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Culturally Responsive School Leadership Agility: A Journey Through Critical Self-Reflection

Abstract

This study examined how school leaders can differentiate their approach using a self-reporting psychometric instrument called the Emergenetics® Profile when engaged in critical self-reflection. Using a multiple case study approach, three urban school leaders engaged in the deconstructing and reconstructing of knowledge frameworks specific to deficit thinking. The Emergenetics Profile served as a lens to critically self-reflect in order to differentiate their approach to the disrupt deficit thinking practices in their schools (Browning 2007; Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018). This study integrated these insights from critical self-reflection and the awareness gained by school leaders through their Emergenetics preferences to change their approach as they interacted with others. The specific problem of practice guiding this study was the disconnect that exists between critical self-reflection by the school leader and implementation of Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) strategies to sustain change. In other words, how can critical self-reflection support a differentiated approach for implementing CRSL strategies based on how people think and behave. The research question for this multiple case study was:

How will the use of the Emergenetics Profile influence the way school leaders engage in critical self-reflection as they disrupt deficit thinking within their school communities?

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CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AGILITY:
A JOURNEY THROUGH CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION

A Dissertation In Practice

Presented to

the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Deborah McKelvey Brown

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Key search terms: Culturally Responsive School Leadership, Social Justice, Self-Reflection, Cultural Capital, Funds of Knowledge, Humanizing, Self-Efficacy, Social Capital, Transformative Leadership

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Chapter One: Introduction

The fissures of systemic racism within our society ruptured in March 2020 as the United States experienced a pandemic that has rocked our culture to its core. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) exposed the essence of historic and systemic racism that has been a part of this country's fabric from its inception. COVID 19 unveiled systemic racism of historically marginalized communities from health care to employment to education, and shattered misperceptions of who we are as country held by many in the dominant majority. This exposure of historic and systemic racism was intensified when George Floyd was murdered by police officers in Minneapolis due to racist policing practices and plunged our country into protests for change that reached a global audience. As a result, the call for change to learning and understanding the historical underpinnings of this country's systemic racism has become paramount. This call for change begins with an educational system responsible for developing global citizens to engage students in learning the historical lineage of systemic racism. School leaders entrenched in this educational system must promote socially just practices influencing school and district policies to support all members of the school community to think critically while ensuring interconnectedness and interdependence to build communities of inclusiveness and equity (Furman, 2012; Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018). Answering the call for changing in our schools are school leaders who have adopted sustaining communities of equity and inclusiveness. As CRSL leaders transform their school cultures to embrace

inclusiveness and interconnectedness, an agile approach is needed to meet the demand of constant change. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines agile as “the ability to move with quick easy grace, having a quick resourceful and adaptable character”. Therefore, agile leadership calls for school leaders to think quickly and pivot their approach as they work to transform their organizations. Shields (2018) advocates for transformative leaders to be agile as they keep their view on the whole system to communicate with clarity and assume a proactive approach while addressing potential conflicts. Furthermore, agile CRSL leaders will need the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to accelerate strategies for change and sustainability (Khalifa, 2018). Equitable inclusive learning environments support the fair and just treatment of all students and requires school leaders to identify and disrupt practices that have prevented access to curriculum and opportunities for students who have been historically marginalized (Khalifa et al., 2016; Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2004, 2018). Khalifa (2018) defines inclusive learning environments as spaces where historically marginalized students feel a sense of belonging and where their Indigenous identities are welcomed. This includes a laser-like focus to disrupt deficit thinking while promoting the humanizing of traditionally marginalized members of the school community. Promoting humanizing means to see historically marginalized students from their Indigenous identities by accepting student behaviors that are different from the dominate culture to honor the perspectives they bring to the learning community (Khalifa 2018).

Students in today’s schools will be required to navigate global relationships as the student demographic diversifies. This diversified student population will demand that all school leaders implement culturally responsive leadership practices to cultivate school

communities who understand and welcome the cultural and social capital of all its members (Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018; Yosso, 2005). However, the call for culturally responsive school leadership has been answered successfully in few school systems. Therefore, a critical question remains; why do some school leaders experience success as they develop as culturally responsive school leaders while others do not?

The first step for CRSL leadership is to engage in critical self-reflection. Therefore, this study will examine how the use of critical self-reflection to disrupt deficit thinking through deconstructing and reconstructing of knowledge frameworks (Shields 2004, 2018, 2020) influences the school leader's approach to change. Shields (2018) refers to knowledge frameworks as the experiences, expectations and beliefs that drive practices and narratives in schools. Therefore, to deconstruct knowledge frameworks, school leaders will need to identify their beliefs and biases through their experiences to examine when, how and why they may have engaged deficit thinking practices in their schools. The critical self-reflective process also requires school leaders to reconstruct a new knowledge framework or mental model to change their leadership approach to transform their schools as equitable and inclusive learning environments. It is important to note, that deficit thinking blames the student who lacks the knowledge and experiences to be successful in majoritarian learning environment, often educational response is to require intervention services to be able successfully engage in the curriculum (Khalifa, 2018, Shields 2018, 2020, Valencia 2010). Culturally responsive school leaders engage in critical self-reflection to understand others in order to develop interdependence and interconnectedness within the school community (Khalifa, 2018; Shields 2018, 2020). Interdependence and interconnectedness may be seen as the promotion of relationships

built through respectful dialogue where differences are welcomed (Shields, 2018). This relationship encourages the understanding of our global connection to support one another as humans through our individual identities (Shields, 2018).

Given that the research on critical self-reflection is robust, a gap exists between the practice of critical self-reflection and the insights gained to affect changes in approaches or practices toward socially just leadership. For this reason, this study examined the influence of a self-reporting psychometric instrument (which measures how a person prefers to think and behave based on genetics and life experiences) to gain insights into the understanding of self as a leader and increase the understanding of those they lead. Using a self-reporting psychometric instrument as lens to engage in critical self-reflective practices, school leaders may differentiate their approach to promote inclusiveness and humanizing of all members of the school community. The self-reporting instrument for this study was the Emergenetics® Profile (Browning & Williams, 1991). There are several self-reporting psychometric instruments on the market however, the Emergenetics Profile was selected for this study because it separates how a person thinks and how a person behaves into specific attributes. This designation of these specific attributes allowed the school leader to be more discerning when critically reflecting. Additionally, the Emergenetics Profile uses positive strengths-based language to promote cognitive diversity on teams. The other self-reporting psychometric instruments integrate how a person thinks and behaves therefore school leaders could potentially overlook key insights during the reflective practice. Using the Emergenetics Profile as a lens, participants examined their knowledge frameworks and their relationship to deficit thinking through a critical self-reflection process to deconstruct and

reconstruct their knowledge frameworks. Additionally, the influence of the Emergenetics Profile during the critical self-reflective process was examined.

Background Study

A culturally responsive school leader understands the history of oppressive practices and policies in the educational system that have led to deficit thinking and the pathologizing of students of color (Khalifa, 2018). Culturally responsive school leadership requires school leaders to act to pursue academic excellence for all students through opportunities to engage the instructional staff to develop an awareness of social injustices operating within their schools. Culturally responsive school leadership requires skills and knowledge to transform the curriculum to eliminate the promotion of power and privilege (Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018). Additionally, culturally responsive leadership requires school leaders to create system-wide change that considers the structure of the organization as well as the culture of the organization. Fullan (Fullan & Quinn, 2016) posits that school leaders who want systemic change will need to identify the right drivers (capacity building, collaboration, pedagogy, and systemness).

As CRSL leaders consider systemic change and the diversified student population, a notable disparity between marginalized populations, specifically between White and Black, and White and Hispanic students in reading and mathematics continues to exist. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics report *The Nation's Report Card: Trends in Academic Progress* (2013), While the disparity appears to be narrowing, the gap is still present. Furthermore, a constant focus of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy (NCLB, 2002) addressing the opportunity gap (Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015) between students identified as members of historically

marginalized populations and the dominant White population highlighted the implementation of various intervention models. The intervention models supported by the NCLB policy suggests that deficit thinking may be a component of these models. The implication of intervention is to address a situation for improvement and focus on the student needing intervention rather than considering the cultural assets a student brings to the learning (Yosso, 2005). More importantly, intervention models put the blame and responsibility on the student rather than on the system to examine the practices or policies that are oppressing the progress of students.

Intervention models have their roots in special education. Beginning in 2004 (Sugai & Horner, 2009), school districts across the country moved toward intervention programs and policies through frameworks known as Response to Intervention (RtI) as part of the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (Sugai & Horner, 2009). RtI initially began with the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, which focused on students with learning disabilities and required tiers of interventions using researched based practices with systematic data collection (Preston et al., 2016; Sugai & Horner, 2009). This multi-tiered system was to eliminate the “one size fits all” approach, with an emphasis on tier 1 instruction focused in the general education classroom required research based, high quality instructional practices to ensure academic success for the majority of students. (Preston et al., 2016). Preston et al. (2016) describes two models of implementation for RtI, the problem solving model which focused on early intervention and the standard treatment protocol, both focused on individualized instruction to meet individual student needs. Additionally the problem solving model considers both general education students and special education students by measuring

academic progress through the concept of adequate growth defined by the district or state (Preston et al., 2016). If adequate growth is not achieved, a cycle of data analysis begins and a more intensive approach is implemented (Preston et al., 2016; Sugai & Horner, 2009). The second model described by Preston et al. (2016) is the standard treatment protocol, which assess all students and those who score below an identified score cutoff are provided with intensive 5-8 week small group intervention. Students are assessed at the end of the intensive intervention and those who do not meet the set criteria move to tier 2 for a more scripted intervention for an extended period of time (Preston et al., 2016).

Intervention programs and strategies incorporated a process for RtI to improve the academic achievement for underachieving students with the goal of shoring up the disparities identified by dominant cultural beliefs based on the accepted experiences and foundations required to be academically successful (Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015; Preston et al., 2016). However, RtI focused on technical strategies for academic achievement and did not incorporate the backgrounds and experiences from the nondominant cultures such as funds of knowledge and social capital (Yosso, 2005). Inclusive practices for an equity-focused learning environments did not exist (Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015). As a result, the structures, of RtI may reinforce and perpetuate such oppressive practices of gatekeeping by holding back students who continue to be marginalized by the practices and policies with the educational system based on academic standards set by the dominant majority.

When considering the influence school leaders have on teaching practices, Shields (2018) reminds us, “the single most important factor in the academic achievement of

minoritized students is the leaders' rejection of deficit thinking" (p.40). Moreover, Khalifa et al. (2018) advocate that instructional leadership is the most influential regarding teaching practices to eliminate deficit thinking.

To that end, how can we address deep, sustainable change through culturally responsive leadership agility? Understanding self through critical self-reflection may provide a vantage point to take a multiple perspective stance. Furthermore, the ability to see through multiple perspectives speaks to the school leader's ability to pivot or have an agile approach when engaging others in the disruption of deficit thinking practices. Multiple perspectives build intention and purpose to leverage practices for inclusiveness and interconnectedness, contributing to successful leadership practices (Burns, 1978).

Theory of Action and Research Question

Khalifa (2018) states culturally responsive leadership requires engagement in critical reflection of their identities while examining the curriculum, school practices and, community engagement through the lens of anti-oppressive practices and policies such as the elimination of deficit thinking. Moreover, he emphasizes the importance for school leaders to engage in critical self-reflection as a strategy to identify their role in the implementation of oppressive practices and policies and, acknowledge their unintentional complicity from the ignorance of the history and socialization of attitudes towards historically marginalized populations (Khalifa, 2018). Khalifa's definition of CRSL speaks to the importance of school leaders' understanding their beliefs, values and action including the willingness to be vulnerable (Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018).

CRSL is informed by Transformative Leadership Theory (TLT) (Burns, 1978; Shields, 2003, 2018) which also addresses how school leaders can confront their

complicity in oppressive practices and policies. Furthermore, TLT addresses the opportunity gap within the educational system by requiring the examination of deficit thinking practices (Shields, 2003, 2004, 2018). Shields (2018) calls upon school leaders to engage in critical awareness of self to reflect upon the educational system and the way it responds to the privileged, as well as those who have been excluded.

This Dissertation in Practice will incorporate the guiding principles of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). The first principle is, “being framed around the questions of equity, ethics, and social justice to bring about solutions to complex problems of practice” (cpedinitiative.org, 2020). By applying this guiding principle, this study will investigate the following research question; *How will the use of the Emergenetics® Profile influence the way school leaders engage in critical self-reflection to disrupt deficit thinking within their school communities?* The theory of action supporting this research question is, *if principals engage in critical self-reflection through a CRSL lens using their Emergenetics Profile to gain insight into self and others, then principals will differentiate their approach to empower others to disrupt deficit thinking.*

The CRSL Agility Framework conceptual framework guided this study and was developed using the foundational theories of TLT and CRSL. This framework will be discussed further in Chapter 2. Since the CRSL Agility Framework was too comprehensive in scope for this study, it has been narrowed to the elements of critical self-reflection, flexing and the CRSL strategy of promoting inclusiveness and humanizing for all members of the school community through the disruption of deficit thinking. The CRSL Agility framework that guided this study is grounded in Shields'

(Shields, 2003, 2018) work on TLT and Khalifa's work (2018) on culturally responsive school leadership behaviors.

The interpretive analysis of three urban school leaders engaging in self-reflection to deconstruct and reconstruct deficit thinking frameworks informed the results of this study. Data was gathered from semi-structured interviews, reflective journaling and a CRSL dispositional survey. A resource guide was developed to support CRSL leaders through the critical reflective process to deconstruct and reconstruct mental models or knowledge frameworks.

Problem of Practice

CPED defines a problem of practice as, “a persistent, contextualized, and specific issue embedded in the work of a professional practitioner, the addressing of which has the potential to result in improved understanding, experience, and outcomes” (cpedinitiative.org, 2020). The following section provides the context specific to the problem of practice guiding this study.

Moral courage and vulnerability are necessary dispositions for leaders who respond to the call for CRSL leadership. CRSL leaders are often met with resistance from the school community when engaging in social justice work. The complexities of leading culturally responsive schools requires the intersection of critical self-reflection and understanding the perspectives of others to incorporate professional agency while establishing relational trust (Bachmann et al., 2015; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

While the school principal has been identified as the second most important influence on student success through shaping the school cultural norms and practices

(Khalifa, 2018; Leithwood, 2004), leveraging this influential role to advance inclusive and equitable practices in all schools successfully has been inconsistent. Furthermore, school leaders who are committed to becoming culturally responsive will need to integrate their multiple identities and find the intersections of these identities as they work with another. The strategies of CRSL are supported by the research (Khalifa, 2018) and the tenets of Transformative Leadership Theory (Shields, 2003, 2004, 2018). Nevertheless, the disconnect between the implementation of CRSL strategies and sustaining practices to promote practices for inclusion and equity. This disconnect needs to be examined.

Therefore, the specific problem of practice guiding this study is the disconnect that exists between critical self-reflection by the school leader and implementation of CRSL strategies to sustain change. In other words, how can critical self-reflection support a differentiated approach for implementing CRSL strategies based on how people think and behave.

To examine the disconnect the Emergenetics® Profile served as the nexus between critical self-reflective practices and how one may understand the perspective of another. The Emergenetics Profile (Browning & Williams, 1991) a self-reporting psychometric tool, provided a lens for school leaders to deconstruct and reconstruct their knowledge frameworks specific to deficit thinking. This study investigated the influence of self-reflective practices to flex or become more agile as they identified strategies to disrupt deficit thinking based on the profiles of their staff.

The Emergenetics Profile is based on Socioanalytic Theory (Hogan et al., In press) which posits people develop certain preferences that can be seen and heard allowing one

to reflect upon self. This psychometric instrument is a valid and reliable instrument meeting the requirements from the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing and, is re-normed every two years using a global population (Williams, 2018). This psychometric instrument measures three behavioral attributes (expressiveness, assertiveness and flexibility) and four thinking attributes (analytical, structural, social/relational and conceptual) (Browning, 2007). Additionally, the Emergenetics Profile measures the energy one gains from being in a preferred type of thought based on genetics and life experiences (Browning, 2007). The Emergenetics Profile provides individual insights into why some activities, tasks or experiences feel energizing or why some feel uncomfortable or challenging (Browning, 2007). Using the Emergenetics Profile may provide a frame for school leaders to critically self-reflect and support the concept of social exchange. (Browning, 2007; Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

This study explored how the Emergenetics Profile provided a bridge for the development of CRSL when meeting the challenges of resistance from the members of the school community toward more equitable schools. For example, if an individual prefers to process information internally and does not outwardly display emotion towards the leader's actions, the CRSL leader may misinterpret this as disengagement. If an individual prefers to process externally through a display of outward emotion that questions the leader's actions, this can be misinterpreted as resistance. Through the examination of the relationship between TLT, CRSL strategies and the Emergenetics Profile, a closer look into a school leader's ability to flex beyond the understanding of self and connect to the multiple perspectives brought by their staffs was examined.

Purpose of the Study

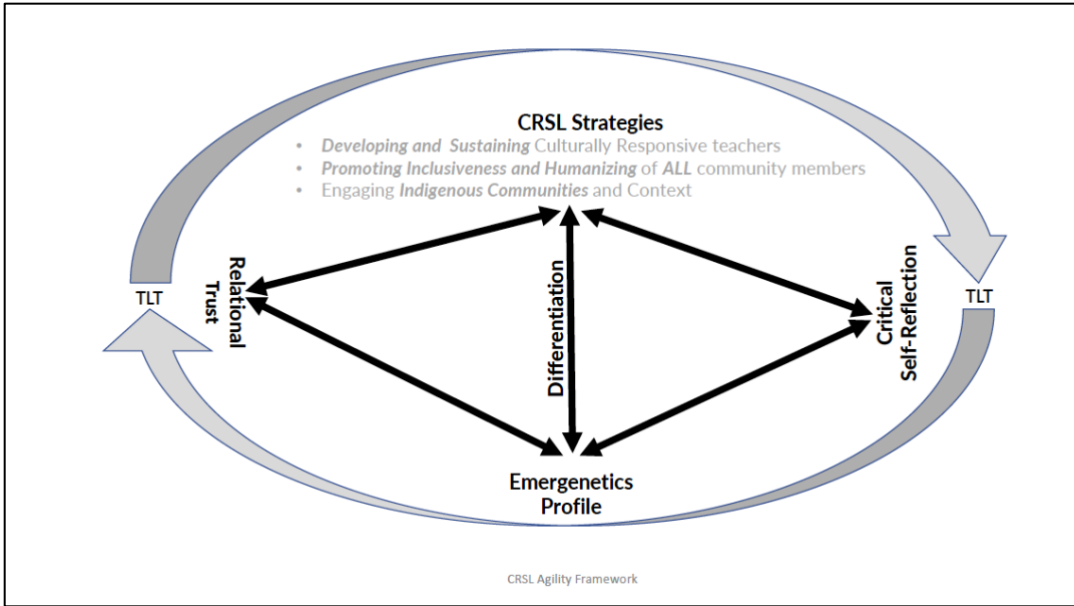
The purpose of this study examined how school leaders differentiated their approach using the Emergenetics Profile when engaged in critical self-reflection. At the same time, this study integrated these insights from critical self-reflection and the awareness gained by school leaders through their Emergenetics preferences to change their approach as they interacted with others.

Multiple case study methodology was used through an interpretative research design to allow social construction of multiple realities of the participants in this study (Boudah, 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). This approach provided insight into why a disconnect may exist for some school leaders between CRSL strategy implementation and the mobilization of school communities to commit to socially just practices. According to Yin (2018) case study methodology is the relevant methodological path for answering research questions seeking to explain a set of events influenced by social phenomena. Yin (2018) defines case study methodology as a process that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p15). The research question for this study aligns with Yin’s (2018) definition for case study methodology. Furthermore, Yin (2018) states other features of a case study design such as, situations that may have multiple variables requires triangulation from multiple sources of data and have prior theories that can support the study. This study incorporated multiple sources of data for triangulation (reflective journaling, semi-structured interviews and a CRSL dispositional survey) and was guided by prior research from TLT and CRSL strategies as foundational support.

Boudah (2020) explains qualitative research as requiring the systematic analysis of language, actions, and artifacts of those participating in the study by identifying themes to describe and provide insight into potential explanations of what is occurring in that particular setting. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that interpretive research with an epistemological perspective of social constructivism is the most common type of qualitative research that requires interpretation of multiple experiences to explain the phenomena being studied.

