Toward Culturally Responsive Instructional Leadership from Structured Critical Self-Reflection (CRILS)

James Wright

Published online: 22 Aug 2024.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

Toward Culturally Responsive Instructional Leadership from Structured Critical Self-Reflection (CRILS)

James Wright

Educational leadership, San Diego State University, San Diego, California, USA

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes a principal preparation course structured by Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) and critical educational leadership research. Introducing CRILS (Culturally Responsive Instructional Leadership Structured by critical self-reflection), the methodology aims to humanize school experiences for Black and racially minoritized students. Through qualitative inquiry, including interviews and analysis of racial autobiographies, the study found that critical self-reflection helped participants recognize biases and confront negative emotional responses. CRILS extends CRSL by incorporating lessons from pre-Brown practices and emphasizes reflective practices among all school-affiliated adults to foster student learning and guidance opportunities.

The Effective Schools Movement during the 1970s and 1980s helped institutionalize the term instructional leadership (IL) in educational administration (Cuban, 1988; Hallinger, 2007; Hattie, 2008; Murphy, 1988). The Effective Schools Movement and increasing emphasis on accountability by policymakers, research foundations, governmental agencies, and principal preparation programs enhanced the value of IL globally (Gates et al., 2019; Hallinger, 2007; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hattie, 2008; McKnight & Whitburn, 2020; Murphy, 1988; Wang et al., 2018). Further, over the last two decades, IL has been the driving force in leadership preparation and reform primarily due to the continued demands for school accountability and student performance in the United States and internationally (E. Anderson et al., 2018; Goldring et al., 2015; Hallinger, 2007; Hattie, 2008; Trujillo & Horsford, 2021; Wang et al., 2018).

IL is widely considered a school leadership perspective focused on instruction to bolster academic improvement and as the path to effective schools (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). IL has been linked to improved teacher practice, positive student outcomes, and increased student achievement across various contexts (Leithwood et al., 2010). John Hattie's (2008) monumental and comprehensive 15-year quantitative meta-analysis, *Visible Learning (VL)*, was a ground-breaking contribution to IL. Despite his exclusion of qualitative studies and methodological, racial, and sociopolitical histories, theories, and debates, many regarded Hattie's contributions to IL as the redeemer of public education (Eacott & Niesche, 2021; McKnight & Whitburn, 2020; Terhart, 2011). Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (2011) work linking school leadership to student learning also led to a watershed moment in leadership investment.

I acknowledge that the field of educational leadership owes a debt of gratitude for the ground-breaking and rigorous research findings regarding the central role that school leaders play in increasing academic performance (Hattie, 2008; Leithwood & Seashore; 2011). Nevertheless, scholars described IL, which does not reference the school context and the background of its students, as shallow (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger, 2007; Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

CONTACT James Wright ✉ jwright6@sdsu.edu 🖅 Educational Leadership, San Diego State University, 5500 Campanile Drive NE 162L, San Diego, CA 92182, USA

Accordingly, this research addresses a gap in instructional leadership by centering the role of the cultural context that students bring into schools as fundamental to how school leaders lead and interact with racially/culturally diverse students and their communities. Moreover, to that end, I build on IL's aims to increase academic performance, which includes principals, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches (Neumerski, 2013). This expansion or distributed characteristic was unheard of in mainstream IL discourses in the 1980s (Hallinger, 2007). Thus, instructional leaders are framed as teacher leaders, instructional coaches, aspiring principals, and principals.

Furthermore, I propose principal preparation that infuses culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) tenets (Khalifa, 2018) with aspiring leaders, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches, structured by critical self-reflection or culturally responsive instructional leadership (CRILS). The S in the CRILS acronym, *structured* critical self-reflection, is a primary focus of this study. Moreover, it contributes to the gap in helping students navigate emotional discomfort due to critical self-reflection in the pedagogies of equity-driven school leadership development (Kim & Wright, 2024; Zembylas, 2018, 2023). The purpose of this article is an intervention effort toward a CRILS-based instructional leadership and principal/leadership preparation program. However, CRILS differs from CRSL in that it expands its historical foundation. While CRSL is based on research by scholars like Khalifa, Tillman, Walker, and Lomotey and their studies of Black principals, CRILS acknowledges the broader role of Black educators during segregation. These educators acted as instructional leaders, principals, and teacher leaders, involving all adults in the school community (Fenwick, 2022; Wright & Karnopp, 2024).

This article is an initial analysis of CRILS within a principal preparation program. I analyze the effects of critical self-reflection, structured by culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) tenets in a course, one in a series with instructional leaders – aspiring principals, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches. I designed the course around structured critical self-reflection, informed by CRSL and critical educational leadership scholarship and research. I used qualitative methods: focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and document analysis (e.g., racial autobiographies and reflective writing assignments). In this article, I found that critical self-reflection assignments structured by CRSL and critical educational leadership research increased instructional leaders' willingness to contextualize and historicize deeply-rooted biases and inequities (e.g., Wright, 2022). By structured, I mean that the critical self-reflection was guided or scaffolded by CRSL tenets and critical educational leadership research and literature presented in class and cited in this paper. Students were prompted to reflect accordingly and assisted by their weekly assignment submissions.

Problem

The Effective Schools Movement and accountability discourses informing principal and leadership preparation and training helped institutionalize IL. However, scholars argue that IL principles are often vague, ambiguous, and grounded on a narrow research base (McKnight & Whitburn, 2020; Murphy, 1988; Terhart, 2011). Further, IL remains an embedded and taken-for-granted component of principal and school leadership preparation programs. Nevertheless, persistent shortcomings of IL regarding a lack of specificity and consistency in its definition have become more glaring (Courtney et al., 2021; Eacott & Niesche, 2021; Neumerski, 2013).

Accordingly, I argue in this study that even the best-conceived efforts to improve instruction that fail to critically reflect on the cultural, epistemological, and linguistic capital that Black and historically racialized and minoritized students bring to school daily is a disservice to them. This perspective is demonstrated by the literature reviewed for this study and insights from a course based on CRILS concepts. The study takes place in a course with instructional leaders in a principal preparation program. It concerns the core question: "How do instructional leaders respond to structured critical self-reflection in their leadership learning?" Followed by these sub-questions:

How, if at all, did the structured critical self-reflection tools and critical educational leadership research help instructional leaders identify deficit educational practices?

What were some critical self-reflections offered by instructional leaders regarding their role in implementing dehumanizing school experiences and contexts, if any?

How did instructional leaders discuss the CRILS-based teachings informing their future practices as instructional leaders or principals?

Objectives and Aims

This study builds on Khalifa (2018) by further developing the historiography of CRSL and contributes to highlighting the critical need for racial and culturally responsive school leadership. In addition, this goal is supported by outcomes based on critical self-reflection, structured and guided by CRSL, and critical educational leadership research in a principal preparation program course. I conceptualize CRILS as enveloping leadership and principal preparation training, not just stand-alone courses. By stand-alone courses, I mean that the entire principal preparation did not take a critical stance as outlined in CRILS, only the course I taught as outlined in this paper. Lastly, educational leadership departments and leadership developers interested in humanizing – racial, ethnic, and culturally responsive leadership – strategies may find this study valuable. I aim to contribute to a collective, critical, and transformational school practice beyond conjuring the sentiments of individual educators. Furthermore, it addresses the emotional discomfort found in the leadership development of equity-driven school leaders (Kim & Wright, 2024; Zembylas, 2018, 2023).

