes several sections that consider this deficiency in research. The first section discusses what professional development is and how it is used in each of the studies. The second section defines and analyzes cultural competency as it relates to supervisory roles. Finally, the last section examines the theoretical framework.

Professional Development for Supervisors

There are various definitions of *professional development* and it is difficult to identify one that all scholars can agree on (Olshfski & Cutchin, 2001). Rostek and Kladivko (1988) defined it "as [a] purposeful learning experience undertaken in response to identified needs. . . to improve organizational and individual performance in achieving institutional goals" (p. 37). However, Edwards (1997) and Friedman and Phillips (2004) indicated that professional development had certain objectives that define it with a different emphasis:

Providing learning opportunities to educate adults to meet challenges associated with change and citizenship; creating a learning market to meet goals of economic

competitiveness and self-reliance; and creating learning networks in which

individuals and groups participate to pursue their own goals. (p. 362)

It seems apparent that one area of commonality is the sense that professional

development for supervisors is about individual performance aimed to achieve the goals

of the institution, while also providing supervisors with opportunities to grow

professionally in order to be competitive, creating a platform for supervisors to pursue

their professional goals.

Several studies indicate what professional development entails and what

processes are used. Hall (1987) suggested there are certain elements an organization

should provide for employees for their professional development. One of those elements

is the opportunity to obtain metaskills that entail adaptability, tolerance of ambiguity and

uncertainty, self-awareness, and identity change. These particular metaskills can provide

the foundation in supervisors' professional development journey to meet the ever-

changing higher education institutions. Astor-Jack, Balcerzak, and McCallie (2006)

found that professional development must be interactive, include hands-on experience,

and furnish tools to immediately apply the training to employee's jobs.

Recent research on professional development for teachers in the kindergarten

through high school (K-12) education system demonstrated that there are various ways in

which it can be done. For example, Stenberg's (2010) study focuses on professional

development that asks K-12 student teachers to do self-reflection and self-awareness

activities of their educational practices to improve their teaching skills. Through self-

reflection and becoming aware of their own beliefs and values and how they permeate in their teaching, student teachers become conscientious and intentional in their pedagogy, which can better prepare them to teach a diverse student population. Likewise, supervisors can incorporate self-reflection as a means to identify what is going well, what areas to improve, and what techniques to implement to increase employee productivity.

From organization to organization, reasons for why professional development is important will vary. Hrivnak Jr., Reichard, and Riggio (2009) argued that the implementation of a leadership development program should often involve a desire "to improve an organization's leadership capability in terms of quality, quantity, or both" (p. 461). Lewis, Cavalier, Hantman, Waechter, and Yamakawa (1994) provided another reason. They write that higher education institutions value professional development because "student retention activities frequently focus on the role of staff in interacting with students. Staff development, then, makes good sense from a management perspective because it can have a positive effect on outcomes" (p. 55). Professional development is encouraged because of the impact the final result will have on the organization as a whole. In essence, professional development for supervisors is an invaluable resource to manage changes in higher education. As stated in "The Changing Landscape of Higher Education" 2000:

> We need institutions that can negotiate market forces successfully to meet
> resource needs while preserving and building on core principles. In addition, we

need to build and sustain academic environments that will prepare educated

citizens who will contribute to both economic and societal needs. (p. 7)

As a result, the article indicates that new programs and services need to meet the

increased demographic changes of the minority student population through multicultural

and diversity training for faculty. In addition to faculty, supervisors in higher education

need multicultural and diversity training due to the interconnectedness of departments

and services provided to students outside of the classroom. Inevitably, the number of

students of color are changing in higher education. According to Mitchell (2014), "there

will be a need for more intersectional support systems on college campuses . . . such

support systems will be needed for students, faculty, staff, and administration alike" (p.

3). Such support systems can be professional development for supervisors in higher

education.

One facet of professional development to consider is cultural competency for

supervisors. Cultural competency increases employee satisfaction while meeting the

needs of a diverse population. When staff and faculty are culturally competent, they

create a culture where students from underrepresented groups feel they are in an

academic environment in which they can excel. Students from the dominant group can

then be in a position where they understand their privilege and how that impacts

interactions with students from underrepresented groups.

Cultural Competency

Addressing cultural competency in the workplace is imperative in professional development for higher education leadership, from middle management to executive members. Sanchez (2011) stated, "to maximize the opportunities inherent in these times, leaders must attempt to understand the beliefs and values of their workforces around the world to enable managers and supervisors to set norms for workforce behaviors" (p. 28). Establishing common values and norms of behavior that are inclusive of all cultures in the organization can help with improvement of employee production, retention, and organization morale.

Higher education institutions are no exception to this. As stated in the introduction, the demographic makeup of CWU has changed over the years and will continue to diversify due to the university's commitment to increase admissions of international and underrepresented students. This increased diversification has significant implications for professional development. Museus (2007) pointed out:

> as the institutional cultures of colleges and universities become more diversified, understanding the impact of those cultures on individual and group behaviors and experiences is increasingly complicated yet highly important. Supervisors should be aware of how to work with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds in order to provide a positive learning experience. (p. 36)

Fisher-Yoshida and Geller (2009) agreed with Museus. They state that it is necessary to "develop leaders with the ability to relate to others across differences in a way that is

respectful of both themselves as well as those with whom they interact" (p. 5). The

failure to provide this development can create significant problems. Lack of cultural

competence can cause supervisors to go through embarrassing situations when interacting

with people from various cultural backgrounds.

As such, Hugenberg, LaCivita, and Lubanovic (1996) suggested leaders need to

participate in intercultural communication training for institutions to interact effectively

in a multicultural environment. Likewise, Hardee (2014) found in a study done on

students from Student Support Services, a federal TRIO program that focuses on

retention of first generation and low-income students, it is necessary for higher education

institutions to move passed superficial programs of diversity. The programs should

create a deeper sense of inclusion that not only empower students of color, but every

student to become critical thinkers in a multicultural environment.

Developing a culturally competent institution can shape an inclusive campus in

which students leave with the capability to succeed in a diverse workforce and, at the

minimum, to become culturally aware of their workplace. To obtain those results,

supervisors must have the cross cultural communication skills to create and/or support

mechanisms for faculty and staff to build inclusive academic settings for all students.

Definition. What does *cultural competency* mean? What implications does it

have in professional development? The literature reflected several terms that were

interchanged through articles and books: (a) *cultural competence*, (b) *intercultural

communication*, (c) *diversity*, (d) *global competency,* and (e) *cross cultural competence*.

To begin, it may be of some value to first define the term *culture* within the definitions of cultural competency. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012) said, "[C]ulture is a learned meaning system that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, meanings, and symbols" shared by a community of individuals (p. 16). Triandis and Albert (1987) defined culture as a reflection of "shared meanings, norms, and values. Members of the same culture know the 'rules of the game' so that their interactions can be effective" (p. 266). Based on that definition, Wiseman (2002) operationalized *culture*; the term is not so much based on people's skin color or on country of origin, "but on the commonalities in and interpretations of their behaviors" (p. 208). An explanation of what culture is provides a foundation to comprehending the terminology authors use in their research such as *multicultural competence*, *intercultural competence*, and *diversity training*.