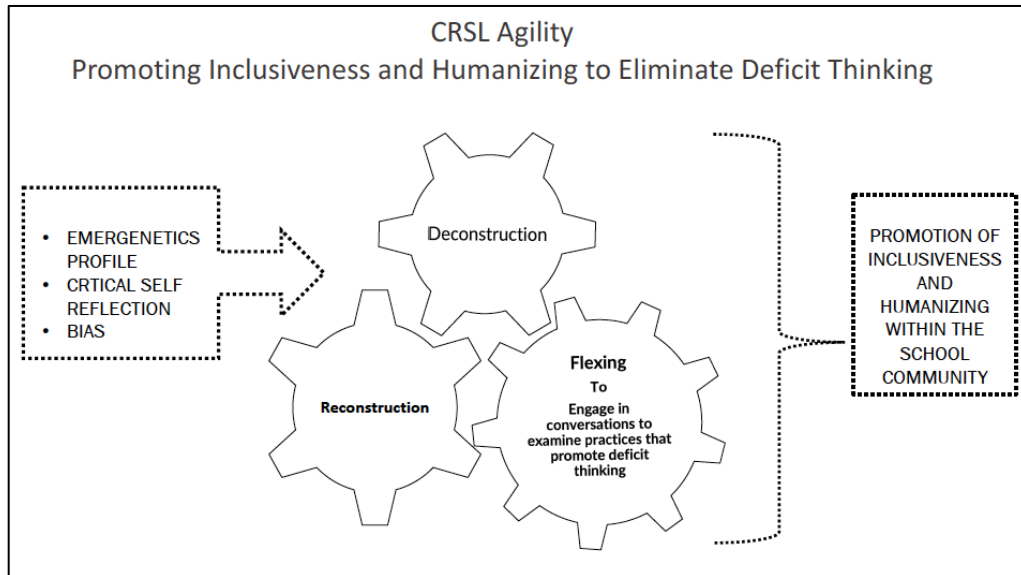
To support this interpretive research approach from a social constructivist paradigm, a conceptual framework was developed. Using TLT as the foundational leadership theory and the behaviors of CRSL, the Emergenetics Profile served as the lens to differentiate approaches and strategies to address the disconnect between critical self-reflection and implementation of strategies for sustainable change toward the elimination of inequitable practices. Using the confluence of these elements, the following comprehensive conceptual framework (*CRSL Agility Framework*) was developed and influenced by several researchers Khalifa (2018), Shields (2004, 2018), and Valencia (2010) to guide this study.

Figure 1
CRSL Agility Framework



As previously stated, the CRSL Agility Framework is too comprehensive in nature for this study, therefore, Figure 2 displays the specific elements from the CRSL Agility Framework that will serve as the focus for this study.

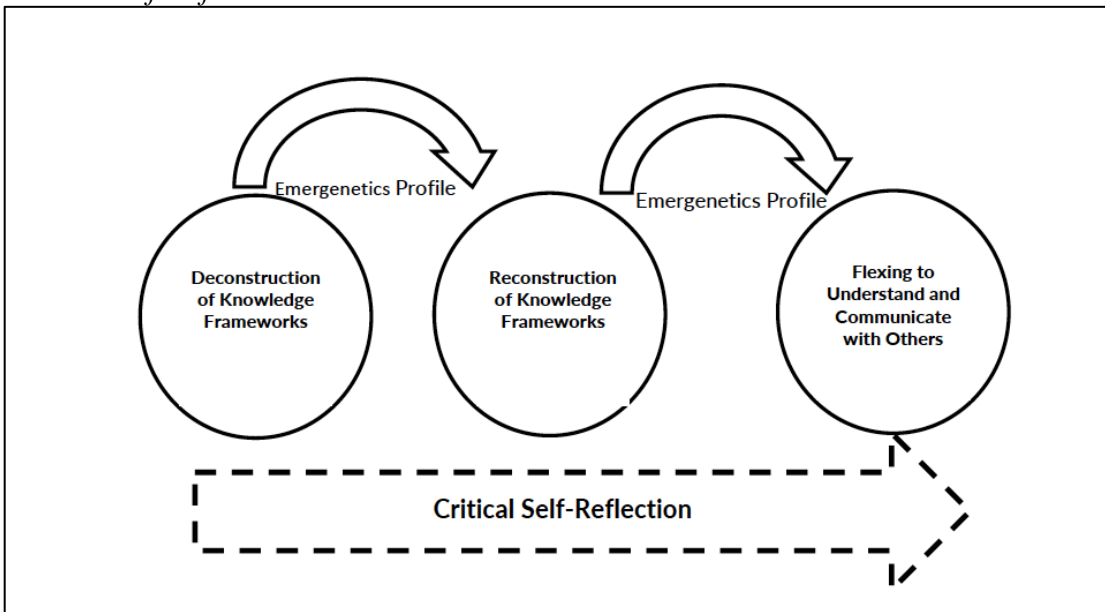
Figure 2
CRSL Agility: Promoting Inclusiveness and Humanizing to Eliminate Deficit Thinking



Each participant followed the critical self-reflective (see Figure 3) developed for this study. First, participants reflected and connected their Emergenetics Profile to their

mental model of deficit thinking. Next, participants continued to use their Emergenetics Profile as a lens to support the deconstruction of their assumptions, biases, and values of deficit thinking. Finally, participants reconstructed a new framework for themselves. Through the reconstruction of their assumptions, biases and values, participants considered how to differentiate their approach how by flexing their position to interact with others by leveraging their Emergenetics Profile.

Figure 3
Critical Self-Reflection Process



As school leaders gain knowledge of self through their Emergenetics Profile and critical self-reflective practices, this self-knowledge highlighted the intersection of their identities to leverage perspective-taking. Engagement with others who think and behave differently than themselves may be successfully navigated through this multiple perspective stance by adjusting CRSL strategies. Through a critical presence of self, school leaders can investigate deeply held cultural beliefs that have driven instructional

practice and their leadership actions (Khalifa, 2018; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). The convergence of school leaders' multifaceted identities, cultural values, and beliefs corroborates the tenets of critical theory, which requires the ability to critically reflect internally and externally when engaging in challenging and critical conversations to open the options for consideration of potential solutions or changes (Capper, 2019). The relationship between self and others will be central to the sustainable implementation of CRSL strategies.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the CRSL literature that has been noted as lacking depth (Khalifa et al., 2016). In a comprehensive literature review conducted in 2016, Khalifa et al. concluded that CRSL research has been limited, illuminating a need to develop the theory of CRSL further. Moreover, culturally responsive scholarship has focused more on culturally responsive teaching rather than on leadership, and lacks connections to leadership behaviors and skills required for culturally responsive leaders (Khalifa, 2018). Additionally, a gap exists between studies that have researched traditional approaches to school leadership which have focused on structural management leadership of school and not transformative leadership which requires the elimination of deficit thinking and, to humanize students and staff by integrating the cultural capital of the school community (Burns, 1978; Khalifa et al., 2016; Shields, 2003, 2004; Valencia, 2010; Yosso, 2005).

Addressing this limitation in the literature will be important to tackle the shift from a traditional leadership model of management to a model of leadership that is agile and connects the concepts of instructional leadership (Khalifa, 2018). This study also contributes to literature of CRSL strategies by emphasizing the differentiation of

leadership approaches using strategies insights of self-awareness and social awareness to understand why specific strategies for work for some and not for others. School leaders can build on this awareness to adjust strategies for so all members of the school community can connect and become engaged (Browning, 2007).

Therefore, their role in the school community to commit to critically analyzing oppressive practices and building capacity of teachers to develop inclusive curriculum is vital for productive learning outcomes for every student. The nexus of the Emergenetics Profile and CRSL strategies provided a new framework that may influence the sustainability of inclusive schools through the elimination of deficit thinking leading toward humanizing of all members of the school community (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018).

Rationale for Methodology

This multiple case study examined the nexus between culturally responsive school leadership and the Emergenetics Profile to provide insight related to what occurs through the experience of school leaders engaged in social justice work in schools. It examined whether or not change occurs in the dispositions and strategies (Khalifa, 2018) of school principals to become culturally responsive leaders as they differentiate their approach with others to develop inclusive school cultures.

TLT (Burns, 1978; Shields, 2003, 2018) is the foundational theory supporting this study. The first tenet of TLT (Shields, 2003, 2018) creating deep and equitable change will be an important construct to address the deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge frameworks. Using the conceptual model developed for this study, participants examined their knowledge frameworks of self. This critical self-reflection process caused the participants to deconstruct frameworks and reconstruct new

frameworks as they began to understand others who think and behave differently than they do. This deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge frameworks supports the action orientation of TLT to create inclusive institutions where respect and acceptance is for all.

Nature of the Research Design

Maxwell (2013) situates qualitative research within an inductive approach with an emphasis on the reflexive process. The problem of practice for this study addresses the disconnect between critical self-reflection and the implementation of CRSL strategies. Maxwell's (2013) goals of qualitative research support the direction of this study:

- Understanding the participants' experience through interpretations of events based on participants' perspectives and the integration of their beliefs, behaviors and sense-making
- Studying a small number and situations allows for individual analysis leading to the understanding of the meaning derived from actions, events, and circumstances
- The process of constructing meaning is more important than the outcomes
- Qualitative research is agile, meaning that flexibility to modify the design is appropriate based on the unanticipated phenomena

Incorporating Yin's (2018) perspective that case studies are well suited for examining phenomenon in real-world context where the boundaries of the phenomenon and the context are blurred with the goals stated above, examining the participants experiences with differentiating CRSL strategies through the Emergenetics® Profile to understand self will allow the agile sense-making required of case study methodology.

Based on the goals defined by Maxwell, the sample selection for this study was purposeful sampling, in order to capture the researcher's desire to learn, make sense, and make meaning of the phenomenon studied (Boudah, 2020; Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). Specifically, the study blended critical case sampling and convenience sampling. Boudah (2020) states critical case sampling utilizes purposeful, strategic sampling criteria that fit the purpose of the study. Using this strategy this investigator selected the participants centered around the situation and the distinct relation to the phenomena being studied (Boudah, 2020; Creswell, 2013). Thus, three urban school leaders from different regions of the United States have been identified and recruited for this multiple case study. These principals serve school districts in southern and western regions of the United States.

Understanding the individual experiences of each school leader requires triangulation of multiple data sources to ensure that the interpretation of the experiences is not from a single source of information (Maxwell, 2013). Recorded semi-structured interviews with member checking, administration of a CRSL dispositional survey, and reflective journal entries will comprise the data collection process. Triangulation of data will converge the evidence to strengthen the construct validity of this study and provide the opportunity to identify converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2018).

The reflexive process of qualitative research requires the investigator to acknowledge positionality to the study, including bias and assumptions. To address researcher bias as well as the acknowledgment of this researcher's positionality in this study researcher's field notes will be recorded and analyzed to document observations

during the interviews and method notes will be documented to support the methodological choices for this study (Boudah, 2020).

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations of this Study

The following assumptions were confirmed:

- School began as usual for the 2020-2021 school year so that this study can commence on time and conclude on time.
- Selected school leaders participating in this study will stay engaged throughout the duration of the study, despite the outside influences of COVID-19.

The following limitations were identified for this study.

- With COVID-19 still effecting the operations of all school districts, additional competing district initiatives may limit the scope of the study. In other words, school leaders may be pre-occupied with the daily management and safety of the school rather than leadership actions for social justice.
- Options for the restart of school (online only, hybrid, face-to-face) may introduce a variable that could affect the interactions of school leaders with their school community, such as the interactions via an online platform will be different from those occurring in an in-person face-to-face setting.

The following were identified as the delimitations of this study:

- The multiple case study method for this study be conducted via an online platform.
- The timeframe to initiate this study will still be viable, given the uncertainty of the school schedule due to COVID-19.

- Given the characteristics of qualitative research and the flexibility to pivot during the study will be advantageous as a result of the uncertainty that COVID-19 brings to the school operations.

Chapter Summary

It is imperative for school communities to engage in the eradication of oppressive practices that support the dominant culture for students of historically marginalized communities to have equal access, academic success and be honored for who they are through their cultural and societal identities. School leaders must become critically reflective as they understand their own self-identity to have insight and understanding of the identity of another. School leaders are compelled to become culturally responsive and transformative through the development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will provide them a pathway toward building learning organizations that have inclusive and equitable practices at their core.

Furthermore, school leaders who are culturally responsive must employ differentiated strategies to transform the commitment of their school communities to sustain the inquiry into dismantling oppressive attitudes and practices. How CRSL strategies are implemented and conveyed will depend on the school leader's ability to understand how they can differentiate their communication so that their message will resonate with others. The call for school leaders to become culturally responsive is critical to ensure socially just and equitable schools. Applying the principles from the CPED Dissertation in Practice framework, Chapter 2 will connect a literature review with the problem of practice by interlacing the research of CRSL and TLT through the lens of critical self-reflection. The confluence of these concepts and theories will illuminate the

disconnect between successful and unsuccessful implementation of CRSL strategies. Furthermore, the awareness of self and others in terms of preferred ways to think, learn, behave and problem solving may provide insight into strategies for school leaders to leverage cultural and social influences to encourage school communities to take actions toward more socially just and equitable schools.

Definition of Key Terminology

Cultural Capital: General knowledge and dispositions and skills passed from one generation to another (Yosso, 2005)

Emergenetics® Profile: a self-reporting psychometric instrument that measures three behavioral attributes and four thinking attributes

Funds of Knowledge: Historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual help, individual functioning, and well-being (Moll et al., 1992)

Humanizing: The ability to accept the Indigenous identities of others (Khalifa, 2018)

Self-Efficacy: A cognitive process in which people construct beliefs about their capacity to perform at a given level of attainment (Bandura, 1993)

Social Capital: Social relationships within groups that have a shared social identity (Yosso, 2005)

Socio-analytic Theory: A theory that posits people develop certain preferences that can be seen and heard allowing one to reflect upon self (D. Hogan et al., In press)

Transformative Leadership Theory: A theory informed by critical theory to decry the inequities in the status quo and seek ways to rectify them (Shields, 2018)

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction and Background

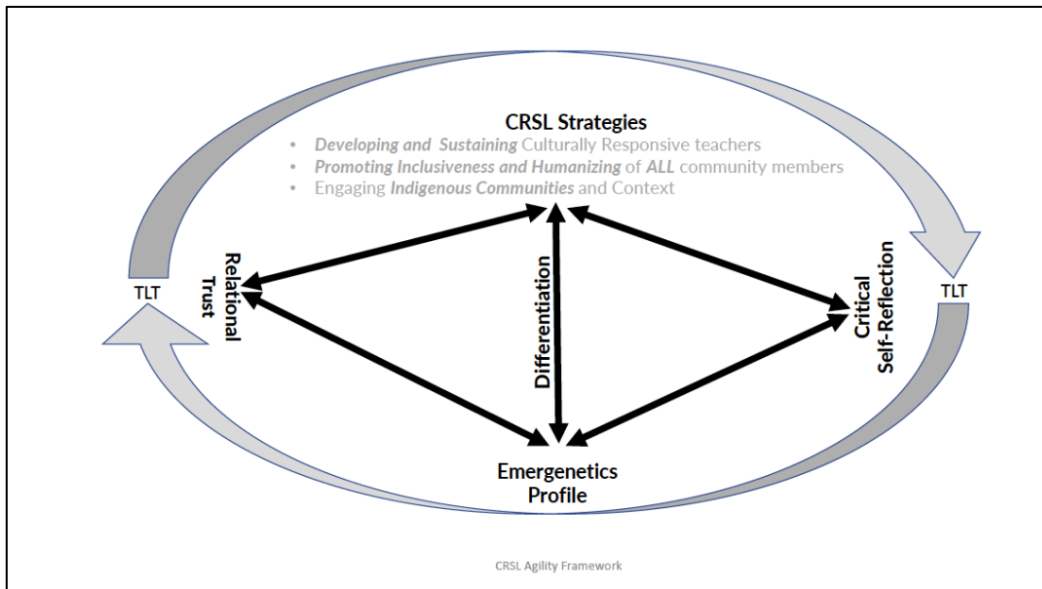
Leveraging the school leader's role as the second most important influence on student success (Leithwood et al., 2004), will be central to addressing the call to action for school leaders to meet the demand of changing demographics within school communities. This demographic change puts pressure on existing cultures, norms, and beliefs. As culturally responsive school leaders leverage this influential role to advance inclusive and equitable practices for every student and promote sustainable change through CRSL strategies is paramount. This call necessitates the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that reflect culturally responsive practices. This begins with critical self-reflection through the examination of who we are as school leaders. Understanding self through a lens of multiple identities of culture, gender, family, community, and ethnicity is central to understanding others. Critical self-reflection is the gateway for culturally responsive school leaders to build relationships of interconnectedness and interdependence to humanize all school community members. This examination through critical self-reflected practices requires the incorporation of multiple identities of culture, gender, family, community, and ethnicity (Brown, 2004; Cooper, 2009; Furman, 2012; Khalifa et al., 2016). The practice of critical self-reflection can influence the development of relational trust by understanding another's perspectives

leading to the humanization all school community members (Dantley, 2005; Miller et al., 2011). Humanizing is to acknowledge and accept historically marginalized students' and community members through their Indigenous identities as their perspectives are welcomed (Khalifa 2018). The CPED (2020) dissertation in practice framework calls for a critical lens of inquiry to gather and analyze literature. The CPED (2020) framework has been applied to this literature review and to emphasize practical research. This literature review takes a critical look at the foundational elements that support the *CRSL Agility Framework* (see Figure 4), with an emphasis on a portion of that framework, *CRSL Agility-Promoting Inclusiveness and Humanizing to Disrupt Deficit Thinking* (see Figure 5) which served as the focus for this study. This literature review begins with an examination of the foundational leadership theory, Transformative Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978; Shields, 2003, 2004, 2018) that supports the CRSL framework. Next, I will review the literature on deficit thinking and its connections to TLT. Then, I will investigate the literature on critical self-reflection, a CRSL behavior, including the deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge frameworks from TLT. Finally, I connect the Emergenetics Profile and impact on deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge frameworks.

The outer circle of *CRSL Agility Framework* holds the elements of this model intact through a dynamic and interconnected relationship of CRSL, critical self-reflection, relational trust and, the Emergenetics® Profile. This dynamic relationship supports the differentiation of CRSL strategies. Embedded in the *CRSL Agility Framework* is a

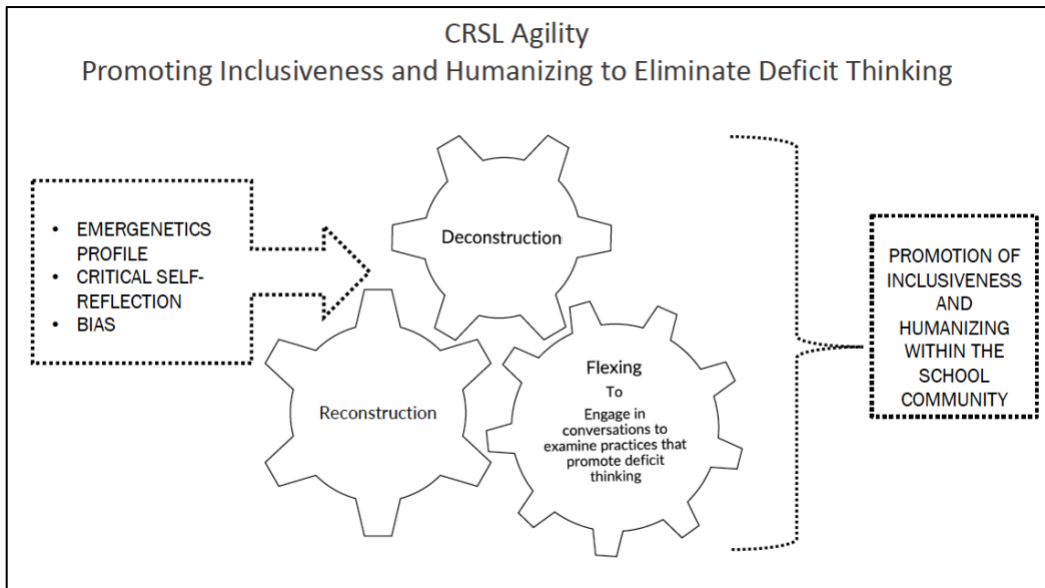
reciprocal action-oriented approach for critical self-reflection and building relational trust. to leverage cultural capital to influence equitable practices (Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018; Valencia, 2010).

Figure 4
CRSL Agility Framework



This literature review concentrates on a portion of the *CRSL Agility Framework*, promoting inclusiveness and humanizing through critically self-reflection using the Emergenetics Profile as a lens to differentiate approaches to deconstruct and reconstruct mental models or knowledge frameworks (see Figure 5) to differentiate approaches that engage all.

Figure 5
Promoting Inclusiveness and Humanizing



Note: This portion of the CRSL Agility Framework was informed from the work of Khalifa (2016, 2018), Shields (2014, 2018) and Emergenetics (Browning, 1999)

The key search terms that guided this literature review were: (a) culturally responsive school leadership; (b) transformative leadership theory; (c) social justice; (d) social capital; (e) cultural capital; (f) relational trust; (g) critical self-reflection; (h) self-awareness; (i) self-efficacy; (j) collective efficacy.

Transformative Leadership Theory

The origins of transformative leadership was influenced by several leadership theories such as social justice leadership (Capper et al., 2006; Freire, 2014; Theoharis, 2007), transforming leadership (Burns, 1978) and, critical race theory (Capper, 2015). The combination of the social justice orientation and transforming leadership are embedded in Transformative Leadership Theory and examines the power relationship (Burns, 1978; Paulienè, 2012; Shields, 2003, 2004) present within the educational

systems. It calls for activism from school leaders to address oppressive practices and policies towards historically marginalized student populations (Capper et al., 2006; Shields, 2004; Theoharis, 2007). Critical Race Theory emphasizes this examination of power and relationships (Capper, 2019). Capper (2019) advocates examining the relationship to power by asking the following questions: who holds it, who does not, and how the intersectionality of identities influence this relationship to power. The answers to these questions are necessary to address equitable changes that will advance student achievement for all (Capper, 2019). According to Burns (1978), the power relationship in transforming leadership is to empower its followers to learn and to take action and, influence to change for liberty, social justice, and equality (Burns, 1978).