Literature Review

Critics of the contemporary logic of IL highlight its ambiguities (Rigby, 2014): narrow, disjointed, and disorganized bodies of literature that disregard students' backgrounds, communities, and culture (Eacott & Niesche, 2021; Hallinger, 2007; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Murphy, 1988). Eacott and Niesche (2021) note that IL was one of the field's most commonly used and uncritically accepted terms, highlighting how "instructional leadership overlooks the matter of context and decentres, if not removes, issues of race, gender, class, and identity" (Eacott & Niesche, 2021, p. 222). These short-comings, critics argue, have made it difficult to determine how IL practices are effective (Neumerski, 2013). Furthermore, IL is enveloped in accountability discourses such as standardized testing as the primary measure of student and school success (Eacott & Niesche, 2021; Ishimaru, 2019; Rigby, 2014; Trujillo & Horsford, 2021) despite a robust body of research attesting to the limitations of standardized testing as the sole measure of student learning (Fendler & Muzaffar, 2008; Hilliard, 2000), as well as teacher and school success (Ishimaru, 2019). The CRILS framework addresses contemporary critiques that instructional leadership (IL) ignores students' backgrounds, communities, and cultures while overly relying on standardized testing. Further, CRILS advocates for a humanizing principal preparation: a more holistic, culturally responsive approach to leadership that emphasizes critical self-reflection and addresses issues of race, gender, class, and identity.

Nevertheless, standardized testing has produced effective, valuable evidence for school administrators, policymakers, and institutions (Fendler & Muzaffar, 2008; Hilliard, 2000; Terhart, 2011). Further, Hattie's (2008) contribution was deemed an IL milestone for its effort to achieve orthodoxy and standardization of student learning (Eacott & Niesche, 2021; McKnight & Whitburn, 2020; Terhart, 2011). However, standardized testing is mired in a deep history of cultural and racial biases that ignore broader sociohistorical, cultural, and racial inequities (Fendler & Muzaffar, 2008; Hilliard, 2000). Thus, Bogotch (2002) contends that addressing unjust educational leadership norms starts with challenging "so-called" (p. 140) neutral and objective structures and systems, reproducing school inequities. Furthermore, Hilliard (2000) points out that high-stakes standardized testing was not

a neutral or objective student improvement activity but, contrarily, the enemy of millions of children's genius going unrecognized in schools. However, standardized testing remains fundamental to IL.

Moreover, research reveals a persistent shortcoming of IL regarding needing more specificity and consistency in its definition (Courtney et al., 2021; Eacott & Niesche, 2021; Murphy, 1988; Neumerski, 2013). Leithwood et al. (2004) stated, "The term [instructional leadership] is often more a slogan than a well-defined set of leadership practices" (p. 6). Neumerski (2013) argued that IL's overemphasis on principals constrains the ability to learn how instructional leaders improve instruction. Murphy (1988) argued that measuring IL was inhibited by problems trying to define IL based on a flawed approach to specifying and categorizing concrete behaviors. Other critics contest traditional IL's claims of objectivity, underscoring the absence of attention to relevant racial, cultural, and other diverse perspectives and responses (Eacott & Niesche, 2021; Trujillo & Horsford, 2021). CRILS integrates culturally responsive practices and structured critical self-reflection to create a more inclusive and humanizing approach to instructional leadership.

Self-Reflection Vs. Structured Critical Self-Reflection in Principal Training

Over the past two decades, more critical self-reflective research models have emerged. Antiracist and social justice methods were incorporated into principal preparation and development to help acknowledge privileges and social class (Boske, 2015; Brown, 2006; Carpenter & Diem, 2013; Diem et al., 2019; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; Hernandez & Marshall, 2017; Hines, 2016; Irby, 2021; Martinez, 2015; van Nieuwerburgh et al., 2020; Ylimaki et al., 2013). As a result of these more critical principal preparation/development approaches, strong negative emotions emerged, causing some instructional leaders to resist any role that they may have contributed to inequities in schools and society (Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015, Irby, 2021; Kim & Wright, 2024; Martinez, 2015). While most of these studies involved research in a programming course, few were program-wide or had full departmental support (Diem & Carpenter, 2013). Even fewer of these studies structured or placed guidelines on self-reflection in the context of critical scholarship as a course or program design (Diem et al., 2019). None structured critical self-reflection on or highlighted culturally responsive school leadership principles. This article builds on the scholarship on emotional discomfort triggered by critical self-reflection in developing and preparing equity-driven school leaders (Kim & Wright, 2024; Zembylas, 2018, 2023). The CRILS framework offers a structured approach to critical self-reflection that integrates culturally responsive leadership principles, aiming to humanize and transform instructional leadership practices by addressing school communities' diverse cultural and racial contexts.

Brown (2006) explored critical reflection in a study of 40 educational administration students in a social justice, equity-based principal preparation course. Brown found that student reflection on their journal entries led to growth in self-awareness and a deeper understanding of themselves (Brown, 2006). Diem and Carpenter (2013) examination of principal preparation programs determined that race-related silences were deployed from a place of privilege and used to avoid race-related conversations. Further, their participants recognized the need to have a social justice component infused throughout the entire program instead of just one class (Diem & Carpenter, 2013). Boske's (2015) investigation into preparing aspiring school leaders to address institutional racism used critical reflection tools, such as written journal entries, which led to increased critical consciousness. Gooden and O'Doherty (2015) used racial autobiographies and reflections as part of their principal preparation training. Martinez (2015) used self-reflection on race and privilege for aspiring leaders in a principal preparation program and found that students were challenged by course content, which led to questioning deeply held beliefs and privileges. Diem et al. (2019) found that deep internal reflection is promising in preparing antiracist school leaders and addressing racialized school policies. Irby (2021) termed his critical self-reflective techniques race-conscious inquiry cycles leadership – a combination of antiracist leadership and organizational improvement approaches.

These principal leadership training research studies used self-reflection to address common shortcomings in traditional IL approaches. They focused on racism, inequities, and social injustice in

schools, in contrast to acultural and ahistorical, traditional instructional leadership training and principal preparation (e.g., Courtney et al., 2021; Eacott & Niesche, 2021; Trujillo & Horsford, 2021).

Scholars have alluded to how structured critical self-reflection can help educators understand the influences of dominant ideologies embedded within assumptions that shape critique, traditions, philosophy, logic, and analysis (Brookfield, 2009, 2017; McArdle & Ryan, 2017). van Nieuwerburgh et al. (2020) found that aspiring principals' structured reflection, guided by a coach, helped prevent their thoughts from wandering and was more helpful than unguided/unstructured reflection. One participant stated that structured reflection, guided by the coach, gave them "the opportunity to reflect on the work we had done, but in my own context" (van Nieuwerburgh et al., 2020, p. 297). Structured critical self-reflection seeks to lead toward transformative action and leadership practices by broadening awareness that discomforting feelings do not occur in a vacuum. On the contrary, these feelings result from generations of unchallenged white supremacy structures, systems, and traditions (Zembylas, 2018, 2023). Building on theoretical and empirical studies in leadership preparation and development of equity-oriented school leaders, Kim and Wright (2024) conceptualized a pedagogical model to help learners navigate emotional responses triggered by systemic racism, social injustices, and the inequitable school experiences they produce. The CRILS framework extends this work by providing a comprehensive model integrating culturally responsive leadership with structured critical self-reflection to equip school leaders to address and transform inequitable school practices.