Beamer (1992) indicated *intercultural competency* includes learning what key cultural communication styles a culture uses to encode and decode messages successfully. This encoding/decoding aims to accept differences between cultures, to acknowledge but challenge stereotypes, to evaluate the communication process, and to gain the skills to communicate effectively in the other culture. Krishnamurthi (2003) defined *diversity* as a "representation of people that exemplifies all cultural and congenital differences. Diversity is an essential component of multiculturalism" (p. 263). Hunter, White, and Godbey (2006) defined g*lobal competence* as "having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others, leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work effectively outside

one's environment" (p. 277). They continued to mention that "the research then noted that to become globally competent, one must establish a firm understanding of the concept of globalization and world history. It is here that the recognition of the interconnectedness of society, politics, history, economics, the environment, and related topics becomes important" (p. 279). Finally, Lopez-Mulnix and Mulnix (2006) created their own definition of *multiculturalism* "as the effective awareness, sensitivity, and practices that embrace human diversity through recognizing strength in different cultural values, styles of communication, interactions, and time constructions" (p. 7).

In addition to these four terms, in their study, Purnell, Davidhizar, Newman Giger, Strickland, Fishman, and Allison's (2011) shared several *cultural competency* definitions. One in particular, although defined in the context of healthcare services, can be applied to higher education. They state that cultural competency is "having the knowledge, understanding, and skills about a diverse cultural group that allows the health care provider to provide acceptable cultural care" (p. 8). In terms of higher education, culturally competent supervisors have the ability to establish systems and implement policies to ensure their staff and faculty are sensitive and aware of other cultures when interacting and providing services to faculty, staff, students, and their families.

Cultural competency for supervisors. How is cultural competency integrated in professional development for supervisors and how do employees perceive it?

Schmidt (2009) studied job training satisfaction on customer and technical service employees in nine organizations. He examined to what degree employees were satisfied

with the diversity training and concluded that training development must meet employees' needs. In addition, interaction with different cultures is vital in order to gain a better understanding of *how* cultures function and *why* they function in certain ways. As people learn more about other cultural backgrounds, they develop the tools to be cautious when they communicate, avoiding misunderstandings and minimizing stereotypical assumptions (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

Sanchez (2011) found in his research that "equally important is the cultural orientation to customer or client service. Because of this impact on an organization's practical behaviors, culture has enormous strategic significance. To be successful, an organization must endeavor to shape its culture to support its mission and implement its strategy" (p. 30). Universities should have a common mission and goal that is inclusive of diversity where it permeates in its organizational culture; this inclusion should extend to its employees and on to the students.

One purpose of higher education systems should be creating individuals who are knowledgeable in academia *and* who are responsible stewards of cultural knowledge, and able to apply it in a global workforce. Supervisors should be culturally competent to dispense that knowledge to their employees and encourage them to acquire intercultural communications skills. These skills are especially important in higher education, as King (2003) found that students, faculty, and staff had a higher degree of intercultural contact within the campus community compared to interactions off-campus. Thus, becoming culturally competent is paramount for supervisors due to the amount of intercultural

interactions that occur in higher education. Hugenberg, LaCivita, and Lubanovic further indicated that "in order for companies to attain and maintain a proper stance in this international marketplace and to function effectively in diverse and multiple cultures simultaneously, business leaders must incorporate training in intercultural communication as a foundation for and prior to their business dealings in the international marketplace" (1996, p. 205). These guidelines are not only relevant for business; they apply to higher education.

Still, if organizations are determined to prioritize training, how can an organization encourage participation in cultural competency professional development courses? Senge (2000) found that leaders need to feel that whatever they are committed to must be worthy of their attention. Organizations must foster in their mission the importance of learning how to work and communicate with a diverse population, buying in to the idea that professional development is required to gain knowledge that fits in with the ever-changing organizational culture. Purnell, Davidhizar, Newman, Strickland, Fishman, and Allison (2011) maintained that, "the administration and governance of the organization are primarily responsible for assuring that organizational cultural competence occurs . . . . administration includes all department heads, governance, and the Board of Trustees" (p. 8). As a result, an institution may create an environment in which supervisors want to pursue professional development in cultural competency. Senge (2000) indicated that "leaders engaged in building learning organizations naturally feel a part of a larger purpose that goes beyond their organization" (p. 293). Supervisors

may acknowledge the impact training can have ultimately on the retention of students, especially underrepresented students.

Cultural competency courses should provide supervisors the means to successfully engage in intercultural interactions. According to Hugenberg, LaCivita, and Lubanovic (1996), "international business and intercultural communication training must assist individuals in solving problems, communicating effectively, and achieving cultural awareness and appreciation" (p. 213). Goodman (2011) found building "trust and rapport [providing] interesting material and activities . . . . people often become productively involved, sometimes despite themselves" (p. 83). Diversity training must be included in the professional development series for supervisors in higher education, and that training must "provide perspective, awareness, and functional skills; while later career training should incorporate senior executive skills, networking, and action learning" (Scalberg, 2013, p. 245).

In summary, professional development for supervisors in intercultural communication must provide them with the skills to effectively interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Moreover, while supervisors become culturally competent it increases their awareness of the societal implications of an individual's identity, from underrepresented groups, in White dominant higher education institutions. The institutions then become a place where knowledge is celebrated and learning is continual. They are academic hubs for supervisors to become competent communicators with faculty, staff, and students who come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Instilling

effective intercultural communication in higher education, where it eventually interlaces within the organizational culture, can result in higher employee satisfaction, which, in turn, can increase job retention as well as increased retention of students of color.

The theoretical framework used in this study to examine professional development in cultural competency for supervisors is sensemaking theory.

Sensemaking in Professional Development

What is sensemaking theory? Rutledge (2009) provided a simple definition: "sensemaking is a communication process through which groups make sense of events and circumstances that affect them" (p. 19). For Weick (1995) "the concept of sensemaking is well named because, literally, it means the making of sense" (p. 5).

Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld's (2005) sensemaking theory analysis is more explicit and articulate. Their analysis of sensemaking has been cited recently in several publications such as Raes, Glunk, Heijltjes, and Roe (2007), Rutledge (2009), and Grant, Dutton, and Rosso (2008). A close examination of the article necessitates use of the main points to create a picture of what the components of the theory are and what are its implications in professional development for supervisors.

Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) captured the essence of sensemaking: "Sensemaking involves the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing" (p. 409). Weick et al. (2005) further indicated sensemaking is ". . . an issue of language, talk, and communication. Situations, organizations, and environments are talked into existence" (p. 409). In sensemaking

theory, recollecting supervisors' experiences from training can provide an analysis to help supervisors and human resources to understand supervisors' professional development needs. In particular, professional development in intercultural communication. It is necessary to look at whether professional development teaches effective intercultural communication between supervisors and subordinates. Making sense of how those communication processes are used can aid the creation of a professional development program that may give supervisors the tools to communicate effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds such as faculty, staff, and students of color.

In the study, Weick et al. (2005) explained how sensemaking helps with identifying why scholars do research in professional development in the first place: "Sensemaking is the experiential process of finding the answers to the question 'what's the story?'" (p. 410). What are the supervisors' perceptions of the current supervisor training offered at CWU? Are they obtaining communications skills where "administrators understand a new or different culture and reexamine their own culture with multiple viewpoints in mind?" (Hansuvadha & Slater, 2012, p. 187). Viewing through the sensemaking lens provides the vehicle to obtain an understanding of professional development in cultural competency for supervisors in higher education by making sense of how a person's culture, race, ethnicity, and/or gender impact an individual's perceptions and actions towards others.