Burns (1978) introduced the theory of transforming leadership as leadership that focuses on the collective group's motivation to seek higher goals such as liberty, justice, and equality. Transforming leadership promotes leaders to be agents of change with the end goal of a higher moral purpose (Burns, 1978). This interdependent relationship between power and leadership influences purpose, relationships, and resources (Burns, 1978; Einstein & Humphreys, 2001; Paulienè, 2012). According to Burns (1978), a leader's role is as a learner while engaging change to meet a higher moral purpose. Transformative leadership takes moral courage. Shields (2018) defines moral courage as “courageous action and engagement” (p. 108) and argues that moral courage is necessary to be an agent of change as a school leader.

Carolyn Shields (2018) defines transformative leadership as a theory of action to increase student achievement and develop inclusivity for all marginalized students. She states that equitable schools better prepare students for a democratic society that benefit

all (Shields, 2018). Transformative leaders engage in deep inquiry to move past school leadership's structural practices, seeking out the practices and policies that contribute to a culture that obstructs access for marginalized groups (Burns, 1978; Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018, 2020). Moving beyond the surface level of structural leadership practices (those that emphasize management tasks), transformative school leaders interrogate their actions, beliefs, assumptions, biases, and expectations associated with unjust practices and policies (Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016; Shields, 2004, 2018).

Shields (2018, 2020) has identified eight tenets school leaders need to address to transform an organization's culture. The eight tenets (Shields, 2018) are;

1. Deep and equitable change
2. Deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge frameworks in response to inequities
3. Address the inequitable distribution of power
4. Focus on the individual and the collective good
5. Focus on democracy and justice
6. Create global awareness through interconnectedness and interdependence
7. Critique with promise
8. Exhibit moral courage

These eight tenets focus on activism with school leaders as a change agents to challenge the status quo through moral courage (Shields, 2018).

Transformative leadership emphasizes establishing equitable and inclusive education for all students and is a core element of social justice leadership (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Shields, 2003, 2018). According to DeMatthews et al. (2014), the

investigation of exclusionary practices toward historically marginalized groups requires school leaders to possess the ability to communicate a heightened awareness to build meaning and elevate the ownership of the school community. As transformative leadership continues to evolve, Theoharis (2007) identified countervailing pressures experienced by school leaders who lead through a social justice lens. He described these pressures as the external influences of situations, people, and issues that are resistant to this work. Theoharis (2007) asserted, “Effective principals are the change agents, the champions of the school vision, and the key figures in the setting and maintaining the school tone.” (p.10). In this role of change agent and champion of the school vision, he stipulated that the countervailing pressure principals face deal with elimination of deficit policies that marginalized differences such as race, gender, disability, due to the lack of leadership preparation to address issues of racism, privilege, and closing the achievement gap (Theoharis, 2007). Therefore, the skills and foundational knowledge to have the awareness to lead other people through this journey will be important (Khalifa et al., 2016; Theoharis, 2007, 2008).

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

Culturally responsive school leaders embrace the epistemological foundation of CRT and TLT as they are called to action to address the oppressive systemic policies and practices that dominate the American school system (Capper et al., 2006; Khalifa et al., 2016; Shields, 2003; Theoharis, 2007). According to Khalifa (2018), three leadership principles guide CRSL:

1. It is necessary
2. Must be consistently promoted by school leaders

3. Is characterized by a core set of unique leadership behaviors:
 - a. Being critically reflective
 - b. Developing and substantiating culturally responsive teachers and curriculum
 - c. Promoting inclusive, anti-oppressive school context
4. Engages students' Indigenous community context

In a literature review conducted by Khalifa et al. (2016), the CRSL themes identified were critical self-awareness, culturally responsive curriculum and teacher preparation, inclusive environments, and engagement in the community context. They concluded through this analysis that CRSL requires further and deeper research, emphasizing the implications for principal preparation programs to ensure future school leaders' skills and strategies to be successful CRSL leaders (Khalifa et al., 2016). Khalifa (2018 p.13) has identified four key behaviors for culturally responsive school leaders to demonstrate:

- Engage in critical self-reflection to understand your history, identity, and epistemological bias.
- Developing and sustainable culturally responsive teachers and curriculum to take collective responsibility and to access community-based knowledge.
- Promotion of inclusiveness to humanize students and allowing for their individualized identities.
- Engaging in students' Indigenous community context to capitalize on funds of knowledge and social capital.

CRSL leaders will need to be skilled in supporting staff to examine school curriculum to ensure it is accessible to all students and to deconstruct knowledge frameworks that lead to deficit thinking practices. According to Minkos et al. (2017),

there are eight practices for culturally responsive leaders to engage with an equity lens, beginning with a focus on honoring students' culture and context. CRSL leaders' work is systems work, where CRSL leaders need to address the organization's cultural competence and ensure the preparation of students for global citizenship. By developing a welcoming and inclusive learning environment, students can develop their cultural and community context through social interactions with one another (Minkos et al., 2017). CRSL leaders can support these inclusive environments through professional development of their teaching staffs to recognize student diversity as an asset (Minkos et al., 2017).

Additionally, Minkos et al. (2017) stated that effective CRSL leaders work to confront bias and deficit thinking by identifying collective values established by the school community, including the development of fair student behavioral practices. The sixth tenet of TLT is interconnectedness is grounded in the perspective that human beings are social beings (Shields, 2018). Interconnectedness encourages inclusive spaces that welcome all identities and voices within the community leading to global awareness and interdependence as human beings (Dantley, 2005; Khalifa et al., 2016; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018).

In a study conducted by Mayfield and Garrison (2015), culturally responsive practices were examined as part of school reform. They stated that the promotion of equity was key to culturally responsive practices to eliminate racial injustices (Mayfield et al., 2015). The collective share beliefs of the staff drove culturally responsive pedagogy and the learning environment. Their findings concluded that culturally responsive leaders had a persistent emphasis on identifying and honoring cultural

differences, where parent community engagement was an integral part of the culture (Mayfield et al., 2015). Liou et al. (2017), suggested CRSL leaders need to be skilled in systems thinking, asset-focused and, develop collaborative, caring interpersonal relationships with the school community. Additionally, they stated that actualizing equity practices require the ability to give voice to empower students, teachers, and parents as school leaders promote the interrogation of racial injustice within the school's current practices (Liou et al., 2017).

The results of a study conducted by Walker (2011) from ten elementary teacher interviews indicated the need for teachers to develop cultural competence to be culturally responsive teachers who will develop curriculum that addresses colorblindness and deficit thinking (Valencia, 2010) to incorporate students' cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005).. Shields (2004) states that school leaders will need to facilitate dialogues that examine differences of race, social status, culture and, language. These courageous moral dialogues (Shields, 2004) must be inclusive, allow for democratic participation and empowerment. School leaders need to teach the participatory skills to necessary to engage in these moral dialogues to maintain interconnectedness within the school community as they disrupt deficit thinking (Shields, 2004).

Eliminating Deficit Thinking

Transformative leadership emphasizes establishing equitable and inclusive education for all students and is a core element of social justice leadership (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Shields, 2003, 2018). According to DeMatthews et al. (2014), the investigation of exclusionary practices toward historically marginalized groups requires school leaders to possess the ability to communicate a heightened awareness to build

meaning and elevate the ownership of the school community. The concept of deficit thinking can be traced to the work of scholars during the 1960s who argued against the belief that people of color and in poverty were not excelling according to the norms established by the dominant culture because of their own circumstances (Valencia, 2010). Deficit thinking at its basic level is the blaming of the victim (Valencia, 2010). Moreover, the concept of deficit thinking is a socially constructed concept defined by the dominant culture. The beliefs that drive deficit thinking originated from those who believe that people of color and who live in poverty created their circumstances. Therefore, the dominant culture takes no responsibility for these circumstances and is not at fault. Terms that have been used to help perpetuate the concept of deficit thinking in education are culturally disadvantaged, apathetic, unmotivated or lack motivation, family, and home backgrounds where education is not valued and, cognitive limitations due to genetic predispositions (Valencia, 2010).

Deficit thinking is grounded in endogenous theory, meaning there is an internal cause and supports the ethnocentric perception that the right system of beliefs and standards support the dominant culture (Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Valencia, 2010). Valencia (2010) refers to six characteristics of deficit thinking; blaming the victim or fixing the student, oppression through compulsory ignorance laws and school segregation, pseudoscience; researchers with a negative bias regarding people of color provide empirical data to persuade and convert others toward their message, temporal changes; the connections to the societal norms at the time, educability; the creation of prescriptive model to address the needs of students of color, heterodoxy; reflections of the dominant culture who portrays the correct norms.

Deficit thinking has been connected to several theoretical frameworks, such as Eugenics and Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Capper, 2019; Valencia, 2010). Eugenics supports the belief that people who are not white do not have the genetic disposition for intelligence. CRT provides the avenue to critically investigate and question policies and practices of power, oppression and, inequities in the educational system. Historically educational systems have built policy and practice based on deficit thinking and disguised this belief in educational reforms that are advertised to enhance or establish more equitable practices.

Reform models developed to address these gaps in the educational system may act as gatekeepers, thus widening the gap of inequity through the lens of deficit thinking (Capper, 2019; Mayfield et.al, 2015). For example, reactionary or intervention programs for students who have not met the required levels of achievement established by the dominant culture require students to leave the general education classroom for these intervention services, thus limiting the access to the general education curriculum. These intervention services often include academic standards that are less rigorous than those established for the general education classroom (Capper, 2019; Mayfield et al, 2015).

More telling is how economics widen the gap of inequity in the education system. Consider school finance laws, much of school finance is based on local property taxes, therefore those who own property also own the right to make decisions regarding curriculum, scheduling, enrichment for the schools in which their child attends. Added to that, if the majority of taxpayers are white property owners, this would account for the disparity of access for students of color regarding AP and Honors curriculum, enrichment activities offered outside of the school day and, funding allotments for remedial courses.

Moreover, Critical Race Theory (CRT) supports the six characteristics from Valencia as its tenets require seeking the counter-narrative of deficit thinking. For example, oppression through compulsory attendance laws and school segregation can be linked to the CRT tenet of whiteness as property (Capper, 2019). Another tenet of CRT is interest convergence, which is defined as gains toward racial equity only occur if whites also benefit (Capper, 2019). Another example is the idea that high stakes testing is good for all assuages the guilt felt by the dominant culture and conveys that holding high expectations for learning will benefit the entire community.

Culturally responsive practices support high expectations for all by leveraging students' cultural backgrounds through connection to the content and context of the curriculum thus allowing access to all curricular opportunities (Lopez, 2016; Walker, 2011). Nelson and Guerra (2014) and Lopez (2016) asserted teachers need to understand the prior knowledge students bring to school through the concept of funds of knowledge, meaning that which learned through the lived experiences of home and community culture. Additionally, culturally responsive practices ensure the use of multiple measures for assessment and will veer from a single assessment data point such as state standardized assessments that perpetuate the perspective of achieving the academic standard by the dominant culture (Lopez, 2016; Walker, 2011).

Nelson & Guerra (2014) found when measuring teachers' beliefs and perceptions of deficit thinking, teachers were unaware of their engagement in deficit thinking. Furthermore, educators who had cultural knowledge did not utilize this knowledge in their practice, possibly due to state and district requirements around achievement (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Lopez (2016) stated teachers who held beliefs around the importance of

cultural knowledge, funds of knowledge, and the use of formative assessments were positively related to an increase in student achievement. Walker (2014) maintains teachers who did possess cultural competence did engage in deficit thinking and colorblindness and would benefit from ongoing professional development to examine their own biases, prejudices and, connect to the communities they serve (p. 593).

In a study by Wagstaff and Fusarelli (1999), they assert the single most important factor in historically marginalized students' academic achievement is the leader's expectation for the elimination of deficit thinking. This supports both Khalifa and Shields stance on the rejection of deficit thinking as a critical action for school leaders to take. TLT necessitates is the interrogation of deficit thinking and its impact on the majoritarian developed curriculum (Capper, 2019; Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018). Eliminating deficit thinking begins with Shields' (2018) second tenet, changing knowledge frameworks. According to Shields (2018), knowledge frameworks are the constructs or mental models one holds to makes sense of the world around them.. Since deficit thinking promotes the dehumanizing of students within the system, it ignores the social and cultural capital that historically marginalized students bring to school as valuable for academic success. This lack of recognition of social and cultural capital of students encourages oppressive practices such as academic tracking for remediation, lower expectations and curriculum that lacks rigor (Capper, 2019). Yosso (2005) maintains that to deny cultural wealth is to perpetuate deficit thinking. She defines cultural wealth as the accumulation of specific knowledge, skills, and abilities. Furthermore, she identifies several sources of cultural wealth, such as community history, navigating the community's social network, and the ability to speak several languages.

Democratic dialogue fosters engagement of the school community to challenge and change knowledge frameworks leads to deep and equitable change (Shields, 2018). This democratic dialogue calls for school leaders to have the ability to clearly articulate how and what societal influences drive the mental models that influence their practices. This democratic dialogue may influence school leaders' belief systems and engage school leaders to address oppressive policies and practices within the educational system. This shift in mental models and attitude from a critical self-reflective position supports Freire's concept of conscientization (Lloyd, 1972) through the awareness of the societal influences that inform who we are as individuals.

In a study conducted by Mayfield et al. (2015), when school leaders leveraged cultural wealth, members of the school community felt empowered. This empowerment led to shared beliefs within the school community, and the school leaders were able to begin the process of dismantling inequitable practices. This empowerment of historically marginalized populations is what Freire refers to as the struggle to be free of oppression and restore humanism to the oppressed (Freire, 2014).

To further explore Freire's focus on restoring humanism, the next section on CRSL will be focused on promotion of inclusiveness to humanize students by welcoming their individualized identities. Humanizing students by acknowledging, accepting, and welcoming Indigenous identities are elevated through the mechanisms of empathy and are the responsibility of all culturally responsive school leaders to promote (Khalifa, 2018).

Promoting Inclusiveness and Humanizing

The inclusivity of welcoming and supporting all Indigenous identities advances opportunities to elicit the cultural wealth from students to transform the curriculum, practices, and policies that necessitate an anti-oppressive stance (Capper, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Shields, 2018, 2020; Yosso, 2005). By understanding self and others, school leaders can begin to leverage what Khalifa (2018) calls identity confluence, the understanding of self through your history and bias. School leaders can leverage identity confluence and empathy to recognize and celebrate the differences in the behaviors of others and their own identity (Khalifa, 2018). The acceptance and celebration of all Indigenous identities is imperative. Integrating the concept of identity confluence with cultural wealth includes recognition of assets such as linguistic capital, (speaking more than one language), familial capital and social capital, (where communities come together to provide resources and support) dispels the idea that people of color do not possess the ability for social mobility (Capper, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Shields, 2018, 2020; Yosso, 2005). Providing historically marginalized students with opportunities to leverage these assets accentuates the strengths and contributions Indigenous identities bring to school and promotes humanizing.

Promoting inclusiveness through CRSL is grounded in social justice work by focusing on the needs of historically marginalized students and the barriers that exist within the educational systems. According to Khalifa et al. (2016) school leaders must understand the multicultural context of their school communities to initiate welcoming spaces that endorse authentic care and opportunities for academic success. Through an

understanding of the community context where schools are in their located, CRSL considers the resources and structures necessary to meet of its students (Khalifa, et al., 2016; Marshall et al., 2018). For example, students whose parents are migrant workers may not be able to meet the school's expectations for parental involvement, thus are subject to deficit thinking and excluded from opportunities to participate. Therefore, policies that promote exclusion must be examined such as dress codes, use of language considered slang, expectations for parental involvement and, curriculum that endorses a majoritarian perspective. Through this examination of policy and practices, CRSL leaders begin to reconstruct knowledge frameworks for new practices that initiate community relationships built on relational trust. This begins with engagement in critical self-reflection to elevate inequitable practices within their schools to elevate critical consciousness of others for equitable change. Next, an analysis of the literature on critical self-reflection will frame key actions for the deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge frameworks to promote humanizing and inclusiveness.

Critical Self-Reflection

Transformative leadership begins with critical self-reflection. Freire (2014) connects critical self-reflection through conscientization as the need to critically reflect and take action. Furthermore, he expands conscientization as a process to critically reflect on the relationships between people and the community. Conscientization is one way to support this reconstruction of new mental models. According to Lloyd (1972), Freire defines conscientization as a reflection process to become aware of society's inconsistencies regarding oppressed communities. Conscientization brings to light the assumptions and bias toward those being oppressed by providing a process to analyze the

social context of the changes and attitudes of self for the improvement for all (Lloyd, 1972). Conscientization is action-oriented regarding the change to societal structures, including power structures (Lloyd, 1972) for the common good.

Transformative leaders must be willing to confront all who are complicit within the system, including themselves. Confronting all who are complicit within the system begins by recognizing and taking responsibility for bias, deficit thinking, and participation in unjust practices within the school (Khalifa, 2018). Self-confrontation opens thinking and begins to change one's knowledge frameworks through the deconstruction and reconstruction process (Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018).

According to Khalifa (2018), critical self-reflection is a iterative process that focuses on one's background and the school context one is working within to identify their role in oppressive actions so that anti-oppressive actions can be taken. Culturally responsive school leaders must examine their values, beliefs, and life experiences through the lens of power, privilege, and oppression. This critical view provides insight into the underpinnings of attitudes held, behaviors enacted, and decisions made. Khalifa (2018) stated that the CRSL behavior of critical self-reflection calls for school leaders to identify and have the humility to articulate their background and privilege. Through this iterative and vulnerable process, school leaders continue to shape and change their understanding of self. Moreover, Khalifa (2018) stipulates that without critical self-reflection, a neutral stance by the leader silences voices, and perpetuates oppressive practices. This neutral stance reinforces the barrier to address oppressive practices that affect marginalized students.

Critical self-reflection can provide a mechanism for school leaders to begin to tackle their biases and actions of deficit thinking within the school community context where they lead (Theoharis, 2007). As school leaders unpack their understanding of the school community context, in other words deconstruct this knowledge framework, they can identify and develop new leadership practices. This knowledge framework reconstruction influences the promotion of anti-oppressive actions to eliminate deficit thinking and move toward promoting inclusiveness of differences. Mental models of oppression such as deficit thinking and a majoritarian developed curriculum call for leaders to examine their own beliefs, attitudes, and actions to critically analyze their roles in these models (Capper, 2019; Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018).

Transformative leaders build critical consciousness when they engage in critical self-reflection to challenge their thinking (Capper et al., 2006). This interrogation of belief systems illuminates the power structures that drive curriculum and pedagogical practices. Additionally, Capper et al. (2006)-stipulates school leaders need to have the organizational knowledge and skills to network people by building relationships with those who are unwilling to engage in this work while navigating and leveraging data analysis to build the case for equitable practices.

According to Furman (2012), leaders who practice social justice leadership engage in reflection to examine their identities to gain clarity of their assumptions and bias through their cultural backgrounds. This critical self-reflection requires mindsets and attitudes to be analyzed and challenged to reconstruct new mental models or mindsets (Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018). The formation of a social justice identity through critical self-reflection for school leaders is continuous and evolves in a non-linear manner

(Capper, 2015). The school leader's multi-dimensional identity directly influences the implementation of leadership practices as it informs the school leader's evolving identity (Capper, 2015). This cyclical formation of identity begins with the ability to engage in critical self-reflective practices.

Developing self-awareness through the examination of our socially constructed identities is a crucial first step for school leaders. Critical self-reflection heightens school leaders' awareness of unconscious bias and the influence of unconscious bias on any decision-making processes that policies deny opportunities for historically marginalized students (Brown, 2004; Cooper, 2009; Dantley, 2005). Engaging in critical self-reflective practices promotes the humanization of historically marginalized populations leading school leaders to reject bias and gain clarity regarding their cultural identities (Cooper, 2009).

Miller et al. (2011) synthesized key themes from Freire to identify dispositions and skills for educational leaders to consider as they navigate social justice leadership, they are; (a) humility to be vulnerable; (b) faith and confidence in other to be honest about their realities; (c) hope in the possibilities for growth and achievement; (d) critical thinking to seek change of oppressive structures; (e) solidarity for interconnectedness. Dantley (2005) argued that school leaders who engage in critical self-reflection develop spiritual selves who "read the world" (p. 660) to make meaning of the educational experiences of the school community. The spiritual sense of school leaders focuses on the marginalization of society as a whole and the systems that perpetuate racism, sexism, and classism (Dantley, 2005).

Pauliené (2012) posited that taking action for the common good cannot be accomplished without considering the development of the leader's cultural beliefs derived through social constructs. In addition, Pauliené (2012) suggested that integrating intercultural competence with transformative leadership supports a leader's ability to flex their preferred interpersonal communication and behavior to leverage perspective and understand one another.

Brown (2004) stated that the "purposes of critical self-reflection are to externalize and investigate power relationships and to uncover hegemonic assumptions" (p 84). According to Brown (2004), to engage in critical self-reflection is to deeply examine both personal and professional assumptions, beliefs, and values, including the ethical and moral implications of those assumptions, beliefs, and values and their relationship to the dominant culture. This critical self-reflective examination through a personal and professional perspective requires the initiation of actions to transform oneself to support socially just leadership practices (Brown, 2004; Dantley, 2005; Furman, 2012).