Instructional Leadership and Dehumanizing School Norms

Dehumanizing school practices emanates from curricula (Milner, 2010), policy (Stein, 2004), and research (Patel, 2015). Further, Carter G. Woodson's (1933) book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, underscored that schooling was designed to indoctrinate and not educate Black people in the US. James Baldwin (1998), in his essay "A Talk to Teachers," described education as a paradox resulting from a birth of consciousness leading to an inevitable struggle and resistance to the dehumanizing conspiracy of education.

In light of these historically oppressive school conditions, Khalifa (2018) called for humanization, a practice in which students' community-based identities are honored – in other words, school leaders and staff identify and recognize students and their communities' cultural behaviors. Humanizing school culture and practice embodied pre-*Brown* segregated schools (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Fenwick, 2022; Walker, 2001; Wright & Karnopp, 2024). Culturally responsive instructional leadership embodies humanizing school leadership and administration, whereby academic outcomes and student success are the priority. The CRILS framework builds on this tradition by emphasizing the integration of culturally responsive leadership and structured critical self-reflection to humanize students' cultural and academic needs.

CRILS: Building a Framework

New and unassuming instructional leaders are commonly socialized by deficit practices regarding Black and minoritized students and their communities. Khalifa (2018) described deficit practices as lowered expectations set by educators toward minoritized students, their families, and communities. The conversation about IL being devoid of culturally responsive tenets is found in national, US-based discourses (e.g., Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Ylimaki et al., 2013) and international discourses in educational leadership. For example, Mugisha (2013) used *culturally responsive instructional leadership* to analyze the deficit practices of well-intentioned White principals toward Maori and Pasifika students in New Zealand. These discourses demonstrate Ishimaru's (2019) argument that excluding the insights, understandings, and expertise of "nondominant families and communities" (Mugisha, 2013, p. 57) exemplifies deficit practices.

CRILS expands on CRSL by infusing IL principles as fundamental toward developing instructional leaders (e.g., Khalifa, 2018; Mugisha, 2013; Ylimaki et al., 2013). It also provides a scaffolding tool to
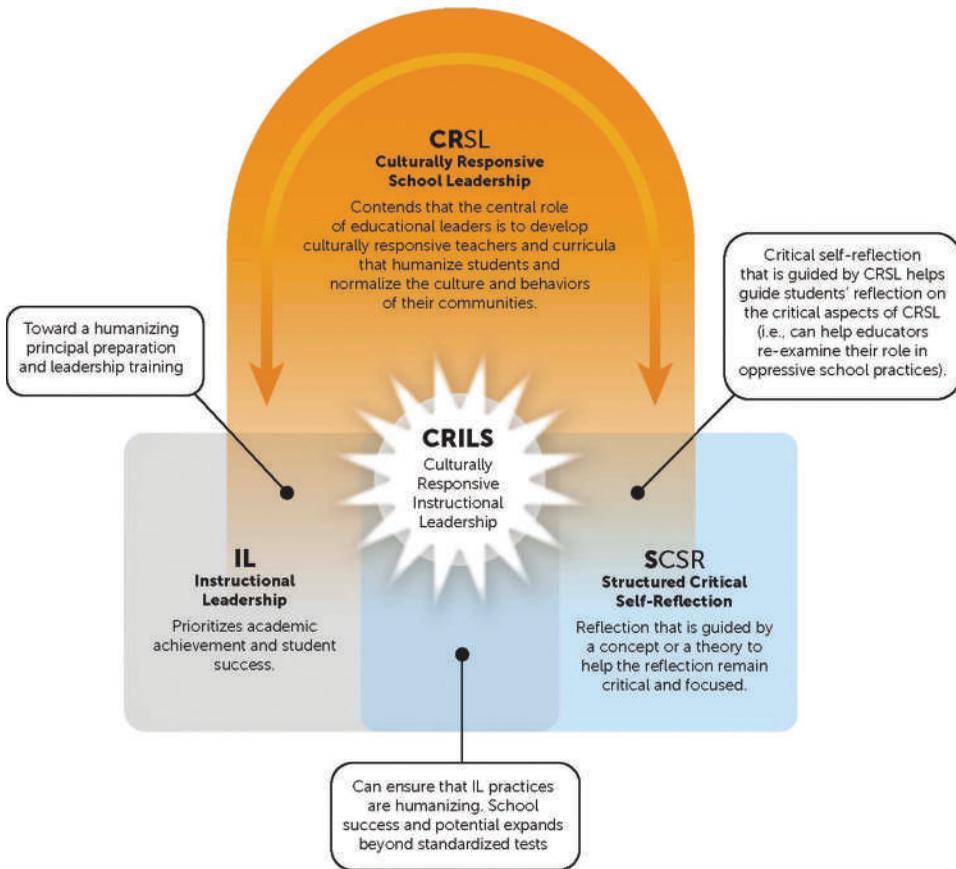
Figure 1. CRILS Framework.

help students navigate discomforting emotions related to critical self-reflection and realize schools' role in reifying inequities (e.g., Kim & Wright, 2024; Zembylas, 2023). This framework seeks to build aspiring educational leaders' capacity to ensure the academic success of minoritized students and the humanization of their cultural backgrounds, communities, and experiences. This conceptualization of CRILS was applied within a core course in a principal preparation program. See Figure 1.

Methods

This qualitative study occurred within a principal preparation credentialing program with instructional leaders – teacher leaders and instructional coaches seeking leadership credentials. Participants are educators who identified as instructional leaders – trained in IL principles, attended multiple hours of professional development training on IL, and enrolled in a university-based IL development program. Within that IL program, I carved out a CRILS-based course conceptualized, designed, taught, and informed by structured critical self-reflection, CRSL, and critical educational leadership research and principles. These research and principles shaped course assignments, class lectures, and discussions throughout the semester. The class was designed to encourage critical self-reflection on students' backgrounds, biases, experiences, and world views as educational leaders.

Students were assigned critical literature, much of which was cited in the literature review that exemplified historical and contemporary examples of humanizing practices, deficit discourses, and dehumanizing educational practices that inhibit healthy relationships and engagement with students,

their communities, and their culture. Also, students submitted bi-weekly synthesis and reflection assignments on course readings. This synthesis and reflection paper was a critical self-reflection of their current and professional experiences as instructional leaders, former K-12 students, and future, post-credential instructional leaders. These reflection/synthesis assignments helped me identify students who exhibited enthusiasm about course content and possible study participants. This study consists of focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and document analyses, e.g., racial autobiography and reflection/synthesis assignments.