Furthermore, "sensemaking is not about truth and getting it right. Instead, it is about continued redrafting of an emerging story so that it becomes more comprehensive, incorporates more of the observed data, and is more resilient in the face of criticism. People may get better stories, but they will never get *the* story" (Weick et al., 2005, p. 415). Rutledge (2009) explained, "a key to sensemaking lies in the plausibility or approximate nature of the story" (p. 21). The simple act of researching supervisor professional development in intercultural communication at higher education institutions—and getting as closely as possible to the reality perceived by supervisors, supported by scholarly research—may be enough for supervisors to feel that the institution is interested in their professional development. Creating dialogue with supervisors may encourage them to begin analyzing their perceptions of professional development in intercultural communication. Rutledge (2009) continued to say, "sensemaking leads a group to discovery" (p. 22), and Ray and Goppelt (2011) stated, "sensemaking is a dialogical practice" (p. 67). By talking out loud about professional development in intercultural communication, supervisors can begin examining their own professional development needs, something they may have not thought of until this study. As asked by Weick et al., 2005, p. 18; Seiter and Dunn, 2010, p. 10 "how can I know what I think until I see what I say?"

Sensemaking theory is social and systematic (Weick and et al., 2005). The quest of researching professional development in intercultural communication not only affects supervisors and human resources administrators, but it also affects the human resources

representatives, staff, faculty, and students. Supervisors' performance and behavior affects subordinates who work directly and indirectly with students or provide services to students. As a result, the social interaction between supervisors and subordinates may cause a ripple effect, either positively or negatively, towards the campus community, which indirectly may affect the outside community as well due to the knowledge of or lack of intercultural communication skills.

As mentioned earlier, according to Weick et al. (2005), sensemaking involves action as well. Researching professional development in intercultural communication leads to the necessary action of having to create dialogue with supervisors. Raes et al. (2007) considered that action is intimately connected to sensemaking theory because by enacting on what makes sense, action begins to construct supervisors' environment. Making sense of current diversity training and supervisors' view on obtaining intercultural communication skills can lead to acting upon areas that may need improvement or enhancement.

Weick (1995) supported this and further explained that as part of trying to make sense of what is occurring in an organization, members of an organization are to have a common understanding of what is professional development. Members are to identify where it needs improvement, identify what is working, what problems it encounters, and what solutions are available in order to meet supervisors' professional development needs and those of the organization. Weick et al. (2005) claimed, through sensemaking, "over time, as supporting evidence mounts, significant changes in beliefs and actions evolve"

(p. 416). Through the collection of evidence, human resources and the university can brainstorm strategies and resources on how to strengthen the current supervisor training if necessary.

However, in order for supervisors to support and embrace professional development, they must believe CWU is committed to supervisors obtaining cultural competency skills. Lopez-Mulnix and Mulnix (2006) cautioned that it is important for institutions to be truly committed to multicultural competency from the top to the bottom. The administration must have an understanding of the underlying issues that supervisors may face when they do not have intercultural communication skills. According to Triandis and Albert (1987), "the primary reason for this importance is that difficulties in communication are more likely to occur and more likely to be problematic, leading at times to overt hostility and conflict when the persons interacting come from different cultures" (p. 283). When administrators grasp the importance of such skills, it can build the commitment and direction for supervisors to acquire intercultural communication skills.

Following the sensemaking theory, there is dialogue between the researcher and the supervisor that may lead to future actions. As supervisors participate in intercultural communication training, their feedback, and changes of the university landscape will continuously dictate the evolvement of the program. Therefore, a supervisor may not ever fully obtain the communication skills to successfully interact with diverse

populations, but will, at the minimum, have the knowledge to improve such interactions, creating an inclusive and equitable academic environment for all students.

Summary

Scholars such as Triandis and Albert (1987) demonstrated that there is a need for: improvement of communication across cultures [that] requires detailed training concerning the meanings of words, actions, and gestures. . . [and pinpointing] the kinds of organizational structures that emerge reflecting the values, norms, and roles and structures [that] in turn shape and constrain the kinds of communication behaviors that take place. (p. 288)

Creating an organizational culture that formulates and sustains professional development can aid in the development of supervisors' cultural competency. It enables the institution to foresee demographic changes within the university, and adapt professional development opportunities for supervisors to obtain the skills to participate in a competitive global marketplace.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study is to do a program evaluation on the current supervisory

professional development program at CWU to examine if supervisors felt they were

obtaining intercultural communication skills. The two overarching research questions

are:

> RQ1: What do supervisors perceive the rationale is for obtaining cultural
> competency skills?

> RQ2: Does the current supervisor training support those perceptions?

It is important to conduct a qualitative program evaluation of the current supervisor

training program at CWU in order to create a cultural competency program that is

meaningful to help provide the foundation for supervisors to build an environment of

diversity and inclusivity. Weiss (1972) explained the definition of program evaluation

research:

> the purpose of evaluation research is to measure the effects of a program against
>
> the goals it set out to accomplish as a means of contributing to subsequent
>
> decision making about the program and improving future programming. Within
>
> that definition are four key features: 'to measure the effects' refers to the *research*
>
> methodology that is used. 'The effects' emphasizes the *outcomes* of the program,
>
> rather than its efficiency, honesty, morale, ore adherence to rules or standards.
>
> The comparison of effects with goals stresses the use of *explicit criteria* for
>
> judging how well the program is doing. The contribution to subsequent decision-

making and the improvement of future programming denote the *social purpose* of

evaluation (p. 4).

In this context, "program evaluation entails the use of scientific methods to measure the

implementation and outcomes of program for decision-making purposes" (Rutman, 1984,

p. 10). The objective of this study is to use qualitative procedures, in program evaluation

research, to capture supervisors' perceptions of the current supervisor training and if they

believe it provides them with intercultural communication skills to effectively interact

with people from diverse backgrounds.

The researcher considered other methods such as conducting a quantitative survey

utilizing Likert-scales and doing a statistical analysis. However, utilizing the program

evaluation research method, the interaction with supervisors during interviews allows

them to think aloud as they speak, which may cause other thoughts and information to

surface that normally may have not been taken in to account in a quantitative study.

According to Pearse and Kanyangale (2009), "more superficial aspects of culture lend

themselves to objective and quantitative research designs, while the deeper cultural

aspects are more accessible through qualitative approaches" (p. 69). Patton (1984)

indicated, "qualitative methods [in program evaluation] permit the evaluator to study

selected issues in depth and in detail; the fact that data collection is not constrained by

predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth and detail of qualitative

data" (p. 54). In agreement, Strauss and Corbin (1998) found "[q]ualitative methods can

be more used to explore substantive areas about which little is known or about which much is known to gain novel understanding" (p.11).

Mertens and Wilson (2012) explained that the qualitative method "aims to establish rapport with the participants through sustained contact that allows them to reveal multiple constructions of reality by different constituencies" (p. 357). Interviews can capture what supervisors feel they need to give them the tools to be effective supervisors in a diverse higher education setting. Holding interviews with supervisors would give more information on professional development for supervisors in intercultural communication at higher education institutions compared to information collected from a survey.