Starratt (1991; 2011) also calls for educational leaders to engage in critical reflection through what he calls the ethic of critique, a way to examine assumptions of power relations and their influences on injustices and the dehumanizing of students. Moreover, Starratt (2011) suggested there are four dispositions for transformative leaders:

1. The identification and development of supports for marginalized student groups.
2. Identify and adjust cultural hegemony by confronting structures that advantage some and disadvantaged.
3. Develop a democratic school culture which allows all to be heard.

4. Develop accessible, relevant curriculum to experience belonging and a connection to the world.

These dispositions are critical to fulfilling what Starratt (2011) advocated as the three purposes of education; the preparation of students to participate in a democratic society, find employment or engage in continued education and continue to grow as a human.

To understand the interdependent relationship of power and leadership influences, we must begin with internal reflection of self from our positionality to account for cultural values and beliefs that influence how we lead (Khalifa, 2018). The influence intercultural competence has on leadership behavior exposes individual and collective beliefs of the school community. To promote inclusiveness and humanizing, CRSL leaders will need to understand the influence of intercultural competence to deconstruct deficit thinking beliefs and practices.

Pauliené (2012) recommends that leadership development emphasizes the skills of deep listening and observation in order for the leader to compare and adjust their behaviors when cultural differences in attitudes arise with those they are leading. Moral courage is augmented through critical reflective practices to understand self so school leaders can be transparent, vulnerable, and provide clarity as their actions challenge the status quo. These action-oriented tenets provide school leaders with a reflective lens to analyze and identify injustices within the educational system and take an anti-oppressive stance for rectification. Furthermore, the eight tenets from Shields (2018) compel school leaders to engage in deep reflective practices to recognize one's behavior and role within an oppressive educational system before influencing others' behaviors. The introspection of self as a leader promoted by Pauliené (2012) and Starrett (1991; 2011) to examine

power relationships as recommended by Burns (1978) and correlates with Freire's concept of conscientization.

In a comparative case study (Cooper, 2009) of three school leaders and their ability to engage in self-reflection to address the cultural division within their communities concluded that none of the three principals were equipped to address the cultural division within their school communities. While they did acknowledge that divisions of inequality existed, they did not take action to change it. Moreover, the three principals had not engaged in any self-reflection to address their own bias and prejudice. Furthermore, each principal did feel they were addressing equity practices through culturally responsive instruction; however, the efforts were only at the surface level and did not address the deep social divisions within their respective schools. Specially, one principal's lack of actions contributed to colorblindness within the school community. Another principal classified her racial differences and engaged in deficit thinking, causing a misalignment with her equity stance; in other words, she did not walk the talk of equity practices. This principal also demonstrated cultural bias toward other groups within her community and was unaware of her own biases.

Capper (2019) identified theoretical links between identity formation and development from an organizational stance and an individual stance toward social justice. An individual investigates identity through a multi-dimension frame (Capper, 2015, 2019) by investigating identities of race, gender, ability, and language and how these identities intersect with one another. Cornel West (1999) maintains that an individual's identity supports community development as it connects to the community through introspection of self and the influence of self on the community. Using West's (1999)

concept of the influence of an individual's identity on the community supports the understanding that our brains learn through a social process and helps us understand how our deeply rooted beliefs and values developed as we grow to adulthood (Capper, 2019). Capper's (2015) theory regarding the development and intersection of the school leader's identity and the organizational identity underscores the importance of school leaders' engagement in a critically reflective position to gain clarity regarding who they are and what they stand for, and how they lead. Engaging in critical self-reflection situates school leaders to question, interrogate and develop new constructs about race and culture.

West (1999) supports reflective examination through what he calls prophetic pragmatism, which he defines as a method to be self-critical and self-corrective of the democratic process. Understanding the intersection of individuals' multiple identities such as race, economics, gender, and sexuality is important to ensure all individuals have opportunities to fulfill their potential (West, 1999). Dantley (2005) also supports self-critique, more importantly he emphasized that self-correction is the morally courageous action of school leaders to advance socially just practices in schools. Self-interrogation or critical self-reflection is foundational to enact change within the current educational system and culture (Liou & Hermanns, 2017). Brown (2004) maintains that the use of reflective journaling connects the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of transformative leaders. These reflective journals provide a space for adults to develop awareness of self by critiquing their thoughts, feelings, and actions related to the concepts of transformative leadership (Brown, 2004).

Reflective journals provide the space for counter-narratives and also reinforce critical self-reflection practices. Counter-narratives are a key tenet of CRT (Capper,

2019; Ladson-Billings, 1998). According to Ladson-Billings (1998), counter-narratives allow an individual to convey their reality through story. Ladson-Billings (1998) describes these counter-narratives as socially constructed view of the world from multiple lenses of an individual's experience to provide a perspective not held by the majority. Furthermore, Capper (2019) states that the importance of counter-narratives is to counter the majoritarian narrative of white privilege, illuminate micro-aggressions, and the experiences of marginalized groups navigating systemic racism. Counter-narratives address the perpetual systemic racial behaviors and beliefs of colorblindness and deficit thinking. Colorblindness and deficit thinking bolster the power of white privilege within educational systems to decide and direct the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to continue the majoritarian narrative of white privilege (Capper, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

In addition to reflective journals, Brown (2004) suggests using cultural autobiographies and reflective journals to support critical self-reflection practices to engage school leaders in self-reflective practices. Writing cultural autobiographies provides a frame for school leaders to examine their ethnic heritage, experience with education, and identified biases. Additionally, Brown (2004) states that reflective journaling affords a place and space for school leaders to engage in self-analysis and transformative learning experiences. Furman (2012) indicates that reflective journals support personal development for school leaders toward culturally competent leadership. Reflection journals are a strategy to gain self-knowledge of the interactions that may be contributing to the silencing of historically marginalized populations (2012). Reflective journals elevate Freire's conscientization concept (Lloyd, 1972) that requires individuals

to surface self-awareness and awareness of historically marginalized populations (Lloyd, 1972; Miller et al., 2011). The power of these insights school leaders gain from critical self-reflection must be shared with the school community and builds or enhances relational trust within the organization. In the next section exploration of the Emergenetics® Profile may provide considerations for school leaders to differentiate the ways to share their insights about self.

The Emergenetics® Profile

The Emergenetics Profile will serve as a tool to support the critical self-reflection process for this study. Several psychometric tools were considered for this study such as DiSC, Insights Discovery, and Meyers Briggs Types Inventory (MBTI). All four of these psychometric tools measure preferences in thinking and behaving. However, how and what they measure is slightly different. For example, Insights Discovery and MBTI were developed from Jungian psychology and measure personality preferences in the four personality types from Jung, extroversion/introversion, sensing/intuitive perception, thinking/feeling judgement and judgement and perception (insights.com, n.d.; meyersbriggs.com, n.d.). Insights uses a 25 item questionnaire pairing adjectives that participants score most to least like them (insights.com, n.d.). The MBTI has a 100 item assessment using pairs of statements where participants select the statement that is most representative of them (meyersbriggs.com, n.d.). Both Insights and MBTI were developed for use in the workforce.

Emergenetics and DiSC measure thinking and behavioral preferences (disc.com, n.d.; emergentics.com, n.d.). DiSC was developed using the four primary emotions and behavioral responses from William Moulton Marston's work (disc.com, n.d.).

Emergenetics measures four thinking attributes of Analytical, Structural, Social, Conceptual and three behavioral attributes of Expressiveness, Assertiveness, and Flexibility. DiSC measures the tendencies or patterns of behavior, while Emergenetics measures how individuals prefer to think and behave and how the intensity of these preferences compare to the population-at-large (disc.com, n.d.; emergenetics.com, n.d.). DiSC uses a 24 item questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale and Emergenetics uses a 100-item questionnaire with a 7-point Likert scale. DiSC was developed for the workforce and Emergenetics was developed for education (disc.com, n.d.; emergenetics.com, n.d.). The following chart provides the comparison of these four instruments.

Table 1
Comparison of Psychometric Instruments

Instrument	Developed For	Foundational Theory	Measures	Assessment Type
DiSC https://www.discprofile.com/	Workforce	William Moulton Marston identified what he called four "primary emotions" and associated behavioral responses, which today we know as Dominance (D), Influence (I), Steadiness (S), and Conscientiousness (C).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures dimensions of personality. It does not measure intelligence, aptitude, mental health, or values. Measures tendencies and preferences, or patterns of behavior. 	24 questions 5-point scale Likert
Emergenetics Profile https://emergenetics.com/	Education	Socioanalytic Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures how a person's preferences to think and behave through 4 Thinking and 3 Behavioral Attributes Measures the intensity of those preferences compares to the population at large 	100 items 7-point Likert scale
Insights https://insights.com/	Workforce	Jungian Psychology Sensing/Intuitive Perception Thinking/Feeling Judgement Judgement/Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures personality preferences and associated behaviors 	25 items Pairs of adjectives to score most to least
MTBI https://www.themysbriggs.com/en-US	Workforce	Jungian Psychology Extroversion/Introversion Sensing/Intuitive Perception Thinking/Feeling Judgement Judgement/Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personality Preferences 	100 items of two statements- selected of the best statement

The Emergenetics Profile was selected for this study for the following reasons:

- It was the only one that was developed for education.

- It was developed based on Socioanalytic Theory which aligns with the focus for reflective practice through the understanding of self and others through social interactions.
- It separates thinking and behavioral preferences providing insights and nuances for individual results.
- It measures the intensity of an individual's preferences offering additional self-awareness.

The Emergenetics Profile was developed from the Emergenetics theory that proposes humans have a combination of genetic tendencies to think and act in certain ways that have been influenced through socialization (Browning, 2009). Emergenetics theory is influenced by Socioanalytic theory that stipulates human beings inherently engage in social interactions (Hogan & Blicke, 2013; Hogan & Roberts, 2004). Socioanalytic theory states that humans are motivated by two concepts: (a) getting ahead by gaining status and power over others; (b) getting along by feeling accepted and supported by the group they belong to (Hogan & Blicke, 2013, Hogan & Roberts, 2004). Socioanalytic theory (Hogan & Blicke, 2013; Hogan & Roberts, 2004) and Emergenetics theory (Browning, 2009) suggest humans are hardwired to think and behave in certain ways that are influenced by life experiences. Given the theoretical foundation of the Emergenetics Profile, it stands to reason the Emergenetics Profile provides a reflective lens for principals to unpack their held mental models. The Emergenetics Profile is a report generated from the results of a self-reporting questionnaire of 100 items. This report identifies the preferences in four thinking and three behavioral Attributes. The four thinking Attributes are Analytical, Structural, Social and Conceptual. The three behavioral attributes are Expressiveness, Assertiveness and Flexibility. Emergenetics identify preferences as the thinking or behavioral attributes that are most frequently accessed and tend to be energizing when thinking, learning, problem solving or

communicating. By comparisons, non-preferences are thinking or behavioral Attributes that are accessed less frequently and tend to energy draining when accessed and may feel uncomfortable or frustrating.

A key premise of Emergenetics is that everyone possesses all seven Attributes, and preferences are not aligned with cognitive ability or skill. In addition everyone can access all seven Attributes. Attributes considered non-preferences are accessed through flexing. Flexing is shifting perspective by viewing the situation, event, or interaction from the characteristics of the non-preferred Attribute and acting from that Attribute. For example, the Analytical Attribute is defined as being logical, rational, and researched focus. Consequently, flexing into Analytical as a non-preferred Attribute, one might bring more data or research to convey their point with others. Flexing through the Emergenetics Attributes supports taking a multiple perspective stance and builds insights into others who think and behave differently. A premise of Emergenetics is that flexing perspectives is key to ensuring comprehensive communication leading to understanding (Browning, 2009). Flexing and the understanding of others through the Emergenetics attributes influences how individuals can differentiate their communication approach and strategies (Browning, 2012). Flexing perspectives influences how we see one another thus contributing to the promotion of inclusiveness and humanizing. This knowledge contributes to development of social awareness regarding their positionality within a group and their relationship to power (Hogan & Blicke, 2013; Hogan & Roberts, 2004).

Individuals are introduced to the Emergenetics Profile and Emergenetics Theory through a three-hour workshop that explains the four thinking Attributes and three behavioral Attributes in an interactive setting. Following the completion of this

introductory workshop, teachers and school administrators are also invited to attend nine hours of training delivered in three modules. The teacher training topics include instructional differentiation, intentional grouping practices, increasing student engagement using the data from the Emergenetics reports. School administrator sessions emphasize communication strategies, developing relational trust, emotional and cognitive empathy and providing feedback. Specifically, school leaders gain strategies for addressing issues of miscommunication by understanding where the communication breakdown occurs through the Emergenetics thinking and behavioral attributes. School leaders also learn to engage others through cognitive empathy (the ability to understand other's perspectives), emotional empathy (the ability to mirror others' feelings and emotions) and enhance relational trust. Applying these strategies using the Emergenetics Profile during the process of critical self-reflection, school leaders can investigate and interpret their current knowledge frameworks through their thinking and behavioral preferences to gain clarity to into their actions.

Chapter Summary

This body of research supports the *CRSL Agility Framework*, the conceptual model for this proposed study. Becoming a transformative and culturally responsive school leader begins with critical self-reflection to understand self and gain clarity regarding the multiple identities that define oneself. This journey of critical self-reflection requires courage and the willingness to be vulnerable and tell the truth. According to Shields (2018), "transformative leadership is a critical approach to leadership grounded in the call for critical awareness followed by critical reflection, critical analysis and critical action against injustices" (p.11).

In order for systemic change to sustain within the educational system, school leaders need to look past the external or structural actions for change and consider internal human processes for change. Specifically, school leaders will need to engage in critically reflective practices of their ethical decision-making processes. School leaders need knowledge of self and another to see the intersection of their identities and identify strategies to engage with those who think differently (Capper et al., 2006; Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

As school leaders embark on the critical self-reflection journey through their Emergenetics Profiles, perspectives of how and why one thinks, behaves, problem solves, and makes decisions are clarified. These insights may initiate a paradigm shift in leadership behaviors to support collective responsibility to promote inclusiveness and humanizing of all school community members. The confluence of transformative leadership theory and culturally responsive school leadership cultivate moral courage to change the system's disparities. Khalifa (2018) argues the change in the demographic of the student population puts pressure on the school community's existing cultures, norms, and beliefs. Furthermore, the work of Freire (2014) clarifies the role of the school to clearly articulate a vision by stating the purpose of education is to ensure that all students are able to fulfill their potential and be able to access all that is available to them.

Chapter 3 will explain the research design of this study and will include my positionality as a researcher, as well as my role in the study from a reflexive stance. Additionally, Chapter 3 will include the description for the format of the critical self-reflection journal entries, the semi-structured interview protocol, and the CRSL dispositional survey. Through interpretive research methodology, I will expand on the

steps taken to ensure reliability and validity for this study and the specifics for the sample identification, data collection timelines, and data analysis protocols.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The CPED (2020) framework for a dissertation in practice calls for a focus on a complex problem of practice to address significant questions and gather data to be analyzed through a critical lens. This process requires research skills and the ability to gather and organize amassed literature to situate the study. Furthermore, this framework emphasizes scholarly practice to frame and solve problems of practice for change through research supported by foundational theories (CPED, 2020). This chapter provides an overview of the research design using a multiple case study approach. A description of the procedures for this research design, including data collection and reliability measures will be detailed. This chapter concludes with the researcher's positionality and reflexivity regarding potential bias and assumptions that may influence this study.

Type of Study

The specific problem of practice guiding this study is the disconnect that exists between critical self-reflection by the school leader and implementation of CRSL strategies to sustain change. In other words, how can critical self-reflection support a differentiated approach for implementing CRSL strategies based on how people think and behave. The research question driving this study, *how will the use of the Emergenetics® Profile influence the way school leaders engage in disrupting deficit thinking within their school communities*, situates this study in qualitative research. Merriam and Tisdell (2016)

define qualitative research as the investigation to understand how people interpret and construct meaning of the world around them through experiences. This inductive process supports an inquiry stance toward the context being studied. Qualitative research requires the acceptance of ambiguity during the investigation and demonstrates the flexible nature of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research supports epistemological perspectives of interpretivism (to understand the reality constructed through social interaction) and critical transformative (to liberate through the subjective and constructed power within systems) (Green, 2017; Tabron, 2017). Creswell (2013) states qualitative research incorporates theoretical frameworks as the foundation through which an emerging approach using an inductive and deductive process to understand individuals in natural settings enables researchers to make meaning of the problem being investigated.

One approach to qualitative research is case study methodology. Case study methodology supports both interpretivism and critical transformative epistemological perspectives. Yin (2018) defines case study as a methodology to answer research questions that seek to explain a social phenomenon. Creswell (2013) states case study methodology as an approach where the researcher explores a real-life setting by analyzing multiple data points such as interviews, documents, observations, and reports. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p.37). Furthermore, they assert that case study is appropriate to understand how the phenomenon being studied and the context are integrated through an inquiry approach.

Green (2017) defines the epistemology of interpretivism as making meaning and constructing truth through the social interactions of people within their social context. The research question driving this study calls for this researcher to examine and interpret the reality of the three school leaders through their social interactions within the school context. Yin (2018) suggests multiple case study designs are replications of single case studies and strengthens findings adding to the reliability and validity of the results. Furthermore, a multiple case study design best supports this investigation to constructing meaning from the social interaction of these school leaders and strengthens the trustworthiness of the findings. The research design (see Figure 1) is based on the framework from Maxwell (2013) and the research protocol (see Figure 2) is based on the framework from Yin (2018) will be applied to each single case.

Figure 6
Research Design

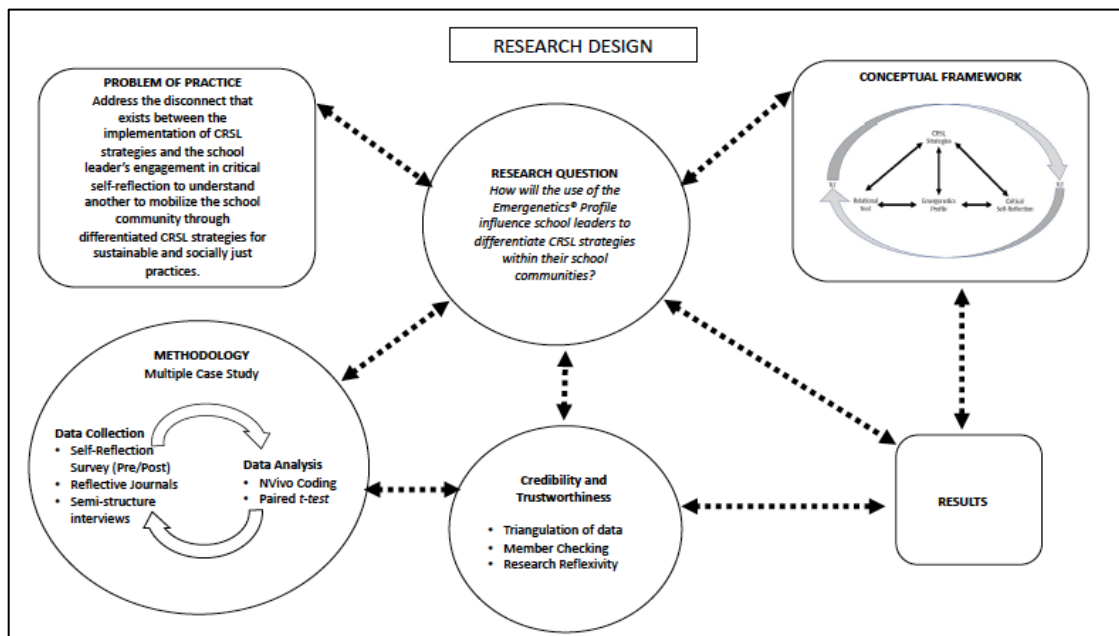
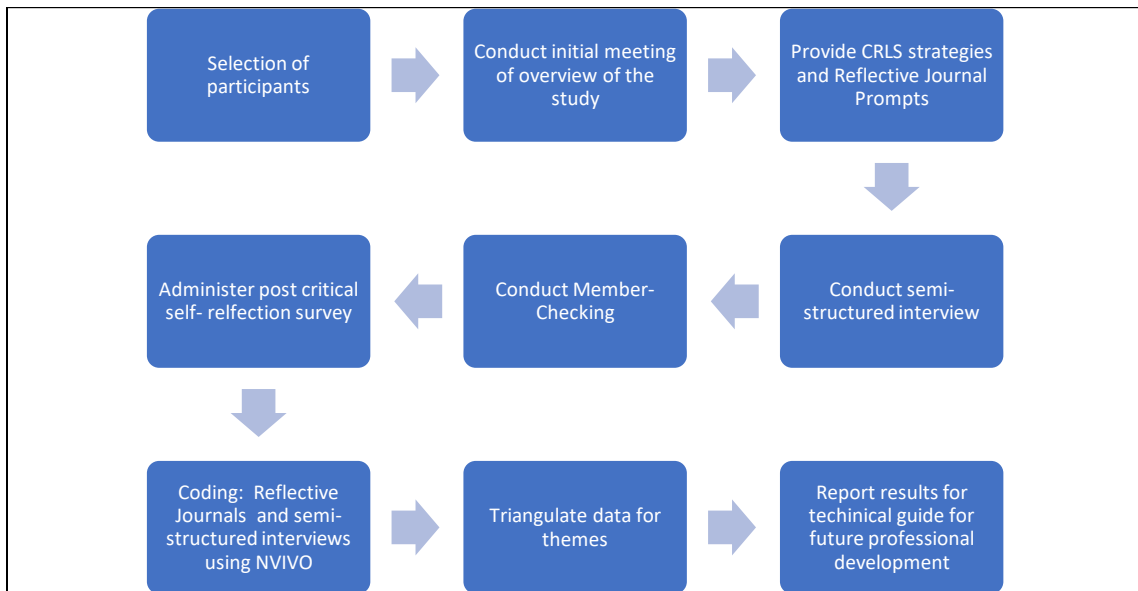


Figure 7
Research Protocol



Design of Study

Central to this proposed study is the investigation of three school leaders' ability to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks during the critical self-reflection process to differentiate their interactions by leveraging their Emergenetics profile to disrupt deficit thinking. To reiterate, the Emergenetics® Profile is a self-reporting instrument that measures individual preferences in four thinking and three behavioral Attributes (Browning, 2007). The four thinking Attributes identified in this instrument are analytical, structural, social and, conceptual. The three behavioral attributes are Expressiveness, Assertiveness and Flexibility. The following descriptions provide a high-level overview of the seven attributes measured by this instrument (Browning, 2007, p34-84):

- Analytic: the combination of rational thought and logic.