This paper is limited by its purposeful selection of instructional leaders (students) aligned with CRSL principles. Former students were not high-level district leaders or principals but teachers seeking leadership credentials. However, they were all familiar with Hattie's (2008) work and considered themselves versed in instructional leadership. Another critical limitation of this study is that CRILS was implemented in a stand-alone course; none of its tenets were fortified in other classes in the program.

Research Participants

A total of ten from a group of 42 instructional leaders enrolled in a principal preparation credential program in the Western region of the United States participated in this study. The participants were a collective of certified teacher leaders, instructional coaches, and district administrators with at least three years of K-12 teaching experience from multiple local majority-minority schools. The instructional leaders were students enrolled in a university's recently redesigned program in partnership with the state credentialing agency and several local school districts. Participants represented diverse backgrounds and educational experiences. Three white women. Two white men. Two Black women. One Latina woman. One Asian man and one multiracial woman identified as Chinese and white (see Table 1). Participants were contacted and asked to participate in this study post-graduation. Participation was voluntary, no form of payment whatsoever was involved, and all university IRB protocols were observed.

I used a purposive selection process, which included both homogenous and variation in sampling to achieve the goals for this inquiry (Campbell et al., 2020; Glesne, 2015; Patton, 2002). The homogenous aspect consists of student selection based on their enlightening racial autobiographies and biweekly synthesis and reflection assignments informed by critical educational leadership literature. The variation in sampling was due to differences in racial, gender, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Of the 42 students in the program, 27 were identified as passionate about the CRILS-based concepts presented in class. All 27 agreed to participate; however, schedules aligned with only ten students for the focus groups, of which eight were interviewed one-on-one.

Table 1. Study participants.

Name (pseudonyms)	Biographical Information and Position while Student	Race/Ethnicity/ Gender	Current Position if Known
Sofia	High school teacher	Latina woman	Post-graduation, middle school principal for 3 years. Promoted to district administrator in 2023
Sarah	High school instructional coach	White woman	Assistant principal
Connor	High school teacher	White man	Assistant high school principal
Desiree	High school teacher	Black woman	Local school district administrator
John	High school teacher	Asian man	High school principal
Ellen	Elementary school teacher	White woman	Not known
Nathan	Dean at a high school	White man	High school principal
Kaela	High school instructional coach	Black woman	Not known
Melinda*	High school teacher	white woman	Assistant principal
Francesca*	Middle school teacher	Multiracial woman (Chinese and white)	Not known

Study Participants

*Did not participate in one-on-one interviews due to scheduling conflicts

Data Collection

The goal of the data collected for this study was to learn how instructional leaders engaged with the CRILS-based course content. Moreover, how structured critical self-reflection may have contributed to dehumanizing, negative emotional responses, and deficit school practices. The primary data for this study were focus group and semi-structured qualitative interview data transcriptions. Along with semester-long assignment submissions: 1) 10 racial autobiographies, and 2) 8 bi-weekly critical self-reflection and synthesis assignments, multiplied by 10 participants for a total of 80.

My white woman colleague volunteered to facilitate the focus group and one-on-one interviews. The interviewer taught a course on IL in the principal preparation program and had a rapport with the students, but she did not teach CRSL or any other critical leadership content. This data collection approach was used to discern whether students would be comfortable discussing the CRILS-based course content with a white instructor. However, I prepared the interview and focus group questions. Glesne (2015) described focus group interviewing as "an efficient use of time that allows simultaneous access to the perspectives of a number of people on a topic" (p. 126). My colleague conducted two focus groups with 5 participants each in July 2019 at a local high school. Six months later, in January 2020, my colleague conducted eight semi-structured one-on-one interviews over Zoom, as 2 of the initial ten focus group participants were unavailable. This gap allowed for several months of reading, interpreting, and analyzing focus group transcripts, which led to focused follow-up one-on-one questions (Patton, 2002). Focus group interviews lasted 90 minutes, and each one-on-one interview lasted 60 minutes. Focus groups and one-on-one interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by a graduate student within ten days of the focus groups and one-on-one interviews. All identifying participant information was removed and replaced with pseudonyms to honor their privacy (see Table 1).

Interview Questions

Interviews were semi-structured (O'Reilly, 2012; Patton, 2002) around racial autobiographies, critical self-reflection and synthesis assignment data, and classroom discussions spanning 16 weeks. All of the participants expressed excitement and frustration at learning, in large part for the first time, much of the critical educational leadership course content. Questions were crafted around how the CRILS-based content in the course helped them identify deficit practices, their role in deficit and dehumanizing school practices that they could identify, and broad historical interconnections to histories of racism and white supremacy, along with actionable steps for their future humanizing practices as school leaders, where suggested or stated during interviews.

Analysis

My interpretation of the participant data was the culmination of a 16-week semester analyzing racial autobiographies, synthesis, reflection assignments, course assignment feedback, class discussions, and lectures, followed by focus group questions designed entirely from my interpretations of the learning in our 16 weeks together. Further, one-on-one interviews were conducted for additional clarification and depth regarding my interpretations six months after focus groups to analyze further the "rightness" of my earlier interpretations (Glesne, 2015; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

The primary data sources – focus groups, one-on-one interview data transcripts, and various written assignments over one semester – were analyzed and highlighted/color-coded based on prevalent themes and patterns linked to the literature review (Patton, 2002; Saldaña, 2015). Specific quotes

from these interview transcripts and documents were identified, interpreted, and linked to three critical issues identified in the literature review (Saldaña, 2015): 1) the narrowness of IL training and professional development; vague and surface definitions of IL that decentered the context, culture, and backgrounds of students; 2) the impact of students' engagement with structured critical self-reflection based on CRILS-based course content; and 3) identification of deficit, dehumanizing school practices and negative emotional responses that were highlighted in the critical and historiographical scholarship presented in the course; along with examples of humanizing practices.

Specific phrases and words from interview transcripts or written assignments were analyzed and found to be linked and aligned with what was found in the literature. For example, all interviewees considered themselves instructional leaders, and their training and development programs were IL-oriented and had specific training and education in Hattie's (2008) *Visible Learning* curricula. However, they could only vaguely articulate what IL meant concerning their students' communities and backgrounds. Many of the racially minoritized students in the class, including those interviewed, were awe-struck by how they had contributed to the same dehumanizing and deficit practices they had witnessed or experienced and lamented when they were K-12 students. Also, the racial autobiography assignments and the bi-weekly synthesis and reflection assignments helped them navigate negative emotional responses to identifying their role in forms of dehumanizing practices contextualized as rule-following or due to a lack of language or fear of reprisal for speaking out (see Table 2).

Findings

Participants' reflections are eye-opening, given their years of teacher training and teaching experience, followed by many hours of professional/leadership development training and workshops. My interpretation of this study's data was the culmination of 16 weeks of course-content analysis that linked and aligned with the literature review, demonstrating the depth of dehumanizing school contexts. As instructional leaders trained to focus on increasing the academic scores of their students, participants reveal how they grossly overlooked and undervalued pertinent racial and cultural-based contexts. Consequently, participants who identified as people of color, in some instances, reified oppressive practices they had once experienced and lamented in K-12 schools as students. Nonetheless, nearly all expressed confidence regarding changing their practices in their respective future leadership roles.