Patton (1984) further stated that "the evaluator using a qualitative approach seeks to capture what people's lives, experiences, and interactions mean to them in their own terms and in their natural settings" (p. 55). It was important to interview supervisors in a comfortable environment that encouraged and allowed them to talk with confidence, such as the supervisor's office or in a conference room. In addition, they had assurance that their input was crucial in developing a professional development program in intercultural communication that was adequate and satisfied their needs as professionals working at a higher education institution.

In program evaluation research, it is required to describe the evaluator and his or her role. The researcher in this study is an internal evaluator, "an employee of the organization in which the evaluation is conducted" (Mertens & Wilson, 2012, p. 14). As

a result, the evaluator is "already familiar with the personnel associated with the program, and with the goals of the program" (Morris, Fitz-Gibbon, & Freeman, 1987, p. 12). The authors further explained the evaluator's role in a formative program evaluation is to "collect and communicate information about the effectiveness of a program" (p. 10). In his work, Scriven explained the difference between an evaluation and an explanation. An evaluation is to provide information on how well a program is functioning "without providing explanations of the shortfall against the ideal or recommendation as to how it should be remedied" (1999, p. 524). In a previous study, Scriven (1998) cautioned that ". . . recommendations are inappropriate because of legitimate political or personnel or social considerations to which the evaluator is not—and cannot be made—privy" (p. 70). The purpose of the data collected and shared in this study is to evaluate how well is the current supervisor training in building supervisors' intercultural communication skills.

The researcher is cautious in giving recommendations without having information on the political, personnel, or social discussions occurring within the institution. Through program evaluation, CWU stakeholders can make "wise decisions…on budget allocations and program planning" (Weiss, 1972, p. 2). The results of this study may provide the institution with information to make informed decisions on intercultural communication competency for supervisors.

Data Collection

The collection of data includes interviews with CWU supervisors and results of training evaluations proctored by CWU Human Resources on the supervisor training program. Mertens and Wilson (2012) indicated that the ". . . the need to collect data at the individual and organizational levels [are necessary] to provide a comprehensive picture of program effectiveness" (p. 355). Doing one-on-one interviews will enable supervisors to address professional development points more in-depth than if they were to answer questions on a survey.

Including a diverse group of supervisors is important to represent the various departments in academia, student affairs, and facilities management that form the institution. Faculty, staff, and students interact with and/or receive services from each of these areas directly or indirectly. This dynamic gives a broader perspective to what degree does the current professional development program meets supervisors' needs across campus. The researcher purposely chose the sample population to match as closely as possible to the makeup of the university supervisor population.

Sample. Participants were from a pool of supervisors who had taken at least three courses of the required supervisor training program at Central Washington University, provided by the university, as of 2009. The Human Resources Department provided a list containing 30 supervisors. Because of the database used in the Human Resources Department, the data tracked back to 2009. Before then, Human Resources did not have a streamlined process for enrolling and tracking training for employees. This means that supervisors who had taken the training prior to 2009 are not on the list;

therefore, did not partake in the study. The President, Vice Presidents, and Associate

Vice Presidents were not part of the supervisor list. Out of the thirty identified

supervisors, 18 participated in the study.

The participants were asked on a demographic survey to answer questions such as

what CWU campus they belonged to, their age group, their ethnic backgrounds, years of

supervisor experience, and if they have completed the training program. About 10 said

they completed the required supervisor training, 4 said they did not, and 4 could not

confirm if they completed the training. Because it is a small sample in a small university,

the researcher deemed necessary not to mention supervisors' positions nor their ethnic

identities to avoid identifying who participated in the study. Participants were between

the ages of 25 and 69:

- 6 in the 50-59 age group;

- 6 in the 40-49 age group;

- 2 in the 20-29 age group;

- 2 in the 30-39 age group;

- and 2 were between 60-69.

There were 9 males and 9 females.   Participants were composed of department chairs,

deans, and staff supervisors. Years of supervision experience at the time of data

collection ranged from 2 to 30 years (3 had arrived to Central with 20 years of

supervision experience), providing an average of 12 years of experience. Together, they

supervise a total of 24 students, 150 faculty, and 45 staff members.

Procedure

From the list provided by the Human Resources Department at CWU, late fall of 2011, 30 supervisors received an email inviting them to participate in the study that included a summary of the purpose of the study and how it was relevant to them. Within 2 weeks, 20 had confirmed they would participate. Before the interviews began, two participants decided to not be part of the research, leaving a total of 18 supervisors. To maximize participation, supervisors met for the interview when it was best for their schedule and at a private office of the participants' choice. This helped with maintaining the interview process confidential with minimal outside interruptions.   After supervisors confirmed their participation, they completed a demographic survey and received a copy of the informed consent form approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee. At the time of the interviews, the researcher collected and placed both forms in individual envelopes to ensure anonymity. Participation was voluntary and participants could stop the interview at any time without penalty. All responses were confidential and all possible identifiers eliminated from the study that could signal out a specific person in the institution.

Interviews were scheduled and took place early winter quarter of 2012 for a 1 month period. Before each interview began, the researcher informed participants again about the study and had the opportunity to ask questions before continuing with the process. They were asked if they could be taped using a digital recorder. Taping the interviews allows the researcher to capture the complete interview to transcribe

effectively and correctly word for word. The questionnaire, divided into three categories

(see the Appendix for complete list of questions): a) professional identity, b) diversity

training, c) and professional development, contained sets of questions addressing each

section. The information collected from questionnaire sections (a) and (c) were for other

professional development inquiries to help Human Resources in revamping their

professional development program. For this study, the focus was on section (b), diversity

training.

The interviews began by asking participants to describe what is a supervisor and

the expectations of a supervisor, what their professional identity is, the culture of the

university, to what degree did their professional identity fit in with the culture of the

university, and to what degree did they feel that the current supervisor training program

addressed professional development identity. Questions referring to cultural competency

and intercultural communication were to determine to what degree does the professional

development program gives supervisors the skills to work with a diverse population;

meaning age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic, religion, race, and people with

disabilities. Participants responded to 25 questions. The duration of the interviews

varied among the supervisors lasting anywhere from 20 minutes to 1 hour and 30

minutes.

The researcher digitally recorded, transcribed, and uploaded the interviews on to

Nvivo software to code the data and to keep track of the number of themes that surfaced

in each of the interviews. Again, the focus was on questions from section (b) on diversity

training. Using the qualitative open coding system allows for organizing the data to conceptualize and reduce data to categories based on various dimensions and themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As mentioned in Hafidz Haji Omar et al. (2010) "in the coding process, data is sorted and analyzed inductively using the three-stage model of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding" (p.277). The first step was to read and reread the transcriptions uploaded to Nvivo and start the open coding process by looking for concepts that follow the criteria of the research questions. In grounded theory, this process is open coding where the researcher reads each transcription carefully, line by line, looking for words or phrases that may appear in the data collected through interviews. Then categorizes, labels, and places those words or phrases into themes known as codes.