- Structural: the combination of sequential thought and practical application.
- Social: the combination of empathic thought and "gut" intuition.
- Conceptual: the combination of innovative thought and experimentation.
- Expressive: outwardly display of emotion to the world at large
- Assertive: style and pace with which you advance your feelings, thoughts, and opinions.
- Flexibility: the degree you accommodate change from the outside.

This instrument measures the energy or the intensity from the Attributes of thinking and behaving and does not measure ability or cognition. The 100 item questionnaire is measured using a seven point Likert scale. The Emergenetics Profile results are presented in a report that includes percentile ranges that are normed against a global population bi-yearly (Williams, 2018). The development of this instrument was based on Socioanalytic theory from Hogan (Williams, 2018). Hogan's Socioanalytic theory is built on the concept that our social identity is the integration of self-awareness and self-regard (Hogan et al., 1985). Furthermore, self-awareness or self-consciousness provides perceptions of expectations when engaging with another; this supports individuals' ability to flex their behavior to conform to the group's social norms (Hogan et al., 1985).

A study conducted by Ewan et al. (2014) found that socioanalytic theory supports leaders' effectiveness by leveraging political skill differentially as they understood their followers' needs and desires. According to the Emergenetics Profile Technical Report (Williams, 2018), the Emergenetics Profile meets the standards of a sound instrument

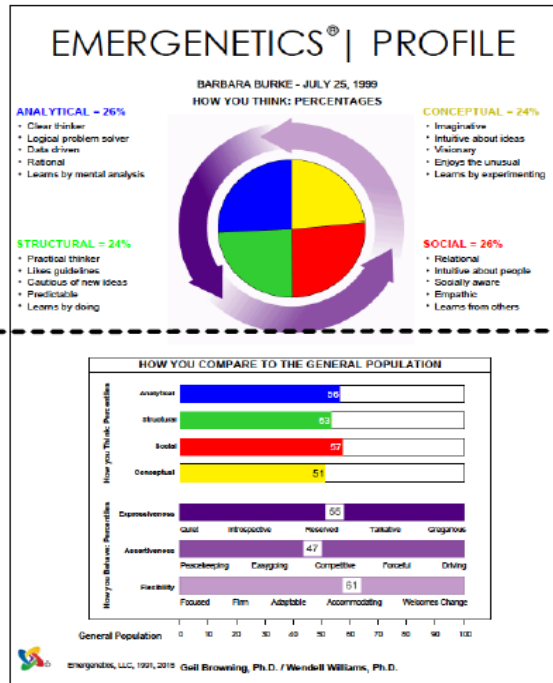
according to the Standards for Educational Psychological Testing. In particular, this instrument meets the criteria for inter-item reliability, test-retest reliability, face validity and, convergent/discriminate validity (Williams, 2018).

The Emergenetics® Profile indicates how you prefer to think, learn, problem solve and communicate through seven attributes. The Emergenetics® Profile is two reports in one (see Figure 8). The top half of the report is how an individual compares to the four thinking attributes and indicates which attribute has been designated as a preference. The bottom half of the report indicates how an individual compares to the global population and displays the intensity for each of the seven attributes in percentiles.

Figure 8

Emergenetics Profile

Reading your Emergenetics® Profile Report



The pie chart at the top indicates the attributes that are your Preferences (23% or greater). This pie chart displays how your personal attributes compare to one another

The bottom of this report indicates how you compare to the global population at-large in percentiles scores AND displays the *energy* you gain in each of the attributes.

Using a cell phone battery analogy, in this example analytical thinking is at the 56th percentile. This means you would have 56% of your battery available to have full function of your phone before you would need to “plug in and re-charge”.

The seven attributes are integrated. When combined they display an individual’s unique ways of thinking and behaving. The thinking attribute with the highest percentage or percentile indicates an individual’s most preferred thinking attribute. The most preferred thinking attribute is the one an individual typically accesses first when thinking, learning, communicating and problem solving. The thinking attribute with the lowest percentage or percentile is considered an individual’s least preferred attribute, meaning this is the attribute that takes the most energy for an individual to engage in during thinking, learning, problem solving or communicating. For example, if someone’s least

preferred thinking attribute is analytical (logic, data trends, research), analytical tasks tend to be energy draining, however this does not indicate that an individual is not capable or has the skill to engage in analytical tasks.

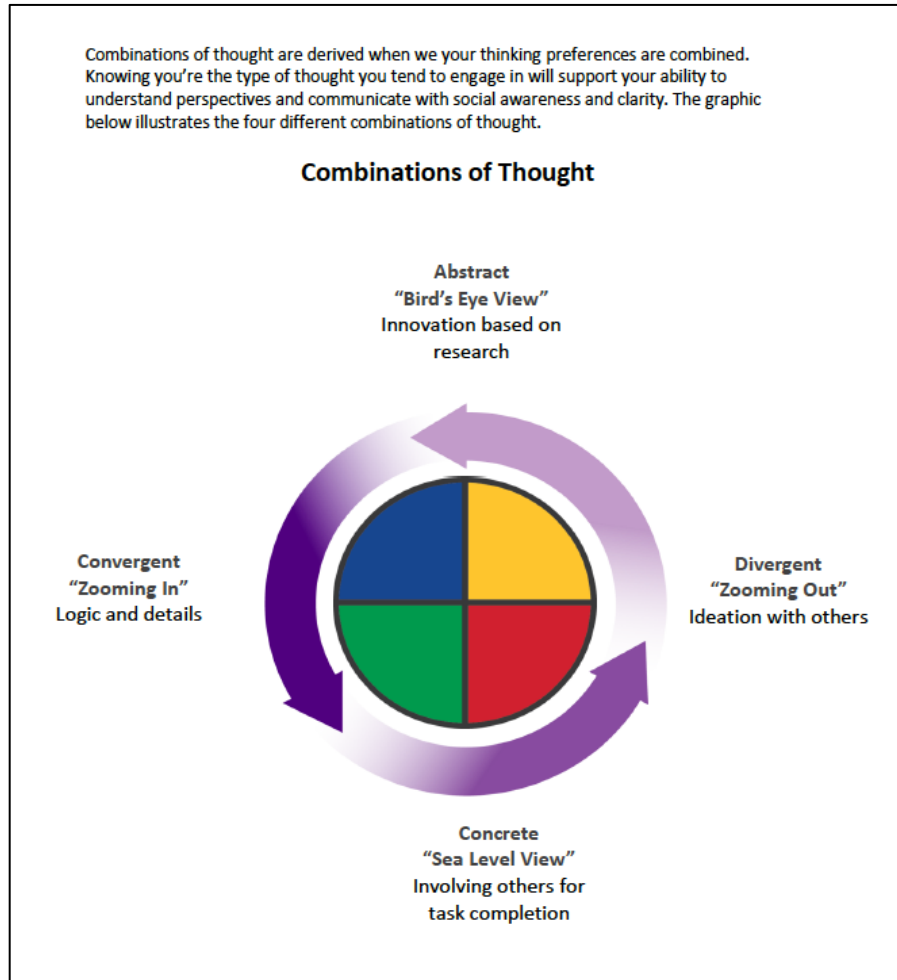
Additionally, the concept of flexing is unique to the Emergenetics Profile (Browning, 2018). Flexing is the action of moving out of one's comfort zone or to feel uncomfortable with various tasks or situations (Browning, 2018). When an individual engages in flexing, they are taking action through a non-preference (Browning, 2007, 2018). The action of flexing into one's least preferred attribute supports the development of social awareness and leverages communication with others who think and behave differently as it encourages perspective-taking.

Browning (2007) identified four different types of thinking combinations that signify an individual's tendency to view situations (see Figure 9). She defines these four types of thinking as convergent, divergent, abstract and concrete (Browning, 2007, 2009):

- Convergent thinkers have preferences in Analytical and Structural thinking and tend to view situations by zooming in through data trends and details with logic and reasoning.
- Divergent thinkers have preferences in Social and Conceptual thinking and tend to view situations by zooming out as they brainstorm and innovate with others as they seek the opinions of many.
- Abstract thinkers have preferences in Analytical and Conceptual thinking and tend to take a high level view of the situation as they enact their vision through innovation that is based on research and logic.

- Concrete thinkers have preferences in Structural and Social thinking and tend to view situations from pragmatics and tasks as they collaborate with others to provide the details and tasks.

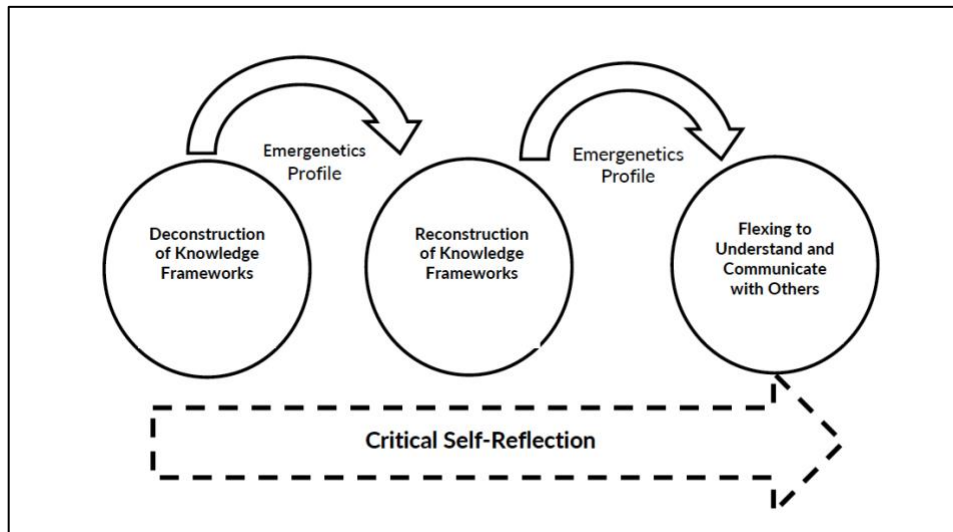
Figure 9
Combinations of Thought



Procedures

This study began with a participant orientation that included a review of the Emergenetics Profile, an explanation of the critical self-reflective model (see Figure3) designed for this study and the expectations to complete four reflective journal entries.

Figure 10
Critical Self-Reflective Process



Note: The critical self-reflection model illustrates the process for critical self-reflection using the Emergenetics Profile. The final step in the flow identifies the step for school leaders to communicate their new perspectives through flexing. Flexing in the context of Emergenetics denotes the opportunity for individuals to flex or access Emergenetics thinking or behavioral attributes that are not in preference (Browning, 2009). Preferences are determined by the responses from the self-report questionnaire and indicate an individual preferred way to think, learn, communication and problem solve. If an attribute has not been identified as a preference, it is considered a non-preference that tends to be de-energizing for the individual. Flexing through the Emergenetics approach is synonymous with perspective taking, taking the position of another perspective in order to understand a viewpoint that is different than your way of thinking.

Participants were asked to engage in an iterative self-reflection process to document their perceptions of their actions and outcomes of the deconstructing and reconstructing process to disrupt deficit thinking. Using a reflective process (Figure 2) adapted from the work of Khalifa (2018) the participants constructed four reflective journal entries:

- (a) **Awareness of Me:** How does my cultural history influence my positionality as a school leader?

- (b) **Awareness of Another:** How does my Emergenetics® Profile influence how I differentiate my interactions with another? How does my Emergenetics® Profile influence the multiple perspectives from another?
- (c) **Actions and Outcomes:** Describe the specific actions take and the outcomes that resulted.
- (d) **New Learning:** How has my thinking changed? How will this new learning influence my leadership actions?

Figure 11
Reflection Cycle



After completing the four self-reflective journal entries, 45-minute semi-structured interviews were scheduled with each participant via Zoom. Using an interview protocol (see Appendix A), participants will be asked about their perceptions of how their Emergenetics® Profile influenced their deconstruction and reconstruction process, and any strategies they used to differentiate their interactions with staff members to disrupt deficit thinking.

Lastly the administration of a CRSL Leadership Agility Survey (see Appendix A) was used measure the perceptions of the participants (a) self-reflection; (b) humanizing; (c) relational trust; (d) promoting inclusion of social and cultural wealth. The survey data was used to triangulate the data from the critical self-reflection journals and the semi-structured interviews

Participants

Three school leaders were selected through purposeful sampling for this proposed study. Purposeful sampling captures the researcher's desire to learn, make sense, and make meaning of the phenomenon studied (Boudah, 2020; Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). The school leaders selected for this proposed study were located in two regions of the United States (southwest and west). All three participants are currently serving as school level principals with a minimum of two years' experience leading schools in large urban school districts. Two participants identified as African American, one female and one male. The third participant identified as Native American and female. One participant (African American female) led an elementary school of 416 students. The two other participants led middle schools, one (African American male) leads a school of 570 students and one (Native American female) leads a school of 800 students. The socioeconomic levels as determined by the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch status ranged from 74% to 100%.

All three participants have experience with the Emergenetics program and have their Emergenetics Profiles. Additionally, all three participants have attended the Administrator Facilitator Certification and have learned to apply and integrate

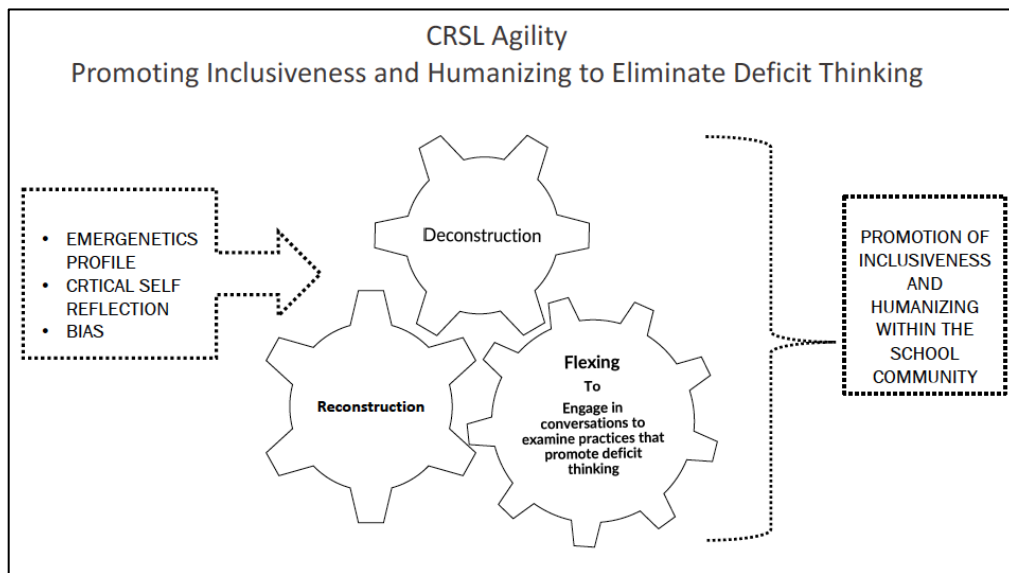
Emergenetics concepts into their leadership process. Finally, the staff at all three schools where the participants are school leaders, have their Emergenetics Profiles.

Data Analysis

The data collection included four reflective journal entries, semi-structured interview and, the CRSL Leadership Agility survey. The CRSL Leadership Agility survey was hand scored. NVivo software was used for first and second cycle coding of the reflective journal entries and semi-structured interviews. First cycle coding focus on open codes through a descriptive lens. According to Saldaña (2009), first cycle coding captures descriptive information through the interpretation of the data and is the initial process of analysis to discover the first impressions the data presents. Saldaña (2009) defined second cycle of coding as the process to further analyze the first cycle codes to identifying categories or axial codes. These axial codes were examined through the portion of CRSL Agility Framework, Promoting Inclusiveness and Humanizing to Eliminate Deficit Thinking (see Figure 3) to identify assertions or interpretive claims regarding the data analysis.

Figure 12

CRSL Agility: Promoting Inclusiveness and Humanizing to Eliminate Deficit Thinking



Pattern-matching (Yin, 2018) was the analytical technique used to correlate the findings using the axial codes from the journal entries and the semi-structured interviews, and the *paired t-test* results. According to Yin (2018), pattern-matching provides a focus for researchers to attend to the congruence of the how and why to help explain the phenomena being studied. The pattern-matching process for this study focused on the findings from the constructs of critical self-reflection; (a) deconstructing knowledge frameworks; (b) reconstructing knowledge frameworks; (c) flexing to differentiate interactions.

Following the analysis of each individual case study, cross case analysis was conducted to synthesize patterns and themes across each of the individual case studies from the pattern-matching technique. Yin (2018) defines cross case synthesis as a technique to elevate higher conceptual aspects of the phenomena being studied. Furthermore, he maintains cross case synthesis as a process to aggregate the findings from individual cases to draw conclusions from the within-case patterns.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Qualitative research focuses on interpreting people's social interactions within their own social context to construct meaning. Important to the interpretive focus of qualitative research is ensuring credibility and trustworthiness of the findings resulting from these studies. The confluence of the evidence is key to establishing credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative findings (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, Joseph A., 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). Triangulation is a strategy to address credibility and trustworthiness and supports confluence of evidence. According to Maxwell (2013), triangulation uses multiple data methods to confirm findings and limitations.

Additionally, the use of multiple data sources allows the researcher to understand the participants' perspectives as accurately as possible (Yin, 2018). To this end, data was triangulated to identify converging lines of inquiry as described by Yin (2018), which strengthened the construct validity of the study. Furthermore, researcher memoing and analytical notes were constructed during the coding process to check for researcher bias and ensure accurate interpretation of the data. Finally, the strategy of member checking was utilized following the transcription of the semi-structured interviews. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define member checking as the process of asking participants to review the interpretations of the data collected for accuracy.

Researcher Positionality

Credibility and trustworthiness are also influenced by the positionality and reflexivity of the researcher. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define reflexivity as the influence a researcher has on

the study and addresses researcher bias and assumptions. Boudah (2020) states that reflexivity is the process of acknowledging a researcher's positionality to the study and to recognize any bias that may influence the interpretations of the findings. To address potential researcher bias and assumptions, researcher memos, field notes, triangulation, and member checking were strategies used to minimize the influence of bias and strengthens the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Boudah, 2020; Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As a researcher who situates herself from the epistemological frame of interpretivism, a focus on the confluence of evidence from this inductive approach was necessary to ensure credibility of the conclusion from the findings. My positionality as Japanese and White brings specific bias and assumptions from my educational experiences as a bi-racial student. Furthermore, the results from the Intercultural Development Inventory indicate a trailing reversal orientation, meaning that during certain times I have a viewpoint of "us" versus "them," with "us" representing non-white viewpoint and "them" representing white viewpoint. This trailing reversal may influence my worldview of social interactions specific to this study.

Moreover, my positionality with the participants may be influenced by my relationship as an employee of Student|Teacher Emergenetics Program (STEP, LLC). My role as the Director of Research for STEP, LLC includes training school and district leaders. As a master level trainer for STEP, LLC, I have a prior affiliation with the participants in this study. Additionally, as a master trainer, I have expert knowledge of the Emergenetics Profile and its application to school leadership. To address potential

bias and assumptions researcher memoing, triangulation of data, and member checking will be employed.

Ethical Considerations

According to Stake (2006), researchers are responsible for addressing ethical considerations such as our affiliations that may influence our interpretations of the findings from the study. Creswell (2013) suggests researchers anticipate ethical issues through all phases of the study; (a) prior to the study; (b) initiating the study; (c) data collection; (d) data analysis; (e) reporting and publishing. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) address ethical considerations through the internal review board (IRB) process and the commitment to do no harm to the participants. They indicate the importance of researchers maintaining a continued focus on the relationship between the researcher and the participants. Therefore, ethical considerations for this proposed study will be addressed through the following:

1. Completion of the IRB determination form.
2. Informed Consent Forms signed by each participant.
3. Providing the participants, the Interview Protocol prior to the interview.
4. Encrypted data storage through One Drive.
5. Audio recordings of interviews destroyed after two years.