Identifying the Ambiguity in Instructional Leadership: Decentring students' Background

Throughout the semester in class discussions, Melinda demonstrated a range of emotions, from excitement to anger and frustration, prompted by the reflection and synthesis assignments. She revealed a newfound empathy for Latino students, many of whom had to navigate crossing the border daily to attend school. However, their bilingual and transnational perspectives should be valued in her school. Further, her teacher/leadership preparation and training never signified these bilingual and transnational students' intellectual, epistemological, and cultural currency – instead, they were deficitized. Melinda was one of several students who rhetorically asked how it was possible to have gone through decades of education, learning, and training, grossly unaware of the research presented as part of the CRILS-based content.

John, an Asian American high school teacher reflecting on his earlier teaching years, admitted that he had subscribed to deficit educational practices toward minoritized students and communities, especially his "Black students." Deficit practices that had been shared with him by his more experienced colleagues. John explained, "But at the time, [I was told] 'Don't rock the boat, you know, you're the new guy, don't get into these politics.'" John's reflections indicate how senior colleagues socialized him to accept deficit educational practices centered around students' race, culture, and norms. "Early on, I bought into the narratives that my colleagues were feeding me about, well, this student is only really suited for these classes or opportunities." John realized, "Looking back, we were taking away some privilege or opportunity from them [Black and minoritized students]." John admitted that "pressure from peers against

Table 2. Analytical framework and examples.

Codes/Themes	Descriptions interpretations and links	Examples (from the findings)
Narrow and vague instructional leadership understanding, leading to decontextualization of students' culture, and backgrounds.	(a) Undermining students' communities and epistemologies. (b) Lowered instructional leadership expectations of racialized students as examples of concrete and generalizable leadership behaviors.	(a) Nathan, a White man and a high school dean, expressed how he was not educated, trained, or encouraged to look for dehumanizing practices. For example, his school sent information home to students' families in English, even though most students came from families whose primary language was Spanish and spoke very little English. Such disregard for students' backgrounds and communities are replete in the educational research literature. (b) John's reflections are linked to problematic dehumanizing narratives and practices in schools; he noted: "But early on [in my career], I kind of bought into the narratives that my teachers were feeding me about, well, this student is only really suited for these classes or opportunities."
The impact of structured critical self-reflection and CRILS-based content.	(a) Unearthing embedded ideologies in school practice and norms. (b) Prevent students from "wandering." Help to better focus on content.	a. Throughout the semester, Melinda, a White high school teacher, demonstrated a range of emotions, from excitement to anger and frustration, illustrated in class discussions, reflection, and synthesis assignments, as indicated in her response. She related a newfound empathy for Latino students, many of whom had to navigate crossing the border daily to attend schools, and who brought to schools a transnational perspective that was not valued but deficitized. a. Similarly, Ellen, a White elementary school teacher, also reflected on how CRILS-based course readings and assignments amplified her engagement with deficit practices: I thought, "Well, why do I automatically assume that the parents aren't valuing education because they didn't sign up for a conference?" (b) Melinda's reflection on the structured critical self-reflection exercise was insightful: "This class made me more aware of myself and where my own attitudes and beliefs are coming from. I think this class had a huge impact on me because I had always considered myself an educator who tried to avoid labels and tried to get to know my families and my students, but just this class really forced me to like confront that I don't know what it's like to be a student who is Latino or I don't know what it's like and I don't know their story, and I've made so many assumptions in my past career, um, that this class kind of forced me to confront and really push myself to try to better understand perspectives other than my own." b. Ellen: "This course forced me to confront [my biases]. And to be just more aware of where those beliefs and motives were coming from."
Deficit and dehumanizing school practices and examples of humanizing practices outlined in the CRILS-based course content.	(a) Indoctrination vs. education. (b) 100 year school system of unarticulated humanizing, racially and culturally responsive education.	(a) John admitted that he had subscribed to deficit educational practices toward minoritized students and communities. Deficit practices that had been shared with him by his more experienced colleagues. John explained, "but at the time, it was kind of just, 'Don't rock the boat, you know, you're the new guy, don't get into these politics.'" (b) Desiree, a Black woman, a district administrator. She described deficit practices as barriers: "we don't have open conversations about what Black and Brown educators are doing [that is working], nor do we really recognize and celebrate them [for what] they're doing in the classroom to better or to improve our students."

speaking out . . . and not necessarily knowing what to say" made him complicit. Such indoctrination was typical for new and novice teachers who often internalized and never unlearned these deficit discourses.

Desiree, a Black woman, district-level administrator, and former high school teacher, described deficit practices as barriers: "We don't have open conversations about what Black and Brown educators are doing [that is working], nor do we really recognize and celebrate them [for what] they're doing in the classroom to better or to improve our students." Desiree's reflections are a measured by-product of being unheard and unseen in a school system that conflicts with her very existence as a Black woman.

Nathan, a white man and a high school dean, reflects on how his school sent information home to students' families in English, even though most students came from families whose primary language was Spanish and spoke very little English. Nathan narrated, "It's like right out of the door, we're saying, 'You're really not that welcome.'" Additionally, Nathan was adamant about how the CRILS-based content helped him navigate and circumvent negative emotions and will continue to frame his future practices regarding the structured way he was trained to handle student referrals.

The CRILS framework offers a structured approach to fostering culturally responsive instructional leadership, emphasizing the need for humanizing principal preparation and leadership training. It highlights the importance of prioritizing academic achievement while integrating critical self-reflection to challenge oppressive school practices. Melinda, John, Desiree, and Nathan each described how CRILS-based reflection on their past educational practices helped them recognize the need for more inclusive and equitable approaches. Their experiences underscore the necessity of embracing CRILS-based content to transform educational environments, to help ensure that school leaders honor and leverage students' diverse cultural and intellectual assets.

CRILS and Structured Critical Self-Reflection

The course content helped instructional leaders identify problematic practices they partook in or did not have a name for. For example, Sarah, a white instructional coach, admitted to subscribing to deficit practices with parents and families who did not align with traditional parental involvement *norms*. Sarah stated, "I just thought about when I grew up, my mom would volunteer in the class and help in PTA, so [course readings and conversations] in class [were] really eye-opening for me." Sarah's critical self-reflection, structured by CRILS-based content, helped her to identify common deficit educational practices regarding parental involvement.

Similarly, Ellen, a white elementary school teacher, reflecting on CRILS-based course readings and assignments amplified her engagement with deficit practices:

> I found myself thinking, "Well, why do I automatically assume that the parents aren't valuing education because they didn't sign up for a conference? Or why do I automatically think that if they don't show up to back-to-school night, it means they don't care about what's going on in their [children's] lives?" I just participated in deficit educational practices because I didn't know any better. This course forced me to confront it. And I think this class allowed me to be just more aware of where those beliefs and motives were coming from.

Sarah and Ellen identified deficit practices of validating common myths and tropes applied to Black and minoritized students' families. Parents who do not attend school activities and PTA meetings are no less loving and caring than those who support and are active in all school-related functions, such as PTA meetings.