During open coding "hundreds of codes can be identified" (Goulding, 2009, p. 383). Therefore, in the axial stage, examining the concepts enables the researcher to narrow down the data to categories that fall under similar themes and patterns that suggest a relationship (p. 383). The categories mentioned the most number of times by the supervisors in the eighteen interviews are pertinent to the research questions. Hafdiz Haji Omar et al. (2010) pointed out to get an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon is by looking at the similarities and differences that exist in the data collected. While analyzing the list of categories, similar categories became one category to provide a holistic detailed picture of that specific category. Coding the data into

categories allows making sense of what supervisors say about the current supervisor training.

The final categories identified are in relation to four specific questions: (a) to what degree do you feel you have the knowledge to work effectively with students, faculty, and staff from different cultures, age groups, and gender than your own?; (b) to what degree do you feel the current supervisory training program gives you the skills to work in a diverse environment?; (c) do you feel it is valuable to include topics of diversity in supervisory training why or why not?; (d) to what degree do you believe that being culturally competent can positively influence your ability to work with student, faculty, and staff who come from different cultures, age groups, and gender than you?.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this research is to do a qualitative program evaluation on the current supervisor training in its effectiveness in providing CWU supervisors with intercultural communication skills. At the beginning of the research process, the researcher contacted 30 supervisors to participate in the study. Out of that group, 18 faculty and staff in supervisory roles accepted and completed the study providing a 60% response rate. The participant demographic include men and women, who identified as either White or person of color. The breakdown of ethnicities is limited to two categories due to the small percentage of faculty and staff of color who participated. This reduces the probability of identifying the participants and jeopardizing the confidentiality agreement between the participant and the researcher.

A qualitative analysis composed of excerpts extracted from the interviews give insight to supervisors' thoughts in reference to cultural competency as part of their professional development. The focus of the data analysis is on four specific interview questions evaluating the current supervisor training and their perspective on cultural competency, as well data collected from training evaluations provided from CWU Human Resources. The four interview questions structure the format of this chapter, utilizing tables followed by an explanation that includes references to portions of the interviews. In the qualitative method, when quoted in the study the references contain the participants' name. Each supervisors had assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity.

The format of each table is comprised of three columns labeled *themes*, *number of times referenced*, and *sample key words or phrases*. From the coding process, themes emerged when more than on supervisor referenced a category based on certain key words or phrases in relation to the particular category. Each table displays the categories from most referenced to least referenced.

As mentioned at the beginning, CWU Human Resources allotted permission to access the qualitative feedback collected through the online survey program SurveyMonkey. Employees have the option to fill out an evaluation form on workshops they complete. The data included comments from 98 supervisors out of 242 who took the diversity training and submitted an evaluation form from December 2009 to December 2012. The coding process for the comments was the same as the interviews. Table 5 displays the results with an explanation of the themes that emerged.

Knowledge to Work Effectively With Diverse Populations

To begin, Table 1 displays the results of question one. The three themes highlighted are *research on own*, *have the knowledge*, and *work experience*. Supervisors indicated the knowledge they believe to have to work effectively with diverse populations was due to doing their own research online, asking questions, and observation.

Cassie shared "you know, if you are uncertain, you know, google will tell you anything that you want to know if you can kind of figure out your question." Julian indicated "I've seen people who have not handled that situation so well so I kind of learned by example." Michael had a similar perspective as Julian in learning from others:

. . . I think that I am learning and I am learning a lot from the students that I speak

with and I think that sharing my story and them showing wanting to learn a little

bit about their culture and respecting that. . .

Many spoke about actively learning through interaction with diverse populations by

asking questions and attending cultural events. For example, Tami acknowledged:

I don't always feel prepared. There is, I mean I have learned it by asking

questions. I have learned the things by talking to people and kind of because

there were certain things that I was very ignorant about and I think that finding a

person you feel you can ask anything to without them judging you. . .

Some supervisors mentioned they obtained their knowledge through personal

experience based on where they grew up and their family upbringing. Michael, Cassie,

Mario, and Robert all alluded to obtaining their cultural communication skills through

their work experience. Sarah shared:

I was a director of a program, which I still do all of the work even though I'm not

the director. And I am the director of a [new program]. . . and basically the

element [of my program] is kind of dealing with interacting with addressing the

issues of underrepresented groups.

Table 1

To What Degree Do You Feel You Have the Knowledge to Work Effectively with Students, Faculty and Staff from Different Cultures, Age Groups, and Gender?

Themes	No. of references	Sample key words or phrases
Research on own	15	Online, question, research, watching, observing
Have the knowledge	9	Raised, personal experience, knowledge
Work experience	5	Organizational, employment

Obtaining Skills through Current Supervisory Training Program

In the next question, supervisors answered to what degree they felt the training gave them the skills to work with diverse populations. As displayed in Table 2, there were two emerging themes from the data, *it does not*, and *legal*. Supervisors shared that the supervisory training program focuses more on the legal implications of discrimination and sexual harassment. They perceive it did not provide them with the skills to effectively interact with faculty, staff and students from different cultures.

Michael expressed:

Um, I can't recall a scenario or some. I, I don't recall actually any sort of training that would prepare me to communicate with individuals from a different background and I think that if there is any sort of communication um topic

mentioned in the training is just communication in general how to communicate with you know students or staff.

Rose to some extent agreed with Michael:

I, you know, I don't think that any of them really except for the discrimination training. . . any of them address enough to say, wow I am talking to somebody from this country and now I am talking to someone from this country and I am going to treat them differently than in the US. I don't think that the training is that high in communication with um, other students.

Cathryn articulated:

I think that OEO and sexual harassment and all of that what it did was—I don't know if it gave me the skills, but it gave me probably more knowledge as far as to be able to draw upon . . . if I were to be faced with any of those situations you know according to the WAC's and according to all of those. . . so it was probably just increased knowledge base.

Gabriel felt it gave him "the foundations to work from what a supervisor should do and not do with the people, the basic things that can get you into trouble as a supervisor from a legal stand point . . ." Sarah voiced "they do in the sense of the law. . . and the online is very good about the law says . . . It's all about what you can do and which you can't do."

Table 2

To What Degree Do You Feel the Current Supervisory Training Program Gives You the Skills to Work in a Diverse Environment?

Themes	No. of References	Sample Key Words or Phrases
It does not	10	Provides skills, preparation, competency, addresses
Legal	4	Policy, procedure, law, legal

Including Topics of Diversity in Supervisory Training

In the third question, supervisors shared whether they felt it was valuable or not to include topics of diversity in their supervisory training program. Because supervisors are facing diversity in the workplace, they are finding the need for and value diversity professional development. Table 3 provides the summary of four themes, *value diversity*, *to serve diverse student population*, *ability to work with diverse populations,* and *institution's objective.*

About 70% of the supervisors referenced that it is valuable to gain cultural competency in three or fewer words, for example, "absolutely," "extremely valuable," and "yes it would be." A few expanded on their answer suggesting how to incorporate diversity topics into supervisory training. Robert believed that diversity training should be "integrated into whatever modules and training sessions" offered. Other supervisors spoke to the need of providing better service to the student population. Cassie

acknowledged ". . . more of these students come. I think we need to address like what is proper etiquette for dealing with the Muslim students especially the most conservative Muslim students." Tami's concern was:

> if there is something about the Chinese cohort that is coming in and that they have special traditions or things like that, I would like to know because I don't feel like I always have the time to research it. I want somebody to say, hey you know we are having a new Chinese cohort coming, these are some of the things that you might want to think about. You know? And we don't really have that.