Limitations

Limitations are evident in any study. Due to COVID-19 restrictions in place during this proposed study, the procedures for this study were conducted via an online platform for any face-to-face interactions with the participants. Using an online platform

may influence the observations recorded during interactions, which may differ from observing in an in-person setting. Additionally, with the unpredictability of COVID-19 and with adjustments made at the school level, school leaders' interactions with the school community may be influenced based on the protocols in place for the school.

Chapter Summary

This multiple case study of three urban school leaders was designed to investigate the disconnect that exists between critical self-reflection and the differentiation of strategies to interact with others who think and behave differently than the school leader. Specifically, this multiple case study seeks to answer: *How will the use of the Emergenetics® Profile influence the way school leaders engage in critical self-reflection as they disrupt deficit thinking within their school communities?*

By measuring the perceptions of three urban school leaders' using the Emergenetics Profile as a lens during critical self-reflection to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks, insights may be gained regarding the use of a self-reporting psychometric instrument to support the critical self-reflective process. Furthermore, how school leaders differentiate their approach with others who are cognitively diverse may be discovered using a self-reporting psychometric instrument.

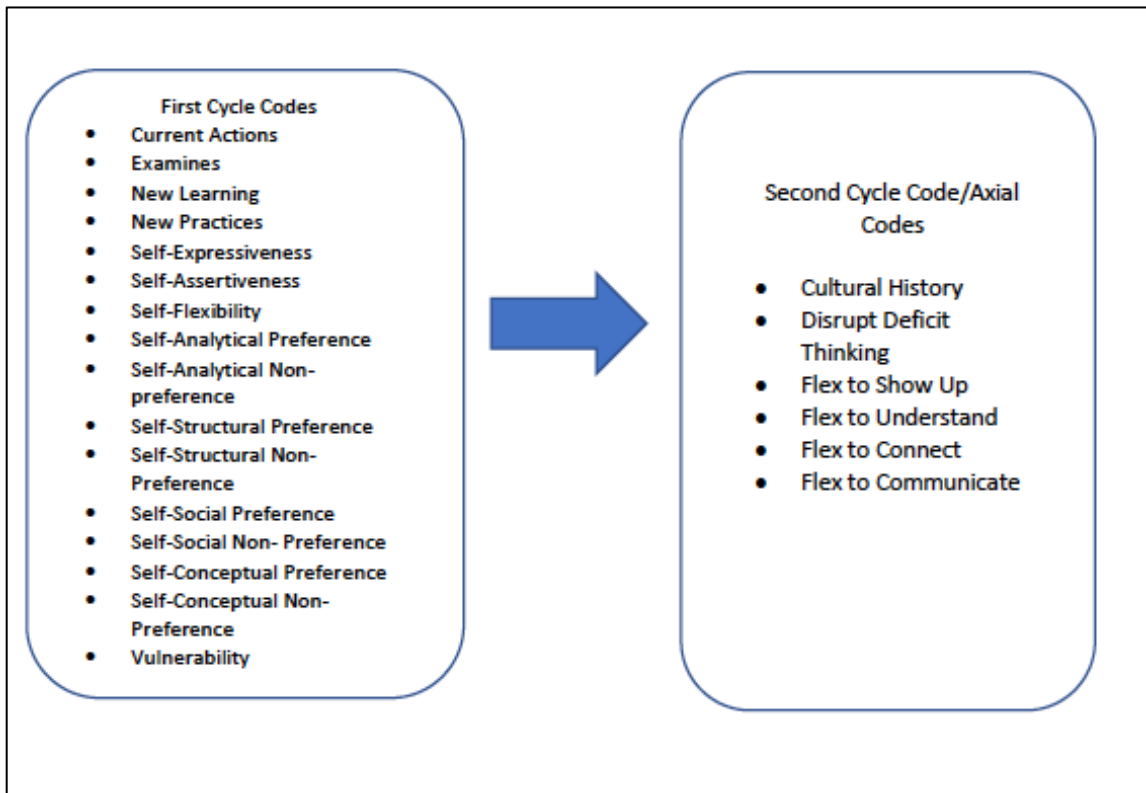
Chapter 4 will discuss the findings for each of the three case studies. The descriptions of each case study will provide the background of the three principal participants and their individual journeys through critical self-reflection. The chapter concludes with the themes that were identified across the three case studies.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

Saldaña (2009) suggests a process for coding that allows for deep reflection through first and second cycle coding. First cycle coding provides context for categories leading to second cycle coding that determines themes found in the raw data. Furthermore, Yin (2018) recommends selecting an analytical technique such as pattern matching to guide your data analysis. This chapter will review the findings from three case studies of current school administrators. Each case will be discussed individually, then a synthesis of all three case studies will be discussed for any themes or patterns. The critical self-reflective model for this study will serve as the organization for each of the case studies. Each case study will begin with the participant's background, how the participant deconstructed and reconstructed mental models through critical self-reflection processes while integrating their Emergenetics Profile. Table 1 displays the first and second cycle codes, which serve as the axial codes. The first cycle codes included 16 initial codes, which were categorized into 6 second cycle codes that serve as the axial codes.

Figure 13
First and Second Cycle Codes



Case Study 1: Cissily Hamilton Principal, Tallgrass Elementary

Background

Cissily Hamilton is the principal of Tallgrass Elementary, located in the Rocky Mountain School District. She has been the principal of Tallgrass Elementary for five years. Cissily has been an educator for twenty-two years, ten of as school principal. Ms. Hamilton identifies as an African American female. When asked about her educational leadership journey, Ms. Hamilton describes following a traditional route to leadership by starting in the classroom as a teacher for ten years. She then moved into the assistant principalship for two years and finally onto the principalship. Cissily describes Tallgrass Elementary as a suburban school with 416 students where 59% of the student population have identified as White, 7% identify as African American, 20% identify as Hispanic, 9%

identify as Multiple Race, 5% identify as Asian and, 0.2% identify as Central South Indian. Twenty-nine different languages are spoken at Tallgrass. Tallgrass has a stable licensed teaching staff of 35 teachers; most have been on staff for over 20 years.

Journey of Reflection

Cissily's Emergenetics Profile indicates she is a concrete thinker (preferences in Structural and Social thinking) and gets energy when implementing detailed plans of action in collaboration with her staff. She does not have preferences in Analytical or Conceptual thinking attributes. Her behavioral preference for Expressiveness indicates a tendency to take an "it depends" position (second-third of Expressiveness). Cissily will consider whether she will flex to an internal processing position (known as first-third of Expressiveness) using few words with no gestures to convey her thinking depending on the situation, task, or interest. Or she may take an external processing position (known as third-third of Expressiveness) using many words and gestures to share her thinking. She indicates this in one of her journal entries, stating, "*Throughout my life, as a woman of color, I often sit back to see how I can enter a space. It really depends!*" Additionally, Cissily tends to take a calm, steady approach to her work by advancing her opinion forward through questioning (first-third Assertiveness). Lastly, through her Flexibility preference (third-third Flexibility), Cissily tends to prefer an approach where options open; in other words, if she needs to pivot quickly, she tends to get energized when considering multiple options.

Ms. Hamilton describes her approach to deconstructing a mental model as a structured process where she begins with introspection through her cultural history and racialized trauma and has attended district sponsored groups for BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color) to support this process. This structured process is indicative of her preference for Structural thinking preference which is at the 76th percentile as reported by her Emergenetics Profile and reveals an appreciation of a systematic approach to tasks and work. She explains through her journal entries and semi-structured interview that her Emergenetics Profile is a frame for her to understand her preferences and the preferences of others as she unpacks her cultural history. The axial codes indicate that Cissily deconstructs her mental models for deficit thinking is through her Social preference and cultural history. Additionally, her behavioral preferences for Expressiveness and Assertiveness were evidenced in her journal entries and her interview responses when deconstructing mental models for deficit thinking. Specifically, she shared,

- *“...the necessity to code switch both in my personal and professional life is how I flex when interacting with different cultures.”*
- *“As a building leader of color, I always say I feel like I have to double think a situation with a staff that is majority white.”*
- *“I always do that extra layer of thinking of, how do I respond? ...trying to take some of that personalized personalization out of the response, you're being overly sensitive.”*

- *“Trying to bring in different pieces when thinking about Emergenetics gives me another way to process through that's a little bit more structured.”*

As Ms. Hamilton reconstructs her mental model to disrupt deficit thinking, she acknowledges that deficit thinking is a trigger for her more than she realized and made the following comment: *“I have come to realize that [deficit thinking] does trigger me... so being able to stop in that moment and being okay with hey, maybe I'm not even going to address this right now.”* This quote connects to her second-third of Expressiveness, deciding whether to address it and to her first-third of Assertiveness, pausing and waiting before advancing her opinion.

Cissily shared how she is working to identify strategies to address the microaggressions that perpetuate deficit thinking with her staff. Through her reconstruction process, she demonstrates the ability to flex or shift her thinking to take specific actions. She describes using *“strategies of refrain refute and redirect [from Zaretta Hammond’s work] ... so kind of stopping, you know, and not going with that immediate reaction”*. Ms. Hamilton states, *“I can differentiate my communication to providing more research behind deficit thinking,”* indicating she is flexing into a non-preference of Analytical thinking. The Analytical attribute is focused on research and data to justify the direction of the work. Her critical self-reflective journal entries suggest her ability to flex. She details how Emergenetics helps her determine the best way to speak to everyone’s communication needs and builds her awareness to understand how others are processing the information she is providing. For example, Cissily wrote, *“I think that I can differentiate my communication to providing more research behind deficit*

thinking. I also think I need to be more intentional about connecting the research to the relational and structural piece.”

An analysis of the axial codes during deconstruction and reconstruction of mental models indicates a shift in how Ms. Hamilton processed her thinking (See Table 1). Generally, she deconstructed her thinking through the lens of her cultural history. Ms. Hamilton restructures her mental model to incorporate ways to disrupt deficit thinking using specific strategies as she demonstrates flexing to understand the perspectives of others who thought and behaved differently than she did.

Table 2
Axial Codes for Hamilton Deconstructing and Reconstructing

Axial Codes	Cultural History	Disrupt Deficit Thinking	Flexing to Show Up	Flexing to Understand	Flexing to Connect	Flexing to Communicate
Deconstruct	35%	15%	10%	15%	15%	10%
Reconstruct	15%	9%	18%	24%	18%	18%

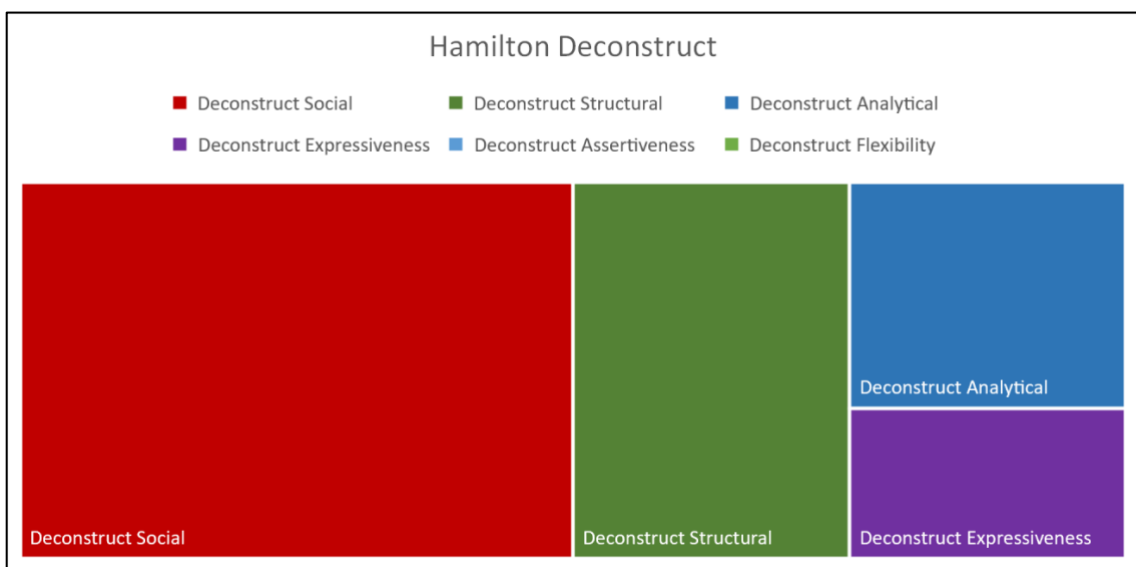
Note: This table indicates the percentage of axial codes coded to the deconstruction and reconstruction of mental models through the critical self-reflection process designed for this study. Ms. Hamilton deconstructed through her cultural history to disrupting deficit thinking and shifted her process for reconstructing through flexing to show up, understand, connect and communicate.

Further analysis of the axial codes during deconstructing and reconstructing of mental models using Emergenetics attributes reveals how Ms. Hamilton flexes during her reconstruction process. As Ms. Hamilton engaged in deconstructing her mental models, she relied on her Emergenetics preferences of Structural and Social thinking and her behavior preference of Expressiveness. It is interesting to note Cissily flexed to her non-preference of Analytical thinking during her deconstructing process (see Table 2). This was reflected in her journal entries as she sought out resources to share with her staff to

disrupt deficit thinking. During the reconstructing process, she flexed more into her non-preference of Analytical thinking. Additionally, Ms. Hamilton flexed into the behaviors of Assertiveness and Flexibility as she contemplated the specific actions to take regarding the disruption of deficit thinking (see Table 3).

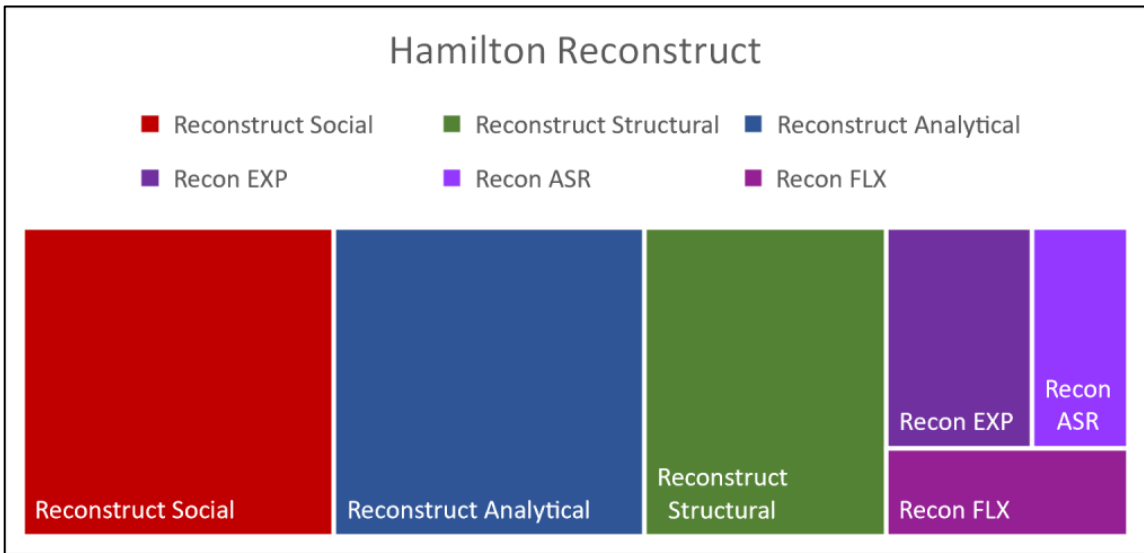
Ms. Hamilton's strongest thinking preference is Social thinking which is reported at the 81st percentile indicating this is a strength and the first thinking preference she considers when reflecting. Her Social preference is indicated in both Tables 2 and 3 for deconstructing and reconstructing. When comparing Tables 2 and 3, Ms. Hamilton's Social preference decreases from deconstructing to reconstructing as her Analytical preference increases from deconstructing to reconstructing. This indicates Ms. Hamilton's flexing into her non-preference of Analytical thinking as she reconstructed her mental model for deficit thinking. Table 3 for reconstructing reveals Ms. Hamilton's access of her Assertiveness and Flexibility attribute to reconstruct her mental model.

Table 2
Hamilton Deconstructing Using Emergenetics Attributes



Note: This tree graph displays the axial codes specific to the Emergenetics Attributes during the reflective process as Ms. Hamilton deconstructed her mental models through her Emergenetics preferences in Social and Structural thinking and Expressiveness. She does flex into a non-preference for Analytical thinking.

Table 3
Hamilton Reconstructing Using Emergenetics Attributes



Note: This tree graph displays the axial codes specific to the Emergenetics Attributes during the reflective process as Ms. Hamilton reconstructed her mental models. Ms. Hamilton reconstructed her mental models through her preferences of Social and Structural and her three behavioral preferences. Ms. Hamilton flexes into a non-preference for Analytical thinking often. (EXP-Expressiveness, ASR=Assertiveness, FLX-Flexibility).

Case Study 2: Mr. Smith, Principal, Academy Middle School

Background

Mr. Smith is the principal of Academy Middle School in the Great Plains School District in the Rocky Mountain Region. He is completing his second year as Academy’s principal and his eleventh year in education. Mr. Smith identifies as an African American male. Mr. Smith describes his education leadership journey as taking him on many different paths to where he is today. His journey begins with his recruitment to play football at a university in the southeast, where he double majored in computer science

and mathematics with a future engineering goal. However, the importance of playing football and achieving his academic pursuits conflicted and led him to nursing and finally to major in education. Once he completed college, he played professional football for eight years and then landed a Rocky Mountain High School position as a football coach. As Mr. Smith considered pursuing a leadership position, he decided on the principalship as he realized he'd significantly impact students. Mr. Smith states, "*...a principal has a bigger impact on the building from perspective of being able to create a culture where all kids feel like they can be successful, and they belong there.*"

Mr. Smith says his work with middle school students is a joy and the ability to work with middle school students is a gift. Mr. Smith describes Academy Middle School as an urban Title 1 school that serves 570 students. Academy Middle School provides several special education programs and focuses on supporting students of trauma. The ethnic diversity breakdown of Academy Middle School includes 85% Hispanic, 7% African American, 6% Asian /Asian Pacific Islander, and 1% White. There are 100 staff members at Academy Middle School. Sixty-five are licensed teachers.

Journey of Reflection

Mr. Smith's Emergenetics Profile indicates he is a divergent thinker, meaning he is energized through collaboration and innovation. He has preferences in Social and Conceptual thinking and is in the third-third for all three behavioral attributes. Specifically, from Mr. Smith's third-third behaviors, he can be described as an external processor (third-third Expressiveness) who appreciates a fast quick pace (third-third Assertiveness) and is energized when options are open (third-third Flexibility). He

simmers (almost a preference) in the Analytical thinking attribute, meaning that he will flex into this thinking attribute.

Mr. Smith describes his process for deconstructing mental models through his experiences as a sports coach by considering the person's perspective. This reflects his preference in Social thinking which is reported at the 95th percentile and is his most preferred thinking attribute. Based on his interview responses, Mr. Smith deconstructs mental models from the perspective of this staff and believes that asking questions first is the best course of action before engaging in problem-solving. Some of the key questions he asks himself shared from his interview are:

- *“... so why is this person thinking this way? Or what is the thing that's in their beliefs that gives them this response?”*
- *“What's missing in this or how, what obstacles in front of you that I can remove, so this can actually get done?”*
- *“I go back to the psychological safety piece because you know, the reason why a person is in deficit thinking is because they may not have skill to, to address whatever it is.”*

These key questions focus on the person and how he can support this person moving forward. These questions indicate his Social preference as the Social attribute focuses on connecting with others by assessing the effects of self and others. Mr. Smith considers perspective-taking to deconstruct mental models when he perceives deficit thinking operating within his staff members. He states, *“if I can see it from the lens of the person*

I'm interacting with, I think that I can get traction and helping support [shifting] their deficit thinking.”

Mr. Smith portrays his reconstructing process by leveraging his understanding of self as seeks to gain understanding and clarity of the perspective of others through questioning. Again, this links to his preference for Social thinking. He continually emphasized the use of intentional language and modeling as part of his reconstruction process. As Mr. Smith emphasizes intentional language in his communication, he does so through the Emergenetics attributes to ensure clarity of the message. As part of his reconstruction process, Mr. Smith focuses on collective efficacy as he embraces multiple perspectives. He stated the following:

- *“I often seek out team members that have a profile that is the opposite of myself to get a perspective that potentially addresses blind spots that I normally would not see.”*
- *“It is critical to support and maintain a positive culture where everyone's voice matters.”*
- *“I have become more aware of other people and their perspectives. When I interact, I attempt to approach things from where they can be coming from with no bias.”*

The analysis of Mr. Smith’s axial codes indicates a shift in deconstructing through Analytical and Social thinking. His Social thinking preference expands as he reconstructs mental models through Social Thinking. Mr. Smith indicates he flexes from his third-third Assertiveness to a more first-third Assertive position. Specifically, he shared how he changed his approach from telling his staff what they would (third-third of Assertiveness) to asking how his staff suggests (first-third of Assertiveness) they complete the task or

problem solve. Furthermore, Mr. Smith flexes to his simmer attribute of Analytical thinking both for deconstructing and reconstructing his mental models, as indicated in the axial code, flexing to understand (see Table 4). When reconstructing his mental model regarding disrupting deficit thinking, Mr. Smith leveraged his Social thinking preference to act through intentional language and ensuring the student's voice was present. Modeling is a key strategy Mr. Smith employs to connect, disrupt and understand. Modeling is a strategy that connects to the Social attribute, which appreciates seeing how others perform.