Melinda's previously mentioned range of negative emotions, caused by the synthesis and reflection assignments and course literature, which structured her reflections, led to an insightful acknowledgment of her role in deficit educational practices:

> This class made me more aware of myself and where my own attitudes and beliefs are coming from. I think this class had a huge impact on me because I had always considered myself an educator who tried to avoid labels and tried to get to know my families and my students, but just this class really forced me to like confront that I don't know what it's like to be a student who is Latino or I don't know what it's like and I don't know their story, and

> I've made so many assumptions in my past career, um, that this class kind of forced me to confront and really push myself to try to better understand perspectives other than my own.

Francesca, a self-described multiracial, Chinese American, white woman, mentioned how the biweekly structured synthesis and reflection assignments caused her to contemplate her upbringing in a predominantly white school district. Her school experience differs vastly from working with minoritized students in majority-minority schools. Reflecting upon CRILS principles prompted her to "reevaluate things that were normal for me, that was just not the same for everyone . . . so [I'm] having to kind of rethink that different people have different experiences."

Nathan grew up as an elite athlete in a white-dominated sport and is currently an administrator at a diverse majority-minority high school; he talked about opportunities he missed as a school leader and his intentions for the future:

> [CRILS-based content in the class made me] think about my actions quite a bit more, [and] about how I would engage with the students and with the families [in the past] . . . since the class, I am constantly checking to see "Are we disproportionate with our suspension numbers? Who are the referrals coming in for? Who [the referrals] are they coming from? Is it a conversation with a kid, or is it a conversation with a teacher [that I need to have]?" And it's enabled me to go into those spaces, I think, with a little bit more confidence of being willing to push back on some of the teachers rather than some of the students.

The CRILS framework helped Sarah, Ellen, Melinda, Francesca, and Nathan recognize and address deficit practices and become aware of biases in their approaches to parental involvement, student assumptions, and disciplinary practices. Sarah and Ellen identified how traditional norms often exclude diverse family contributions. Melinda's reflection on her assumptions about Latino students, Francesca's reevaluation of her upbringing, and Nathan's focus on equitable disciplinary actions illustrate the transformative capacity of CRILS. This framework equips leaders to create more inclusive, culturally responsive educational environments, benefiting educators and their communities.

Dehumanization in Schools Toward Humanization

Nathan's reflections about how he overlooked routine oppressive and dehumanizing school practices linked to the "Anglo-centric evolution of schools in this country" led him to ask, "Am I perpetuating this in the current setting I am in now either explicitly or implicitly?" Furthermore, Nathan's reflections are supported by decades of deficit practices that have become school norms. For example, Nathan expressed dehumanizing barriers toward his Spanish-speaking students and their families and that he should have prevented letters from going out in English to families who needed them to be in Spanish.

Desiree's earlier reflections regarding the ways that school structures, systems, and practices, despite the intention, ignore, marginalize, or avoid "open conversations" that celebrate the successful practices of Black and Brown educators. This systemic avoidance is rooted in the widespread decontextualization of the educational success and impacts found during the Jim Crow school era. This lack of learning contributed to a marginal understanding of Black experiences, perspectives, and frustrations regarding education and schooling in the US.

Kaela, a Black woman and an instructional coach, recalled:

> So, for me, when I'm coaching and working with teachers, I constantly have to remind them it's okay to see color depending on how you see it and understand what they're looking at. Because some of the things that come up [are based upon] the differences in race/ethnicity or just plain not knowing some of the cultural norms that happen [in Black families and communities]. I'm just trying to point those out to make sure that the classroom is engaging for all students and that the students are not being overly reprimanded for things that are just normal within their culture.

Kaela's insight – similar to Desiree, the only other Black instructional leader in the cohort – was from a place of lived experience. However, their voices, perspectives, and expertise are marginalized by the

sheer lack of presence and representation of Black voices in a school system with a history of disempowering Black voices, particularly those serving Black students.

Sofia, who identifies as Mexican American, a high school teacher, offered a personal and vulnerable account of dehumanizing school experiences:

> In my autobiography, I wrote about how, unknowingly, in my first couple years of teaching, . . . I contributed to dehumanizing school experiences . . . [the racial autobiography and course readings were] mind-blowing for me because it allowed me to recognize who I am and how I, at the beginning of my [teaching] years, had done that, without even realizing it, to some of my students. . . regardless of, "Oh, it was my first year teaching" . . . It doesn't matter. I partook in that.

Sophia was referring to how she had accepted a culture of dehumanizing Mexican American students by disregarding their epistemologies, culture, and language that they bring with them into schools every day. She recalled how critical self-reflection structured by the CRILS-based course content helped her identify her role in reifying the same dehumanizing school experiences that she had experienced as a Mexican American K-12 student. Sofia had become angry at herself for overlooking the dehumanizing experiences and stereotypes levied against her as a young Mexican American student.

Francesca, reflections and reevaluation upon "things that were normal" for her as previously stated, normal here can be substituted for human. Francesca's schooling experiences in a high-SES environment with mostly white educators and students differed from the students she teaches and their communities. She indicated that the CRILS-based course content highlighted the depth of dehumanization in the school where she teaches compared to the K-12 schools she had attended. Francesca realized that what was "normal for me" was due to cultural and epistemological norms validated in schools that reflected and informed her experiences, which could cause misinterpretations of intelligence and academic ability.

Connor, a white man and former high school teacher who became an assistant principal upon completion of the program, reflected on the *funds of knowledge* content introduced to him in the course. Connor had begun grappling with how, as an instructional leader, to incorporate students' and families' assets: "How do we incorporate [their *funds of knowledge*] into curriculum, activities, things that we're doing on campus . . . terms of engagement and inclusion so that we are like placing value on the skills different families and students bring to school?" Connor was genuinely excited about the opportunity and the challenges awaiting him in his new role as assistant principal.

The CRILS framework revealed significant insights into how educational leaders can recognize and address deficit and dehumanizing school practices. Nathan's reflections underscore how traditional "Anglo-centric" school norms perpetuate exclusion, particularly toward Spanish-speaking families. Desiree's and Kaela's experiences highlight the systemic marginalization of successful practices by Black and Brown educators rooted in historical and ongoing neglect of Black educational experiences.

Kaela emphasizes recognizing racial and cultural differences in student behavior to create engaging and fair classroom environments. Sofia's self-reflection on her initial teaching years reveals how she unconsciously contributed to dehumanizing practices against Mexican American students, mirroring her own negative school experiences. Francesca's reevaluation of her privileged schooling versus her students' experiences underscores the cultural biases that can distort perceptions of student abilities.

Connor's excitement about integrating students' and families' cultural assets into the school curriculum demonstrates the potential for CRILS to foster inclusive and engaging educational environments. Overall, CRILS equips leaders to dismantle deficit thinking and promote equity, inclusivity, and respect for diverse cultural contributions in education.

Discussion

I introduce CRILS as a principal preparation and IL training methodology and pedagogy designed to navigate negative emotions and humanize the school experiences of Black and other racially minoritized students (e.g., Kim & Wright, 2024). However, I do not intend to "pedagogise white discomfort;" instead, I seek to move from sentimentalism toward critical and transformative school practices (Zembylas, 2018, 2023). This study demonstrates the capacity to fuse critical self-reflection structured by CRSL and critical educational leadership to support instructional leadership, a fusion I conceptualize as CRILS. Furthermore, educational leadership departments and policymakers should consider CRILS a viable leadership training intervention encompassing principal preparation programs and not just stand-alone courses. By infusing and grounding CRSL into IL development and training, this study fills gaps and strengthens common shortcomings experienced by instructional leaders. In particular, this study provides more precise, practical, and relevant explanations and definitions for the experiences and practices of instructional leaders.