Some supervisors addressed cultural competency as a benefit to work with diverse populations. Sarah suggested, "people have to be able to work with people who are different from themselves and who may have different holidays, eat different foods, and have different religions." Tami wants to build on her cultural competency skills through training:

> But I don't think that we are trained, but I mean there are different opportunities that come about on campus where you know they publicize on *Central Today* activities like the Chinese New Year celebration. And then, the 5 de Mayo and a lot of different activities and that is all well and good, but it doesn't really teach us about the culture. How do we respond to people?

Table 3

Do You Feel it is Valuable to Include Topics of Diversity in Supervisory Training?
Why or Why Not?

Themes	No. of References	Sample Key Words or Phrases
Value diversity	13	Valuable, not valuable agree, not important
To serve diverse student population	8	international, practicing faith, demographics
Ability to work with diverse populations	4	Employee expectation, able to, differences, respond
Institution's objective	3	University is moving or going, strategic plan

Cultural Competency Positively Influencing Supervisors' Role

The final question asked examines supervisors beliefs whether becoming cultural competent can positively affect their work in a diverse environment. Three themes, shown in Table 4, emerged from the interviews *cultural sensitivity*, *very important*, and *supervisor role*. Topics such as open-mindedness, awareness, and avoiding assumptions were terms appearing in the interviews either explicitly or indirectly.

Placing a value of importance on cultural competency came from about fifty per cent of the supervisors. They utilized words that included, but not limited to, "a very high degree", "essential", "huge", "extremely" and "undeniably". Tami would like to see cultural competency "as an all employee training. Yeah, I think that everybody should have that training." Robert's preference is ". . . not to be an expert of what it is to be

Vietnamese as much as it is, you know, being mindful of what is going on between my ears, being mindful of what I say and how I say it is being received in the intent of which it was sent, and being mindful that everybody is a unique story to themselves . . ."

Cassie and Morgan do not want to offend or annoy individuals from different cultural background than theirs. Morgan said, "I feel a bit more comfortable communicating and you know not asking them annoying questions that they don't want to be asked." Cassie explains, "well if you know where they are coming from, I think it's easier to know what is offensive or what's not even if you think that something you are saying is." In terms of awareness, Michael believes it is "not helpful to the individual for us to not be aware." Sarah has similar thoughts as Cassie and Michael: one must "at least have some understanding of those people, where people different from yourself are coming from. And Miguel mentions both awareness and open-mindedness:

> The worst thing is coming here and thinking something wrong because they believe in something different than you . . . If you are not open to other basic life, the way people live their life and stuff, I think to be a good supervisor you have to be open in your thought process."

Furthermore, supervisors referenced the implications of cultural competency in their role of authority and influence. Morgan specifies, "the more culturally competent you are, the more competent you are. They are tools that you have as a supervisor and in a person in general." Michael finds, "you help the individuals as supervisors to grow

professionally and academically . . . for us it's to be effective supervisors to the student staff and to be able to grow professionally as well."

Table 4

To What Degree Do You Believe That Being Culturally Competent Can Positively Influence Your Ability to Work with Students, Faculty, and Staff Who Come from Different Cultures, Age Groups, and Gender than You?

Themes	No. of References	Sample Key Words or Phrases
Cultural sensitivity	13	Awareness, open, prejudice, assumption
Very important	8	Level of importance, influence, ability
Supervisor role	6	Responsibility, competent, professional growth

In Table 5, the results from the interviews were tabulated based on ethnicity— supervisors who self-identified as White or as a person of color. This portion of the analysis allows to explore relationships or lack of in the data when considering supervisors ethnic backgrounds. The table consists of the research question, the themes mentioned in Tables 1 through 4, and how many times each theme was referenced by group.

Examining question one (Q1), supervisors who identified as White, indicated they did research on their own to obtain cultural competency skills accounting for 10 out of the 15 times it was referenced compared to supervisors of color. In question two (Q2), they scored higher than supervisors of color in theme *not good* where they indicate the

current supervisory training program does not provide them with the tools to work effectively in a diverse environment.

By adding the number of references vertically for each group in each question, supervisors who identified as White referenced more than supervisors who identified as persons of color in questions one, three, and four. However, for question two they seem to have a shared perspective that the supervisor training program does not give them the skills to work in a diverse environment. Supervisors of color mentioned three times more than supervisors who identified as White that supervisor training focuses on the legal implications of how to address sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

As mentioned earlier, CWU's Human Resource department provided access to the results of the training evaluation forms. What is the feedback Human Resources is receiving from supervisors? How does that compare to what the supervisors in this study shared in the interviews? The researcher focused on the comments of the evaluation and coded the responses. The following themes emerged: *legal processes*, *learning content*, *perception of training*, and *diversity on campus*.

Supervisors referenced nine times the theme, legal processes. They expressed thoughts such as "she can make even legal information sound interesting", "it is most helpful to know how the law pertains to this public academic setting", and "very clear on rules." Overall, supervisors seem to have positive opinions about the training in relation to the content including the format and delivery. There were a couple of references on diversity on campus. One comment a supervisor shared:

with the increasing diversity and sensitivity of CWU students and employees and the workforce as a whole, it is crucial to be knowledgeable of and exhibit appropriate behavior at all times. This class was informative and the atmosphere was conducive to questions and discussion.

The other comment speaks of "discriminations goes beyond races, etc., to 'class' discrimination—what level you are on the ladder, etc. I see more problems with this at CWU than any race discrimination."

Table 5

Emerging Themes Based on Ethnicity

Theme	Self-Identified person of color	Self-Identified as White
Q1. To what degree do you feel you have the knowledge to work effectively with students, faculty, and staff from different cultures, age groups, and gender?		
Research on own	5	10
Have the knowledge	5	4
Work experience	2	3
Q2. To what degree do you feel the current supervisory training programs gives you the skills to work in a diverse environment?		
It does not	4	6
Legal	3	1

Q3. Do you feel it is valuable to include topics of diversity in supervisory training why or why not?

Table 5 (continued)

Theme	Self-Identified person of color	Self-Identified as White
Value diversity	5	8
To serve diverse student population	2	6
Ability to work with diverse populations	2	2
Because institution's objective	2	1

Q4. To what degree do you believe that being culturally competent can positively influence your ability to work with student, faculty, and staff who come from different cultures, age groups, and gender?

Cultural sensitivity	5	8
Very important	3	5
role Supervisor	4	2

Summary

      In closing, the qualitative program evaluation research study gave supervisors a vehicle to express their thoughts about the current professional development program for supervisors, discussed their beliefs on cultural competency, and shared their experiences working in a diverse environment. Excerpts of the interviews in this section provide an understanding of the answers to the research questions: (a) feeling if they have the knowledge to work effectively in a diverse environment at CWU, (b) if the supervisor training program includes cultural competency skill building, (c) supervisors' view on

including topics of diversity as part of their professional development, and (d)

supervisors' perception on cultural competency positively influencing their ability to

work in a diverse environment? In Chapter V, a discussion on the results of this chapter

will include interpretations, implications, limitations of this study and recommendations

for further study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the conclusion, recommendations and implications for action, and areas of further inquiry are discussed. This study is to support further dialogue and contribute to the research of scholarly work in professional development for supervisors, in higher education, with an emphasis in intercultural communication.