Table 4
Axial Codes for Smith Deconstructing and Reconstructing

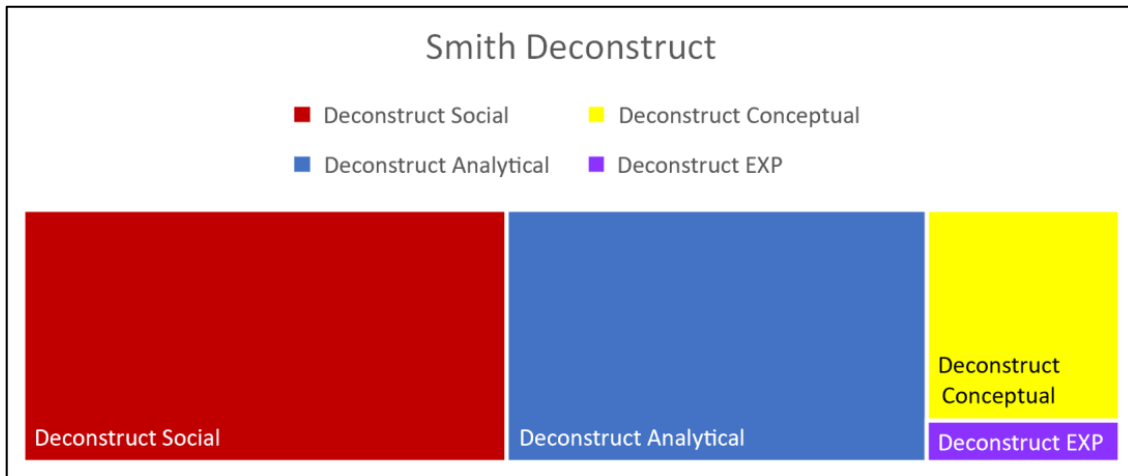
Axial Codes	Cultural History*	Disrupt Deficit Thinking	Flexing to Show Up*	Flexing to Understand	Flexing to Connect	Flexing to Communicate
Deconstruct	100%*	33%	0%	50%	47%	50%
Reconstruct	0%	67%	100%*	50%	53%	50%

Note: This table indicates the percentage of axial codes coded to the deconstruction and reconstruction of mental models through the critical self-reflection process designed for this study. *Mr. Smith did deconstruct through cultural history; however, this was to provide context for his cultural identity. *Flexing to Show Up only revealed one code.

As previously stated, Mr. Smith's most preferred thinking attribute is Social thinking. Tables 5 and 6 reveal that Mr. Smith continued to access his most preferred thinking attribute as he deconstructed and reconstructed his mental models through critical self-reflection. Table 5 indicates he flexed into his non-preference of Analytical thinking more often during deconstructing rather than reconstructing. Additionally, Table 5 indicates Mr. Smith accessed his preference in Conceptual thinking, however he did not access his Conceptual preference during reconstruction. As a final point, the behavioral

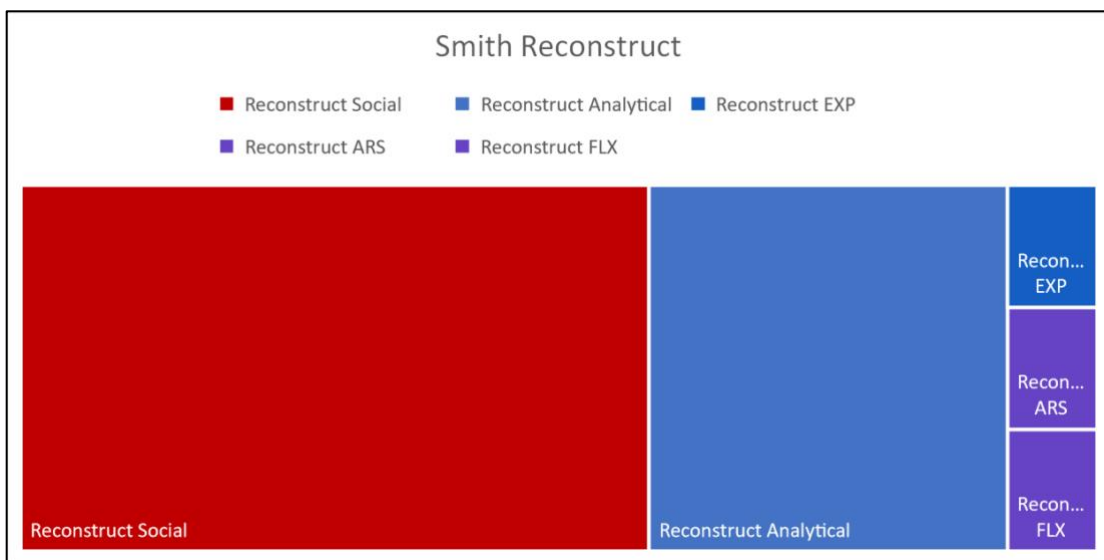
Attributes of Assertiveness and Flexibility were accessed during Mr. Smith’s reconstruction process whereas this did not occur during his deconstruction process.

Table 5
Smith Deconstructing Mental Models



Note: This tree graph displays the axial codes specific to the Emergenetics Attributes during the critical self-reflective process. Mr. Smith’s deconstructing process highlights his preference in Social thinking. Of note is the flexing into the non-preference of Analytical thinking.

Table 6
Smith Reconstructing Mental Models



Note: This tree graph displays the axial codes specific to the Emergenetics Attributes during the

reflective process during reconstructing. Mr. Smith's preference in Social thinking became more pronounced. Additionally, he continued to flex into his non-preference of Analytical thinking.

Case Study 3: Mrs. Maggie Longford, Principal, Western Middle School

Background

Mrs. Maggie Longford is the principal of Western Middle School in the Southwest Regional School District. She has been the principal of Western Middle School for four years and is completing her sixteenth year as an educator. She identifies as Native American. Mrs. Langford describes Western Middle School as a seventh through eighth-grade campus that serves 800 students. She supervises 55 full-time teachers, and 35 itinerate staff who work with the district special urban campus special education program. Maggie states the ethnic diversity breakdown for Western Middle School is 60% White, 15% African American, 10% Hispanic, and a mixture of Asian and two or more ethnicities. Additionally, Maggie shares the socio-economic status of Western Middle School ranges from students who live in million-dollar homes to students who live in federal housing.

Mrs. Longford's educational leadership journey begins with a dream as a fifth grader to become an astronaut, initially majoring in aerospace engineering and received a college basketball scholarship. Due to the heavy study load of physics and playing basketball, Maggie refocused her studies on basketball coaching and education. Completing her degree in education with an emphasis on English, Maggie began teaching in a middle school in Southwest Regional School District. Her path includes becoming a master teacher, providing instructional coaching to teachers, and earning her master's degree in administration.

Journey of Reflection

Maggie's Emergenetics Profile shows she is an abstract thinker with preferences in Analytical and Conceptual thinking. This means she prefers thinking that is innovative while rooted in logic and facts. Her behavioral preference of Expressiveness reveals she is a second-third Expressive, meaning she will flex to an introspective or external processing position depending on the situation, topic, or interest. In addition, she is a second-third Assertive, meaning she will flex to a calm, steady approach or a fast, quick pace approach with her work depending on the situation, topic, or interest. Finally, she is a third-third Flexible, meaning she is energized when multiple options are open. Maggie also has a simmer preference for Social thinking, where she will flex into her Social thinking from time to time.

Maggie explains her process for deconstructing mental models starts with understanding the issue to precisely describe it to others to understand her thinking. As she considers disrupting deficit thinking, she acknowledges her challenge to build capacity to understand others' thinking regarding deficit thinking. In one of the interview responses she shared, *"What I've deconstructed and had to reconstruct was my understanding of what it meant such that I identify and describe it in a way that I could tell somebody else to then they have an understanding of it to take and apply to their own experience or circumstance."*

- The Analytical attribute considers relevance and purpose as key to communicating. This quote demonstrates Maggie's preference in Analytical thinking by providing the rationale for deconstructing and reconstructing to share knowledge with others. Her

process to deconstruct is the introspection of self and logic. Through her Analytical preference, she seeks to understand the “why” behind what she is deconstructing. Maggie’s critical self-reflective journal entries demonstrate this, here are some examples” *“I have a hard time understanding those who won't let someone else "talk about them" or "look at them that way" when they have no desire to have a friendship with the other student.”*

- *“I am interested in finding ways to identify the possible disconnects either before or during my conversation.”*
- *“I have identified a need for understanding the cultural differences in the students who come from homes that have a "fight" mentality, but I'm not sure how to address it or change the behavior of the student at school.”*

Maggie’s deconstructing process also indicates her ability to flex into her non-preference of Social thinking. In one journal entry, she explains, *“When dealing with adults, the biggest thing I struggle with is sometimes over-empathizing with different mindsets to the point that I struggle to communicate my own beliefs for fear of offending others.”* Wanting to relate and being emotionally sensitive is connected to the Social thinking attribute.

Maggie’s insights into how she engages in the reconstruction process of mental models have been more intentional. She explains that her “end game” is to build capacity, as reflected in these statements from her interview:

- *“...after having reflected frequently over the course of these last four weeks...[a] positive consequence, gave me the desire to be more intentional with every conversation I walk into, approaching it [Emergenetics], from that angle”*
- *“I’m going to like, think about Emergenetics when I walk into this.”*
- *“...my end game is always build capacity because there’s only one of me. And I have enough other people on campus to be able to share the load.”*

Maggie’s Analytical preference is present in these quotes. Being intentional and building capacity speaks to efficiency, a characteristic of the Analytical attribute. By flexing into her non-preference of Social thinking, Maggie reconstructs her mental models through the effects on herself and others is a quality of the Social attribute. Here are a few examples from her journal entries:

- *“I’ve been more explicit even in the conversation saying like, okay, how are you thinking? Like what, what attributes are you coming at me with right now.”*
- *“...there’s an inherent grace, whether you’re calling it for what it is or not, but it’s it gets you to see the person for the person and not for the behavior or the perceived behavior of what they, I’m anticipating them to do or say.”*
- *“I think that has helped me grow as a leader so much just the last month and having to reflect on what I’ve been doing, how I have conversations how I provide feedback and, and do coaching in a way that I never would have done before.”*

The axial code analysis reflects Maggie’s deconstruction process to understand others through her introspection and logic of her Analytical thinking preference. As she deconstructed through her flexing to understand others, she reconstructed her mental

model to shift to connect and communicate with other (see Table 7). The continued analysis of the axial codes with the Emergenetics attributes for deconstructing mental models suggests that Maggie flexes into her Social non-preference many times and leverages her Analytical preference (See Table 8). Further analysis of the axial codes with the Emergenetics attributes for reconstructing mental models reveals Maggie leveraged her Analytical thinking preference most of the time to take action through the lens of expertise and logical problem solving (See Table 9).

Table 7
Axial Coding for Longford

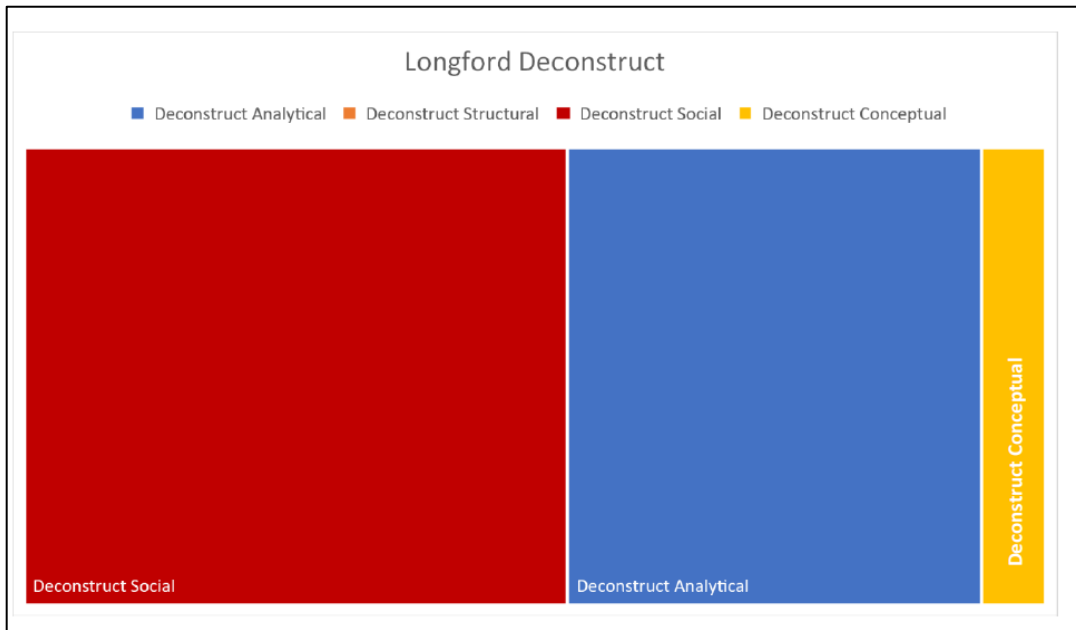
Axial Codes	Cultural History	Disrupt Deficit Thinking	Flexing to Show Up*	Flexing to Understand	Flexing to Connect	Flexing to Communicate
Deconstruct	6%	0%	0%	69%	25%	0%
Reconstruct	0%	4%	0%	20%	54%	22%

Note: This table indicates the percentage of axial codes coded to the deconstruction and reconstruction of mental models through the critical self-reflection process designed for this study. Mrs. Longford spent most of her time flexing to understand as she deconstructed her mental model. She reconstructed most of the time through flexing to connect as she reconstructed her mental model.

Mrs. Longford’s most preferred preference is Conceptual thinking, surprisingly she did accessed her Analytical preference more than her Conceptual preference as Table 8 illustrates. And more surprising was Mrs. Longford flexing into her non-preference of Social thinking more than her preferences in Analytical and Conceptual as indicated by Table 8. However, during the reconstruction process, Mrs. Longford accessed her preference of Analytical thinking most as evidenced by Table 9. Furthermore, Table 9 reveals another non-preference of Structural thinking being accessed by Mrs. Longford

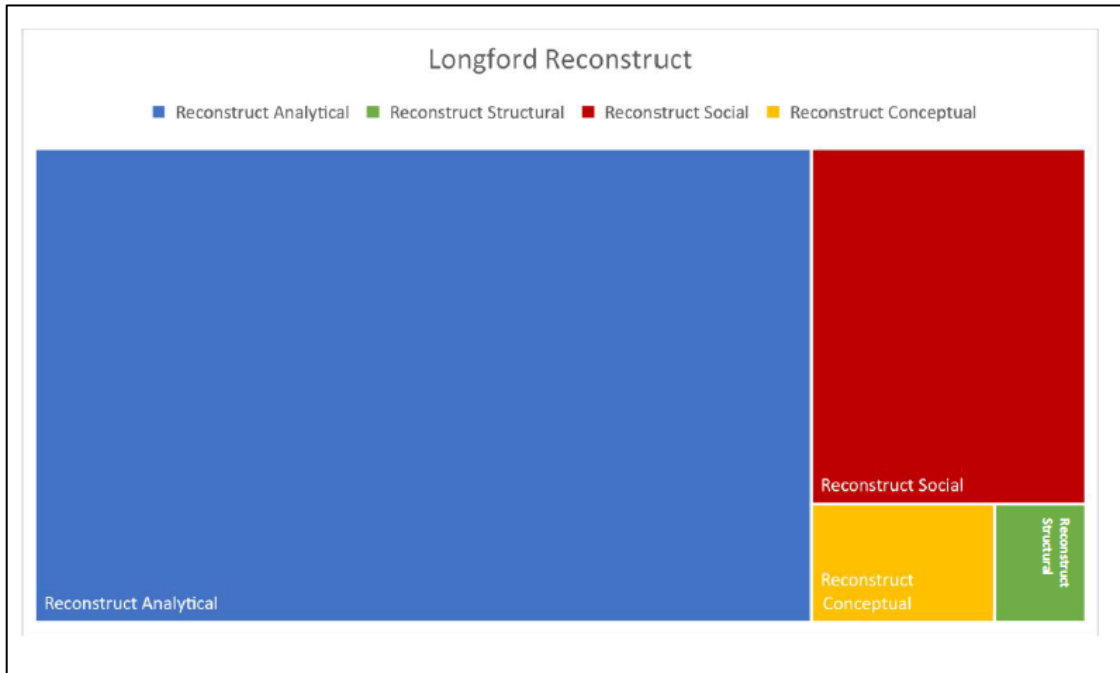
during reconstruction. Mrs. Longford did not access any of the three behavioral Attributes during deconstruction or reconstruction as evidenced by Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8
Longford Deconstructing Mental Models



Note: This tree graph displays the axial codes specific to the Emergenetics Attributes during the reflective process for deconstructing. While Mrs. Langford leveraged her Analytical preference for deconstructing, she also flexed into her non-preference for Social thinking.

Table 9
Longford Reconstructing Mental Models



Note: This tree graph displays the axial codes specific to the Emergenetics Attributes during the reflective process during reconstructing. Mrs. Longford continued to leverage her Analytical preference to reconstruct. She continued to flex into her non-preference for Social thinking as well.

Cross Case Synthesis

Yin (2018) describes cross-case analysis as a process to identify patterns within each case to determine if any relationships exist across the cases. The following identifies the similarities and differences across the three case studies.

Table 10
Cross Case Similarities and Differences

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All three participants leveraged the Analytical attribute to deconstruct and reconstruct their mental models. Both Hamilton and Longford increased the leveraging of the Analytical attribute from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamilton demonstrated a higher degree of flexing into a non-preference (Analytical thinking) than the other two participants. Smith increased the leveraging of his Social thinking preference during the reconstructing process.

<p>deconstructing to reconstructing their mental models.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Hamilton and Longford reconstructed their mental model to disrupt deficit thinking using strategies from the Analytical attribute. • All three participants leveraged the Social attribute to deconstruct and reconstruct their mental models. • Both Hamilton and Longford decreased the leveraging of the Social attribute from deconstructing to reconstructing. • All three participants focused their reflective practice mainly through thinking attributes rather than behavioral attributes. • The axial code of flexing to connect (for deconstructing and reconstructing) was the most prominent code for all three participants. • All three participants flexed to an attribute that was a non-preference. • All three participants focus on the relationships with staff to disrupt deficit thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longford increased the leveraging of her Analytical thinking preference during the reconstructing process. • All three employed different strategies to disrupt deficit thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hamilton did this by providing additional research and resources to inform her staff about deficit thinking ○ Longford broke down the reasons why before implementing a strategy ○ Smith did this through the lens of expertise. First, he provided the expertise and then shifted to his staff's expertise
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The conclusions drawn from these similarities and differences across each of the case studies are as follows:

- Leadership is unique to the individual, as is the Emergenetics Profile. While there may be similarities between each leader's approach to critically self-reflect, the intent and purpose differed based on the context each principal was leading.

- Flexing into a non-preference is not a natural process. If an individual has a simmering preference (almost a preference), the tendency was to flex more.
- How each leader interprets the behaviors of their staff dictated how they would disrupt deficit thinking through their preferences.
- Leveraging their own Emergenetics Profile to connect with the staff through their Emergenetics Profiles provided a framework to analyze and act.

The final chapter will discuss the conclusions and implications of this study. Additionally, implications for practice are shared as well as the limitations and considerations for future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

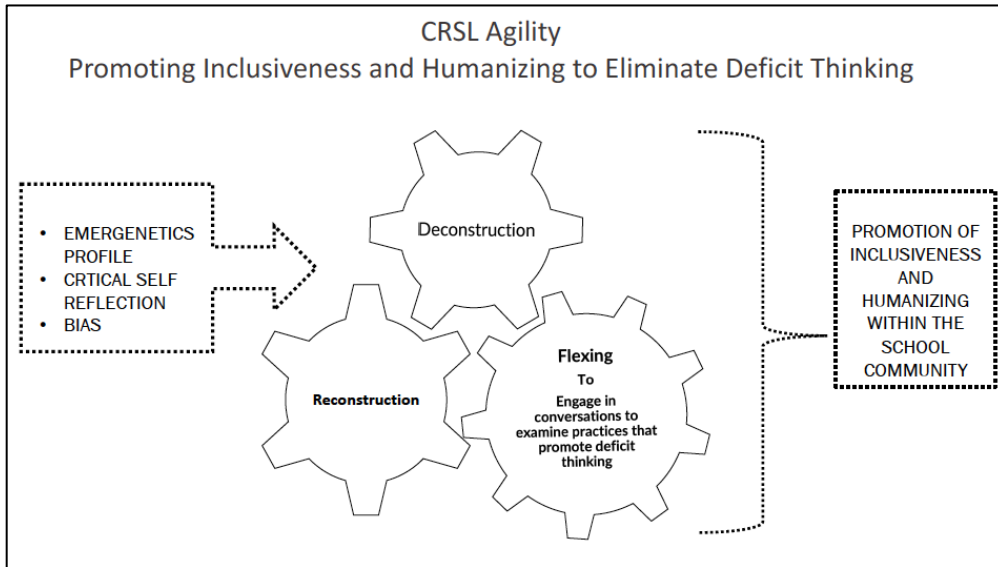
Culturally responsive school leaders must demonstrate leadership agility to address the rapidly changing needs of their school communities. Seeing from multiple perspectives and taking an agile approach to disrupt deficit thinking will require school leaders to engage in critical self-reflection. The purpose of this study was to examine how the Emergenetics® Profile influenced the CRSL leader as they disrupting deficit thinking through the critical self-reflective process. The research question guiding this study is:

How will the use of the Emergenetics Profile influence the way school leaders engage in critical self-reflection as they disrupt deficit thinking within their school communities?