Structured critical self-reflection allowed participants to confront and address their subtle yet deeply held biases, practices, and negative emotions. Instructional leaders revealed how they contributed to the deficit and dehumanizing school experiences for their students through systemic practices of ignoring and degrading their ontologies, epistemologies, cultures, and language. These revelations are particularly insightful given that, in some instances, instructional leaders shared similar racialized backgrounds. These revelations highlight the necessity for CRSL and other critical curricula, even for minoritized instructional leaders, because the indoctrination and socialization of Eurocentrism are deeply rooted in the knowledge canons and pedagogies governing educational training, specifically instructional leadership education, and training.

CRILS differentiates from CRSL in several ways. First, CRILS expands the historicity grounding CRSL. For example, Khalifa's (2018) construction of CRSL builds from the scholarship of Black principals. However, CRSL was part of the entire structure of Black education during the segregated schools era. Black educators were instructional leaders, principals, teacher leaders (e.g., Neumerski, 2013), and all the adults associated with the school (e.g., Fenwick, 2022; Irby, 2021; Kim & Wright, 2024). The instructional leaders pre-*Brown* demonstrated culturally responsive leadership or culturally responsive education in general in demanding academic excellence from Black students in familiar and relatable ways. What we call CRSL (or culturally responsive education, pedagogy, etc.) today is what Black educators, which included their broader communities, lived and practiced in segregated schools and communities (e.g., Fenwick, 2022; Wright & Karnopp, 2024). Second, CRSL is structured by reflecting on the practices of Black principals (Khalifa, 2018), CRILS is structured by reflecting on principals, teacher leaders, instructional coaches (Neumerski, 2013), and all of the adults affiliated with the school as offering opportunities for student learning and guidance (Fenwick, 2022; Walker, 2001; Wright & Karnopp, 2024). Third, CRILS is a methodology and pedagogy that intertwines and fuses CRSL (the broader description just provided) and IL practices for principals, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches. CRILS offers insight into its capabilities in a widespread principal preparation program. Future investigations of departmental-infused CRILS-based leadership training with university buy-in supported by policy can contribute much to humanizing educational leadership and school experiences for Black and historically racialized, minoritized students. Also, future studies can examine larger groups, including those who are obstinate to CRSL and more inclined to traditional top-down leadership approaches to principal and leadership preparation. Also, adding ideologically differing educators could further nuance these conversations.

Conclusion

The participants were well aware of and trained in instructional leadership principles. They attended professional workshops and were introduced to its tenets throughout their training before and after

becoming educators. However, only some were familiar with culturally responsive school leadership, and none were trained in its tenets nor familiar with the research and arguments for CRSL.

The CRILS (Culturally Responsive Instructional Leadership) framework significantly impacts how instructional leaders conceptualize and operationalize their roles, aligning with the paper's aims to explore equity and inclusivity in education. Participants like Nathan and Desiree highlight systemic issues, such as the marginalization of Spanish-speaking families and the avoidance of celebrating Black and Brown educators' successes. Their reflections underscore the need for critical self-awareness in leadership practices.

Instructional leaders like Kaela and Sofia emphasize recognizing and addressing deficit practices rooted in cultural biases. Kaela focuses on the necessity of understanding cultural norms to foster engaging and fair classrooms. At the same time, Sofia reflects on her participation in dehumanizing practices against Mexican American students, prompting a shift toward more inclusive approaches.

Francesca and Connor illustrate the practical application of CRILS by integrating students' and families' cultural assets into the school curriculum and activities. Francesca reevaluates her privileged background in contrast to her students' experiences, while Connor is eager to enhance engagement and inclusion through culturally responsive strategies.

Overall, participant responses demonstrate that CRILS informs instructional leadership by promoting critical self-reflection, recognizing and addressing deficit practices, and operationalizing inclusive educational strategies. This alignment with the paper's aims and research questions underscores the transformative potential of the CRILS framework in fostering equitable and culturally responsive educational environments.

Future research should look to incorporate CRILS program-wide with tenets woven and integrated across all of the program's courses, not just stand-alone courses. Also, future studies should further interrogate the disregard for CRSL (and similar critical educational content) in schools that serve racialized and minoritized students. CRILS offers much regarding a conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical framework for IL and principal preparation. While CRSL informs and structures the critical self-reflection in this study, other theories and concepts that challenge deficit practices and dehumanizing educational experiences, such as coloniality/decoloniality, critical race theory (CRT), and Black feminist thought, among others, can be exchanged for CRSL.

Acknowledgments

Disclosure Statement

References

Anderson, E., Winn, K. M., Young, M. D., Groth, C., Korach, S., Pounder, D., & Rorrer, A. K. (2018). Examining university leadership preparation: An analysis of program attributes and practices. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, *13*(4), 375–397. https://doi.org/10.1177/1942775117735873

Anderson, J. D. (1988). *Education of blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. University of North Carolina Press.

Baldwin, J. (1998). A talk to teachers (1963). In T. Morrison (Ed.), *Baldwin: Collected essays* (pp. 678–686). Library of America.

Bogotch, I. E. (2002). Educational leadership and social justice: Practice into theory. *Journal of School Leadership*, *12*(2), 138–156. https://doi.org/10.1177/105268460201200203

Boske, C. (2015). Preparing school leaders to interrupt racism at various levels in educational systems. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, *17*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v17i1.848

Bossert, S. T., Dwyer, D. C., Rowan, B., & Lee, G. V. (1982). The instructional management role of the principal. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *18*(3), 34–64. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X82018003004

Brookfield, S. (2009). The concept of critical reflection: Promises and contradictions. *European Journal of Social Work*, *12*(3), 293–304. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691450902945215

Brookfield, S. (2017). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Brown, K. M. (2006). Leadership for social justice and equity: Evaluating a transformative framework and andragogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *42*(5), 700–745. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X06290650

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, *25*(8), 652–661. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206

Carpenter, B. W., & Diem, S. (2013). Talking race: Facilitating critical conversations in educational leadership preparation programs. *Journal of School Leadership*, *23*(6), 902–931. https://doi.org/10.1177/105268461302300601

Courtney, S. J., Gunter, H. M., Niesche, R., & Trujillo, T. (Eds.). (2021). *Understanding educational leadership: Critical perspectives and approaches*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Cuban, L. (1988). *The managerial imperative and the practice of leadership in schools*. SUNY Press.

Diem, S., & Carpenter, B. W. (2013). Examining race-related silences: Interrogating the education of tomorrow's educational leaders. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, *8*(1), 56–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/1942775112464962

Diem, S., Carpenter, B. W., & Lewis-Durham, T. (2019). Preparing antiracist school leaders in a school choice context. *Urban Education*, *54*(5), 706–731. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085918783812

Eacott, S., & Niesche, R. (2021). Education and instructional leadership. In S. J. Courtney, H. M. Gunter, R. Niesche, & T. Trujillo (Eds.), *Understanding educational leadership: Critical perspectives and approaches* (pp. 221–236). Bloomsbury Academic.