Discussion of Results

The purpose of this study was to do a program evaluation on the current supervisory professional development program at CWU to examine if supervisors felt they were obtaining intercultural communication skills. The two overarching research questions are:

RQ1: What do supervisors perceive the rationale is for obtaining cultural competency skills?

RQ2: Does the current supervisor training support those perceptions?

To get an in-depth understanding of what supervisors at CWU feel about the current professional development program offered, and its impact in developing intercultural communication skills, the researcher chose a qualitative program evaluation methodology utilizing the lens of sensemaking. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) found that through sensemaking people have the ability to share their thoughts, put them out there for others to know, acknowledge, and to understand their point of view. And according to Strauss and Corbin (1998), "qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that

are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods" (p. 11). Taking into account this is a program evaluation; Weiss (1972) indicated "much evaluation research relies on interviews and questionnaires to collect information about program participants—who they are, what they do in the program, and what their attitudes and behaviors are before and after program participation" (p.53). Therefore, interviews with eighteen supervisors, made up of faculty and staff whose supervisory experience ranged from two to over 20 years of experience, shared their perspectives on intercultural communication and professional development. Two groups, White and People of Color, represent the supervisors' ethnic demographics. The demographics within supervisors of color is small enough to group them as one to prevent identifying who participated in the study.

Under each of the following four interview questions, the researcher transcribed and coded the interviews in to themes under each of the following four interview questions:

- To what degree do you feel you have the knowledge to work effectively with students, faculty, and staff from different cultures, age groups, and gender than your own?

- To what degree do you feel the current supervisory training program gives you the skills to work in a diverse environment?

- Do you feel it is valuable to include topics of diversity in supervisory training why or why not?

- To what degree do you believe that being culturally competent can positively influence your ability to work with student, faculty, and staff who come from different cultures, age groups, and gender than you?

The structure of the discussion of results is in a similar format as Chapter 4, providing an interpretation of the data for each question.

Knowledge to work effectively with diverse populations. Out of supervisors' responses three themes emerged *research on own*, *have the knowledge*, and *work experience.* Most of their knowledge they gained by actively pursuing information on their own through the internet, asking questions, and observations. Some had the knowledge based on their work and personal experiences. Alvarez, Smith, Brown, and Curtis (2013) found through their literature that this process is called adaptation where individuals are not "simply acknowledging and respecting differences to attempting to view situations from the perspective of the 'other'" they are referencing and exploring various perspectives (p.22). By doing their own research, supervisors understand there is a need to adapt and acknowledge the different cultural communication styles.

A common theme reflected in their interviews is that within the supervisor professional development program they were not learning how to communicate effectively with diverse populations. According to Otten (2003), to gain intercultural competence there needs to be training for all who interact with students. Educators need to understand their ethnocentrism, the "assumption that one's personal worldview is central to all reality" (Alvarez, Smith, Harris, & Curtis, 2013, p. 21) and how that affects

their interaction with diverse populations. The second question directly addresses that concern.

Obtaining skills through current supervisory training program. When asked if the current professional development program offered diversity training, supervisors indicated the supervisor training was more about policy and procedures. It educated them more specifically on the law in the workshops Preventing Sexual Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace, currently known as Treating People with Dignity and Respect. They shared that understanding the legal processes of misbehaviors is vital; however, cross-cultural competency skills are just as important. Their thoughts are in alignment with the research. Krishnmaurthi's (2003) results demonstrated higher education institutions recognize the need to create an inclusive environment that includes scholarship as they see an increase in minorities on their campuses. It is invaluable to incorporate cross-cultural communication training to better prepare faculty and staff for the demographic changes.

Including topics of diversity in supervisory training. The results from the interviews do indicate that supervisors deem valuable to include training that educates them on how to serve diverse populations, more specifically students. The majority only spoke about students; rarely did supervisors mention how intercultural communication can benefit relationships with faculty and staff. Which signifies that on one hand supervisors acknowledge the makeup of CWU's student population is becoming more diverse and need preparation to serve them however, on the other hand it is equally important to do the same

for faculty and staff. Supervisors must become culturally competent to collaborate and contribute to developing an inclusive environment.

Within their interviews, they express appreciation of the institution's mission and goals to increase the number of minority students, staff, and faculty, providing an additional reason of why intercultural training is important. For example, CWU has incorporated into its Strategic Plan, Theme 2 titled *Inclusiveness and Diversity* (para. 1) where it says the following:

> CWU is committed to providing all faculty, staff, and students a diverse working and learning environment built on principles of respect, support and encouragement as a way to achieve individual and collaborative excellence. Changing demographic trends in the United States and the increasing globalization of economic, political, and social systems demand that students be prepared for working in a world in which diversity is the norm. Research clearly indicates that learning is enhanced when students experience a diverse learning and living environment. It also suggests that faculty and staff are more innovative, entrepreneurial, and successful in an inclusive and diverse environment.

The institutional culture is shifting due to the administration's support and even more so as Theme 2 intertwines across the university through collaborative efforts from faculty and staff.

Supervisors believe they play a role in accomplishing the institution's goals, but also recognize the need to be better equipped to be successful. As authority figures on campus, research finds that "a leader can be very instrumental in shaping culture and to fostering its growth" (Amey, 2005, p. 700). Supervisors are able to meet the objectives of Theme 2 when they have cross-cultural communication skills to be a part of the university's commitment to inclusivity and diversity. By supervisors providing their perspective on the merit of becoming culturally competent as a part of their professional development, it provides a platform for the institution to postulate itself as the nucleus in intercultural communication for faculty and staff.

Cultural competency positively influencing supervisors' role. The fourth interview question became the summative question of the interviews. Supervisors confirmed their thoughts on the need for intercultural communication training to feel competent in their roles as leaders. Supervisors believe that the organizational culture of CWU was good and liked the direction it was heading with diversity and inclusivity. They see the increase of diverse populations among students and desire to be capable of serving them in a sensitive manner. With providing and embedding diversity courses in professional development, it makes a statement to the organization that diversity and cultural competence is important and vital as well for an organization that is changing demographically.

Emerging themes based on ethnicity. The data, separated by ethnicity, suggested that overall, supervisors agreed that the supervisor professional development

program did not provide them with cultural competency skills. Their ethnic background was not a factor in that regard. However, as noted in the results in Table 5, supervisors who identified as White felt more the urge to do research on their own compared to their colleagues who identified as People of Color. This demonstrates supervisors who identify as White acknowledge they need to increase their cultural competency skills, but are going about it individually, indicative of the lack of training in that area from the institution. Potentially this can be a dangerous path to take if the research they are finding is not correct or misleading causing misunderstandings or subconsciously perpetuate stereotypes.

In number of times that themes are referenced, supervisors who identified as White had higher references than supervisors of color. However, in specific themes supervisors of color did score higher, for example in *supervisor's role* and *legal*. They determined it is the supervisor's role to be culturally competent, but the supervisor training focused on the legal implications of misbehaviors in the workplace.