Edmonds, R. (1979). Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational Leadership*, *37*(1), 15–24.

Fendler, L., & Muzaffar, I. (2008). The history of the bell curve: Sorting and the idea of normal. *Educational Theory*, *58*(1), 63–82. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.2007.0276.x

Fenwick, L. T. (2022). *Jim Crow's pink slip: The untold story of black principal and teacher leadership*. Harvard Education Press.

Gates, S. M., Baird, M. D., Master, B. K., & Chavez-Herrerias, E. R. (2019). *Principal pipelines: A feasible, affordable, and effective way for districts to improve schools*. RAND.

Glesne, C. (2015). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (5th ed.). Pearson.

Goldring, E., Grissom, J., Neumerski, C. M., Murphy, J., Blissett, R., & Porter, A. (2015). *Making Time for Instructional Leadership [Instructional leadership: The "SAM" process]*. The Wallace Foundation. https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/making-time-for-instructional-leadership.aspx

Gooden, M. A., & O'Doherty, A. (2015). Do you see what I see? Fostering aspiring leaders' racial awareness. *Urban Education*, *50*(2), 225–255. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085914534273

Hallinger, P. (2007). Instructional leadership and the school principal: A passing fancy that refuses to fade away. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *4*(3), 221–239. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700760500244793

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1996). Reassessing the principal's role in school effectiveness: A review of empirical research, 1980–1995. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *32*(1), 5–44. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X96032001002

Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203887332

Hernandez, F., & Marshall, J. (2017). Auditing inequity: Teaching aspiring administrators to be social justice leaders. *Education & Urban Society*, *49*(2), 203–228. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124516630598

Hilliard, A. G. (2000). Excellence in education versus high-stakes standardized testing. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *51*(4), 293–304. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487100051004005

Hines, M. T. (2016). The embeddedness of white fragility within white pre-service principals' reflections on white privilege. *Critical Questions in Education*, *7*(2), 130–145.

Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2000). *Doing qualitative research differently: Free association, narrative and the interview method*. Sage.

Irby, D. J. (2021). *Stuck improving: Racial equity and school leadership*. Harvard Education Press.

Ishimaru, A. M. (2019). *Just schools: Building equitable collaborations with families and communities*. Teachers College Press.

Khalifa, M. A. (2018). *Culturally responsive school leadership*. Harvard Education Press. http://hepg.org/hep-home/books/culturally-responsive-school-leadership

Kim, T., & Wright, J. (2024). Navigating emotional discomfort in developing equity-driven school leaders: A conceptual-pedagogical framework. *Journal of School Leadership*, 10526846241254050. https://doi.org/10.1177/10526846241254050

Leithwood, K., Patten, S., & Jantzi, D. (2010). Testing a conception of how school leadership influences student learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *46*(5), 671–706. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X10377347

Leithwood, K., & Seashore-Louis, K. (2011). *Linking leadership to student learning*. Jossey-Bass.

Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *Review of research how leadership influences student learning*. The Wallace Foundation.

Martinez, M. A. (2015). Engaging aspiring educational leaders in self-reflection regarding race and privilege. *Reflective Practice*, 16(6), 765–776. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2015.1095727

McArdle, F., & Ryan, S. (2017). Reflection: Reinvigorating a key professional practice in teacher education. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 38(4), 275–278. https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2017.1403213

McKnight, L., & Whitburn, B. (2020). Seven reasons to question the hegemony of visible learning. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 41(1), 32–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2018.1480474

Milner, H. R., IV. (2010). Culture, curriculum, and identity in education. In H. R. Milner IV (Ed.), *Culture, curriculum, and identity in education* (pp. 1–11). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230105669_1

Mugisha, V. M. (2013). Culturally responsive instructional leadership: A conceptual exploration with principals of three New Zealand mainstream schools. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 15(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v15i2.645

Murphy, J. (1988). Methodological, measurement, and conceptual problems in the study of instructional leadership. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 10(2), 117–139. https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737010002117

Nelson, S. W., & Guerra, P. L. (2014). Educator beliefs and cultural knowledge implications for school improvement efforts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(1), 67–95. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X13488595

Neumerski, C. M. (2013). Rethinking instructional leadership, a review: What do we know about principal, teacher, and coach instructional leadership, and where should we go from here? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49(2), 310–347. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X12456700

O'Reilly, K. (2012). *Ethnographic methods* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Patel, L. (2015). *Decolonizing educational research: From ownership to answerability*. Routledge.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative interviewing. In M. Q. Patton (Ed.), *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed., pp. 339–428). Sage.

Rigby, J. G. (2014). Three logics of instructional leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(4), 610–644. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X13509379

Saldaña, J. M. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Stein, S. J. (2004). *The culture of education policy*. Teachers College Press.

Terhart, E. (2011). Has John Hattie really found the holy grail of research on teaching? An extended review of visible learning. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 43(3), 425–438. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2011.576774

Trujillo, T., & Horsford, S. D. (2021). Critical perspectives and approaches to educational leadership in the United States. In S. J. Courtney, H. M. Gunter, R. Niesche, & T. Trujillo (Eds.), *Understanding educational leadership: Critical perspectives and approaches* (pp. 15–28). Bloomsbury Academic.

van Nieuwerburgh, C., Barr, M., Munro, C., Noon, H., & Arifin, D. (2020). Experiences of aspiring school principals receiving coaching as part of a leadership development programme. *International Journal of Mentoring & Coaching in Education*, 9(3), 291–306. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-11-2019-0107

Walker, V. S. (2001). African American teaching in the South: 1940–1960. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 751–779. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312038004751

Wang, E. L., Gates, S. M., Herman, R., Mean, M., Perera, R., Berglund, T., Whipkey, K., & Andrew, M. (2018). *Launching a redesign of university principal preparation programs: Partners collaborate for change*. RAND.

Woodson, C. G. (1933). *The Mis-education of the Negro*. Tribeca Books.

Wright, J. (2022). The deep roots of inequity: Coloniality, racial capitalism, educational leadership, and reform. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 58(5), 693–717. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X211029483

Wright, J., & Karnopp, J. (2024). Protest and resistance: Conceptualizing a blackamerican institutional schema and the contemporary relevance of pre-brown educators. *American Educational Research Association Open*, 10, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584241269812

Ylimaki, R., Jacobson, S., & Jacobson, S. (2013). School leadership practice and preparation: Comparative perspectives on organizational learning (OL), instructional leadership (IL) and culturally responsive practices (CRP). *Journal of Educational Administration*, 51(1), 6–23. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231311291404

Zembylas, M. (2018). Affect, race, and white discomfort in schooling: Decolonial strategies for "pedagogies of discomfort. *Ethics & Education*, 13(1), 86–104. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2018.1428714

Zembylas, M. (2023). Challenging sentimental narratives of "victims" and "perpetrators" in postcolonial settings: Thinking with and through affective justice in comparative education. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 53(7), 1152–1169. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2021.2017766