The question is, why? Is it possible that supervisors of color, based on their upbringing and lived experiences, did not feel the need to become culturally competent as much as their colleagues? It is possible that supervisors of color are the victims of the lack of cross cultural competency within the dominant culture. They see the need for supervisors who identify as White to become culturally competent. Based on the results, supervisors who identify as White seem to agree with supervisors of color. They believe

cultural competency is important and should be included as part of their professional development.

These observations based on ethnicity indicate there is, to a certain point, a difference in individual perceptions based on their own cultural backgrounds. It is possible that a person's culture, race, ethnicity, and/or gender can influence an individual's view on the level of importance of including cultural competency as part of their professional development. Even more so, identifying whose responsibility is it to become culturally competent.

Summary. Wiseman (2002) found that people need knowledge, motivation, and skills—the knowledge of proper terminology, the knowledge of people and knowledge of the culture's communication rules. Motivation drives people to want to learn how to communicate with other cultures. Through the interviews, supervisors have demonstrated their motivation to learn. Skills are the behavior portrayed when interacting with people without the need of following a script—the interaction is more natural, not a performance. As supervisors become culturally competent, others can perceive their authenticity. Proper terminology and skilled interaction with people from diverse backgrounds can facilitate supervisors' jobs in order to serve staff, faculty and students without fear of sounding offensive. The more people know about each other it reduces uncertainty therefore, reduces the amount of misunderstandings between them, and increases the desire to interact with each other (Gudykunst, 1983).

Recommendations and Implications for Action

Although a single study cannot speak for all supervisors at CWU and all higher education institutions. The recommendation is as the face of an institution becomes more diverse, a call for intercultural communication courses becomes a necessity. Supervisors collectively believe becoming culturally competent is beneficial for everyone, especially to better serve a diverse student population.

This qualitative program evaluation can be replicated in other institutions to evaluate their own professional development program in terms of intercultural communication. Sensemaking theory can be the theoretical framework in such evaluations and future research. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obsteld (2005) argued that sensemaking theory brings into existence thoughts, ideas, and actions through retrospect answering the question, "how can I know what I think until I see what I say" (p. 135). The institution can become aware of the areas of growth supervisors must have to interact successfully with diverse populations. Further studies can focus on the influences of supervisors' ethnic background in their perceptions of cultural competency.

As the institution becomes culturally competent, it will lead to numerous benefits such as recruitment of diverse populations, retention of diverse populations, and change in curriculum. As a result, it will change the story and make sense of intercultural interaction between supervisors and their colleagues. King (2003) and Otten (2003) concluded that as faculty increase their cultural competency, by incorporating a curriculum that is inclusive and diverse, that knowledge spills over in developing

culturally competent students as well. As a result, a potential increase in retention of students of color and an increase of student who leave the institution prepared to work globally.

In terms of supervisor and supervisee relationships, Inman (2006) found that a "supervisory relationship that involves an implementation of cultural competence through a mutual agreement on goals and task related to a focus on multicultural issues may provide for a greater supervision satisfaction" (p. 81). Therefore, as supervisors become culturally competent, they become aware of cultural influences that cause an impact on the communication styles and the behaviors that leads them to adapt their own mode of expression. A second recommendation is for further research on supervisors in higher education examining the impact of becoming culturally competent with a pre and post analysis of the implementation of the program. Such research may enhance this study in determining the need for supervisors to obtain the skills to work, serve, and interact effectively with diverse populations.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. A limitation to this study is the demographic makeup of the participants. The supervisors identified and who participated came from CWU's 2009 database. Supervisors who may have taken courses were not on the list and therefore not contacted. The Human Resources department did not have a set process on how to keep track of which supervisor had taken the supervisor professional development program prior to 2009. As a result, only eighteen supervisors participated

in the study. Their responses may not be representative of all supervisors at Central

Washington University.

An additional factor that can influence how the participants respond is the role of

the researcher at the time of the study. When the interviews occurred, the researcher was

a graduate student for the Human Resources Department. Although, participants knew

their identity was protected, subconsciously they may have responded what the researcher

may wanted to hear, and not so much what they truly thought about professional

development in intercultural communication. The construction of the interview questions

could also be a factor. Supervisors may have subconsciously felt compelled to answer in

an affirmative manner, not fully disclosing their thoughts about the supervisor training

and intercultural communication.

Lastly, interviews may not provide a complete picture of how professional

development can impact supervisors' behaviors in a diverse environment. Ray and

Goppelt (2011) found that "no one has the whole story but instead only fragments and

glimpses through their experiences and those they talk with. People are left to fill in the

blanks with speculation and supposition based on previous experience and personal

theories" (p. 60). Based on the discussions with supervisors, an interpretation of the

results made by the researcher runs the risk of not fully understanding what supervisors

were trying to communicate, nor capturing their deeper thoughts about the topic.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore supervisor professional development in intercultural communication in higher education. Supervisors reflected on their knowledge to work with diverse populations and the sources from where they learned about serving diverse populations. Supervisors expressed the importance of becoming culturally competent, and indicated the current supervisor professional development program does not give them the tools to communicate and interact effectively with faculty, staff and students who have different cultural backgrounds as theirs. Although this study is minimal, it may add to future research in the creation of intercultural competency building courses for department chairs, administrators, supervisors and staff.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

Category 1: Professional Identity

1. What is your definition of a supervisor?
2. Has your supervisor shared his/her definition of a supervisor with you? Is the definition the same as yours?
3. What are the expectations of a supervisor?
4. What does a supervisor do?
5. Describe who you are as a professional, your professional identity.
6. Describe the culture of Central Washington University.
7. To what degree does your professional identity fit in with the culture of CWU?
8. How does this influence how you communicate with your supervisor(s) and employees?
9. To what degree does the training program address or include professional identity development?

Category 2: Training

10. What are challenges that you face as a supervisor?
11. Are these challenges addressed in training giving you the tools to be able to handle those challenges?
12. How valuable do you feel supervisory training is for your professional development?
13. To what degree do you face cultural diversity in your line of work?
14. To what degree do you feel you have the knowledge to work effectively with students, faculty and staff from different cultures, age groups, and gender than your own?
15. How does the influence how you communicate with students, faculty, and staff who come from different cultures, age groups, and gender than you?
16. To what degree do you feel the current supervisory training program gives you the skills to work in a diverse environment?
17. Do you feel it is valuable to include topics of diversity in supervisory training? Why or why not?
18. To what degree do you believe that being culturally competent can positively influence your ability to work with students, faculty, and staff who come from different cultures, age groups, and gender than you?

19. To what degree do you feel you have the tools necessary to provide equal opportunity hiring for your department, such as creating job descriptions, interview questions, and recruitment strategies?

Category 3: Professional Development

20. Now that you have taken training sessions, what would you have liked to know about being a supervisor on a university campus that you did not get through training?
21. What additional resources do supervisors need in a higher education setting to provide individual support and professional development?
22. How important is it to you to have follow-up conversations with the trainers?
23. What do you think about professional development courses that combine online and in-person training? Most of the information would be offered online and would be followed up by an in-person training that allowed hands-on learning, scenarios, case studies, and sharing of information amongst participants.
24. What other ways can the training be more accessible to you?
25. What organizations are you affiliated with where professional development training hours count towards your involvement in that organization?