The CRSL Agility Framework was the conceptual model that informed this investigation, with Transformative Leadership Theory as the foundation and incorporated the work from Khalifa (2016, 2018) and Shields (2004, 2018, 2020). Since the CRSL Agility Framework was too comprehensive in scope for this study, a portion of the CRSL Agility Framework was the central focus for this investigation (See Figure 12).

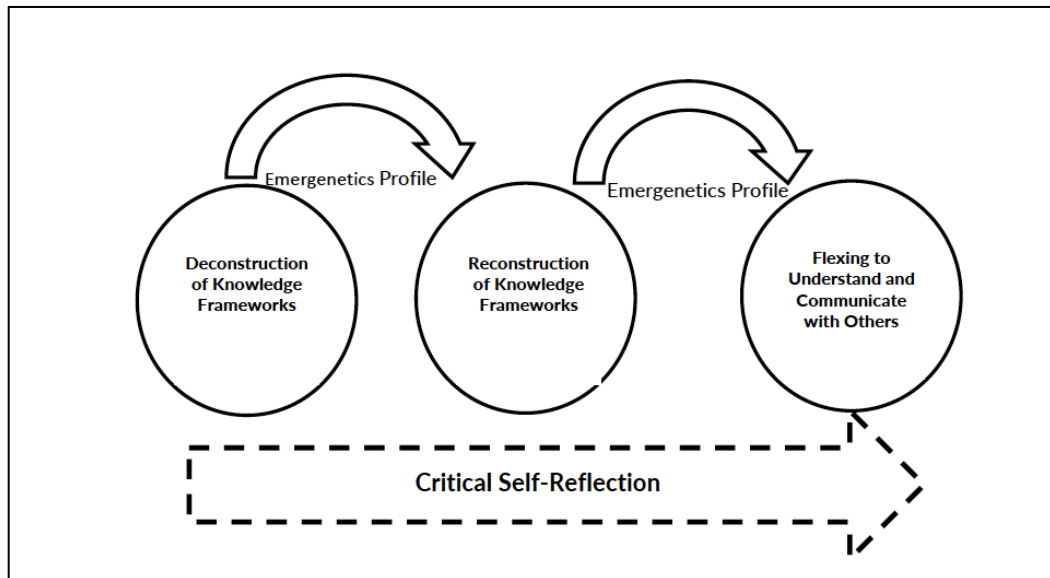
Figure 14

CRSL Agility Framework: Promoting Inclusiveness and Humanizing



Additionally, the process for critical self-reflection was based on the self-reflection process from Khalifa (2018) and integrates the Emergenetics Profile as a lens to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks or mental models (See Figure 13).

Figure 15
Critical Self-reflection process



The following sections will discuss the findings from the data, implications for practice, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigated how three urban school principals deconstructed and reconstructed mental models using the Emergenetics Profile to disrupt deficit thinking during the critical self-reflective process. All three principals had previous experience with the Emergenetics Profile. Each school principal attended an Emergenetics Administrator Facilitator Certification to learn to integrate Emergenetics theory with their leadership skills. The overall findings from this study were:

- All three school principals deconstructed through their Emergenetics preferences.
- All three school principals deconstructed through their non-preferences.
- All three school principals reconstructed by flexing into a non-preference.
- All three school principals identified leadership strategies from their non-preference.

The findings indicate that when school principals can interpret situations involving deficit thinking through a framework or construct such as a psychometric tool, they are able to identify key actions to positively address the disruption of deficit thinking. Simply put, having a framework or construct to self-reflect while identifying preferred ways of thinking and behaving for school leaders can advance the insights to understanding others in the school community. Through this self-awareness, school leaders can differentiate their interactions with others as they act to disrupt deficit thinking.

The discussion of the findings begins with the themes of the critical self-reflection process while deconstructing knowledge frameworks or mental models using the Emergenetics Profile. Next, the themes identified from the critical self-reflection process

to reconstruct knowledge frameworks or mental models to flex their leadership actions will be discussed.

Deconstructing through Critical Self-Reflection

Khalifa (2018) and Shields (2018) both assert the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of mental models or knowledge frameworks requires self-confrontation as part of the critical self-reflective process. As CRSL leaders examine their values, beliefs, and life experiences, they continue to shape and evolve their understanding of self. The use of the Emergenetics Profile provided the principal participants with a frame to connect the insights of self during the reflection process. To provide context for the results of this study, next I discuss the connections between the Emergenetics Attributes and leadership.

According to Browning (2018), transparency and knowing the strengths of your Emergenetics Profile supports critical self-reflection through self discovery. Browning (2018) states this process of self-discovery is accessible through a leader’s Emergenetics Profile. Each of the Emergenetics Attributes brings key questions to consider when engaging in self discovery. The following table explains how each of these Attributes processes an individual’s leadership style (Browning, 2018, pp. 22-23).

Table 11
Emergenetics Attributes and Leadership Strategies (Browning, 2018)

Attribute	Key Questions	Key Leadership Characteristics
Analytical Thinking	Why? Why is this happening?	Focuses on being rationale and what needs to be done. Relies on factual information.

Structural Thinking	How? How can this be resolved?	Focuses on clear rules and lines of authority. Handles logistics and details.	
Social Thinking	Who? Who needs to be involved to maintain the relationships?	Focuses on the well-being of all. Collaborates and is encouraging of others.	
Conceptual Thinking	What else? What if we...? What are the possibilities?	Focuses on innovation and global implications. Sees the big picture and engages in out-of-the box ideas.	
Expressiveness	In what ways can I ensure all voices are heard?	First-third	Third-third
		appears calm and poised. Maintains an even expression.	appears gregarious, always engaged in conversation.
Assertiveness	What pace should I take...	First-third	Third-third
		Seeks consensus and goes with the flow. Advances opinions through questioning.	Seeks a decisiveness and a fast, quick pace. Advances opinions through directive statements.
Flexibility	What should I consider for any course corrections or changes in the plan?	First-third	Third-third
		Appears firm and focused	Appears fluid and keeps options open

Along with these Emergenetics leadership characteristics, Browning (2018) suggests, leaders need to embrace the uncomfortable. She defines the uncomfortable as being outside of your comfort zone. Leaders who step outside their comfort zones support their personal growth and begin to understand how their staffs think and learn. Flexing is the Emergenetics term for stepping outside of one’s comfort zone. Flexing supports the process of deconstructing and reconstructing mental models during critical self-reflection. Given that the Emergenetics Profile indicates a leader’s preferred thinking and behaving style, it can also indicate the Attributes a leader will need to “flex into” when stepping outside of their comfort zone. Through critical self-reflection through the lens of Emergenetics, leaders can identify and articulate what tasks and interactions take them

out of their comfort zone. Applying this information from critical self-reflection leaders challenge themselves to take a risk, be open minded and acknowledge to others how they are flexing. This type of leadership transparency closes the gap of miscommunication with others.

One final consideration is the type of thought different combinations of thinking preference favor. According to Browning (2018):

- Abstract thinking prefers big ideas/concepts rooted in logic and fact (combination of Analytical and Conceptual Attributes)
- Concrete thinking prefers tasks and working with people (combination of Structural and Social Attributes)
- Divergent thinking prefers innovation and collaboration (combination of Social and Conceptual Attributes)
- Convergent thinking prefers logical reasoning and a defined plan for implementation (combination of Analytical and Structural Attributes)

To begin the discussion of the findings and build on the context provided on the leadership connections to Emergenetics, I begin with Mrs. Cissily Hamilton's results for deconstructing. Mrs. Hamilton engages in concrete thinking through her Structural and Social preferences as revealed by her Emergenetics profile. As a concrete thinker, Mrs. Hamilton emphasizes a step-by-step process as she shares the expectations for teamwork. As a result, Mrs. Hamilton prefers to examine situations by analyzing the specific details (her Structural preference) of the actions of others (Social preference) and her own. At the same time, Mrs. Hamilton considered how she felt about what was happening (her Social preference). As Mrs. Hamilton unpacked her mental model for deficit thinking

through her Structural and Social preferences, she realized how deficit thinking impacts and triggers her behavior, most likely a connection to her Social preference that tends to feel deeply about issues and events. She enacts a systematic approach (her Structural preference) to analyze the situation through her lived experiences of her cultural history to help her connect her past experiences with deficit thinking. Mrs. Hamilton's Emergenetics Profile provided the scaffold for her to deconstruct in a way that made sense to her, using a step-by-step process while considering the well-being of herself and others.

A further example of this connection between the Emergenetics Profile and the deconstruction process of reflection is from Mr. Smith. He is a divergent thinker with preferences in Social and Conceptual based on his Emergenetics Profile. Through his divergent thinking, Mr. Smith emphasizes connecting with others (his Social preference) while he motivates and inspires his staff toward future work (his Conceptual preference). Mr. Smith indicates that his deconstruction process focuses on his relationship with people (his Social preference). He stated the importance of seeing the situation from the other person's perspective. Since Mr. Smith emphasizes working together as a team (his preference in Social thinking) in his school, he analyzes the situation through the connections within the team. As an individual with a Conceptual preference, Mr. Smith analyzes the situation more globally as he considers how relationships within the team align with his vision for his school. As Mr. Smith considers the big picture, he also analyzes the needs of the individuals to identify what is missing to help him determine the next steps. During the deconstruction of deficit thinking, Mr. Smith considered the bigger picture of school (from his Conceptual preference). He stipulated students will not

be treated unfairly or blamed for their lack of progress. Fairness is a characteristic of Social thinking, and fairness was a theme in Mr. Smith's responses. As Mr. Smith unpacks his mental model of deficit thinking, he did so through his stories about his interactions with others. Conveying content through stories is also a characteristic of the Social Attribute.

Another example is from Mrs. Longford, an abstract thinker with preferences in Analytical and Conceptual thinking. As an abstract thinker, Mrs. Longford examines through facts and deductive reasoning (Analytical preference) to consider the complete view (Conceptual preference) of situations. Mrs. Longford seeks the why (Analytical preference) to recognize the disconnects between what she is observing and her own beliefs to understand the whole picture. As Mrs. Longford interprets the observed behavior from the perspective of self and others, she extracts the relevant facts to make logical sense of the issues. This deductive process through logical reasoning is a hallmark of the Analytical preference. The disconnect she feels between what she is observing and her assumptions of the situation underscores her need to understand another characteristic of the Analytical preference. Mrs. Longford deconstructs her mental model for deficit thinking through her Analytical preference by identifying what information she still needs and what questions she still needs to ask to select a process for change.

However, it is important to note that all three principals did flex into a non-preference during the deconstructing process. Both Mrs. Hamilton and Mr. Smith flexed to their non-preference for Analytical thinking. Mrs. Longford flexed into her non-preference for Social thinking. Mrs. Hamilton accessed her Social preference and is her most preferred thinking Attribute during the deconstruction process most of the time. Mr.

Smith, on the other hand, accessed his Social preference, his most preferred thinking Attribute, and his non-preference in Analytical thinking equally during his deconstruction process. Mrs. Longford, by contrast, flexed into her non-preference for Social thinking more than she accessed her preference for Analytical thinking when she engaged in deconstruction.

As a final point, the findings suggest the Emergenetics Profiles influenced the participants by providing language to articulate their behaviors, as well as others. More importantly, as the participants considered their deconstruction process, they expanded their understanding of self by acknowledging the potential misinterpretation of their actions by others. This finding aligns with the research on critical self-reflective practices to gain self-knowledge as leaders investigate their professional assumptions and beliefs to address social just practices in schools (Brown, 2004; Dantley, 2005; Furman, 2012).

Reconstruction through Critical Self-Reflection

Critical self-reflection compels school leaders to examine their attitudes, assumptions, and biases to adjust and reconstruct new mental models (Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018). This reflective process elevates unconscious bias and its influence on leadership judgments and decisions. Pauliene (2012) suggests that school leaders engage in critical listening and observation of their behaviors compared to those they lead to adjust or change their interactions. Reconstruction of mental models or knowledge frameworks takes moral courage to be self-critical, and self-corrective (Shields, 2018; West, 1999). The results of this study suggest the Emergenetics Profile influenced the reconstruction process of the three school principal participants through flexing into a non-preference. As stated earlier, flexing into a non-preference is shifting out of one's

comfort zone. Through flexing a perspective-taking approach clarified these leaders actions to differentiate their communication with others who think and behave differently than them. These three principals flexed through their non-preferences to close the communication gap, build better relationships through understanding, and connect to others by honoring their differing perspectives.

To illustrate this point, Mrs. Hamilton flexed into her non-preference for Analytical thinking as she identified the need to provide more research-based resources for her staff to disrupt deficit thinking. She flexed her leadership strategy with her staff by initiating a staff book study to investigate and critically question the research (speaks to the Analytical Attribute) for culturally responsive teaching. Mrs. Hamilton realized she was not providing enough research on deficit thinking for her staff through the reconstruction process. This demonstration of flexing from Mrs. Hamilton indicates the influence of her Emergenetics Profile that led her to a strategy to move the staff forward with disrupting deficit thinking.

In the next example, Mr. Smith also flexed into his non-preference for Analytical thinking. He changed his telling approach with his staff to a questioning approach by flexing from his third-third Flexibility (his preference) to first-third Flexibility (a non-preference). His strategy of asking more questions led him to understand the actions of his staff. During the reconstruction process, Mr. Smith did flex into his non-preference for Analytical thinking. However, he predominately reconstructed his model for deficit thinking through his Social thinking preference. This shift in thinking resulted in strategies to change his actions to connect with others.

Finally, Mrs. Longford did flex into her non-preference for Social thinking during her reconstruction process. Mrs. Longford's Emergenetics Profile influenced her behavior to articulated strategies to change her approach with others to build better connections with others. Her new behaviors included checking with others and using a common language to work as a cohesive unit. Both strategies resonate with Social thinking. However, Mrs. Longford accessed her preference for Analytical thinking most of the time during the reconstruction process. As she investigated ways to connect with others, she examined her interactions with others to seek a deeper understanding of the interaction. This reconstruction led her to focus on identifying the preferences of others to understand what is most important to them. Having the ability to name and notice the preferences of others is Mrs. Longford's way of closing the miscommunication gap toward a better understanding of one another.

To conclude, all three school leaders did flex into a non-preference during both the deconstruction and reconstruction process. The data indicates that the Emergenetics Profile influenced how these school leaders reconstructed their mental models or knowledge frameworks to identify a leadership strategy to address the disruption of deficit thinking. An important consideration for leadership practices is the concept of flexing or taking a more agile approach. Flexing helps close any communication gaps by clarifying the message, so the message resonates with the individual. This act of flexing promotes inclusiveness by elevating and welcoming the diversity of cognitive thought.

Recommendations for Practice

Navigating change in a school is complex. The dynamic nature of how people prefer to think and behave added to the complexities of change in schools provides the

CRSL leader with practices and strategies to differentiate their approach to understand, connect and communicate with the diverse ways people prefer to think and behave. School leaders need to allocate time to critically self-reflect to understand how and why they act and communicate as they do through their multiple identities, psychometric tools such as the Emergenetics Profile provide an authentic and structured frame to make sense of mental models. Critical self-reflection is the first step toward understanding others and determining the most appropriate approach to connecting and communicating.

As these school leaders understood how to flex by moving out of their comfort zones, they changed their approach to accommodate and meet the needs of others. This shift in thinking and behaving acknowledges the individuals to build inclusive spaces that welcome diversity. All three school leaders in this study used the information of themselves through critical self-reflection and their Emergenetics Profile to identify leadership strategies to shift the thinking and actions of others resulting in connecting and communicating. Furthermore, due to the uniqueness of each of the three school leaders as defined by their Emergenetics Profile, a differentiated method for self-reflection was observed. Again, this supports humanizing by promoting and supporting the individuality of each school leader. As a result, the frame of Emergenetics to guide the critical self-reflective process had impact through meaningful deconstruction and reconstruction process of three school leaders' mental models.

However, critical self-reflective practices are not significant components of leadership preparation programs or continuous professional development for practicing school leaders. School leaders need to be provided with the strategies and constructs to engage in critical self-reflection in order to deconstruct and reconstruct their own mental

models. Engaging in critical self-reflective practices requires the understanding of the practice and its intended outcome to ensure impact and results. To simply ask a school leader to critically reflect on their cultural identity to identify their biases is not enough, they must be taught how to do so and provided with resources to support the development of their self-awareness.

More importantly the implications for teaching and developing critical self-reflective practices with school leaders to deconstruct and reconstruct mental models is paramount. The ability to differentiate leadership approaches to transform schools to inclusive and equitable cultures takes courage. Equally important are the relationships within the school community, therefore having self and social awareness to deconstruct and reconstruct mental models to eliminate deficit thinking is an important consideration. For those reasons the following recommendations are offered for:

1. **District Level Leaders:** From a system perspective, district leadership integrates with all aspects of the organization. To that end, district leaders should model the way by incorporating critical self-reflective practices that include understanding of self to understand others. Specifically, district leaders who have supervisory roles for building level leaders will need to know, understand, and practice critical self-reflection to share with their direct how they prefer to think, learn, communicate and problem solve. It will be important for district leaders to recognize the differences in the ways their direct reports prefer to think, learn, communicate and problem solve this process to differentiate their interactions. This differentiation of support promotes humanizing and inclusiveness and will be continuity to the system.

2. **Building Level Leader:** Like the district level leader recommendation, building level leaders will need to model the way by sharing how they prefer to think, learn, communicate and problem solve with their staff and school community members. Providing this level of transparency or vulnerability can lead to more respectful relationships. Along with this transparency, building leaders will also need to consider the perspectives of their staff and school community members who think, learn, communicate and problem solve differently to differentiate their interactions as they advance the disruption of deficit thinking.
3. **Principal Preparation Programs:** Principal preparation programs need to consider ways to develop future school leaders who are able to clearly articulate their multiple identities while gaining insight on strategic ways to work with others. This begins through a defined process of reflection to deconstruct and reconstruct their own mental models. The fundamental focus of this reflection process should incorporate self and social awareness, including the ability to articulate the commonalities and differences between self and others. Furthermore, this defined process of reflection to deconstruct and reconstruct mental models should be included in all academic coursework as students continue to define who they will become as future school leaders.

The promotion of humanizing and the ability to critique with promise (Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018) is crucial to develop as CRSL leaders. With critical self-reflection at the heart of this work, the findings of this study indicate the significance of a framework or construct for the understanding of self and others. The Emergenetics Profile provided a construct for school leaders to examine themselves and others using a common language

to analyze and interpret events and interactions through a strength-based lens. While the use of Emergenetics Profile an argument can be made for school leaders to develop and structure their process to deconstruct and reconstruct their mental models from the key questions in Table 11, *Emergenetics Attributes and Leadership Strategies*. As school leaders answer these questions and consider the leadership actions contained in this table to deconstruct their mental models, they can reflect through all seven Attributes of the Emergenetics model. Furthermore, as they begin to reconstruct their thinking using the Emergenetics Attributes and Leadership Strategies table, the decisions and leadership actions will also incorporate all seven of the Attributes, thus providing a more comprehensive approach to disrupting deficit thinking.

Limitations

This study was conducted during the COVID 19 pandemic. The societal upheaval felt across the country by the elevated spotlight on racial injustice from the murder of George Floyd; and the Asian American hate crimes to the inequities within our health care system to response to COVID 19 in our historically marginalized communities. Equally important is the impact that COVID 19 had on our nation's schools. School leaders and teachers were required to shift their focus from instruction to COVID health and safety protocols and the constant change to the school schedules. Most schools were forced to transition to online learning platforms and, in many situations, lacked the proper infrastructure and resources to provide quality and inclusive learning experiences for all students.

As a result, the focus of the three school principals on health and safety protocols may have conflicted with their focus on socially just practices and may have influenced

the self-reported data. Additionally, the data collection was confined to email communications and virtual meetings, thus eliminating the opportunity to gather observational data in the school setting. Collecting observational data may have provided additional insight to construct the meaning of the participants' experiences. Furthermore, the interactions between the principals and their staff occurred via a virtual online platform for a majority of the school year. These virtual interactions may be different from how they interact in an in-person environment. The strategies selected by the principals to disrupt deficit thinking to understand, connect and communicate may have been affected by these virtual interactions.

The timing of this study may have affected the findings. This study was conducted during the spring semester over eight weeks. The spring semester is challenging due to end-of-year requirements such as academic testing and the advancement of students to the next year's grade level. Therefore, the emphasis on disrupting deficit thinking may not have been as prevalent as it was at the start of the school year.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings combined with the limitations of this study promote the consideration for future studies. The current study focused on only a portion of the CRSL Agility Framework. Therefore, the first consideration would be to conduct a study to investigate the influence of the Emergenetics Profile on relational trust within the context of CRSL strategies. Examining school leaders' ability to flex and differentiate their approach using their Emergenetics Profiles through critical self-reflection would be important to consider. Trust is foundational for relationships (Bachmann et al., 2015).

Bachmann et al. (2015) state that this acknowledgment requires individuals or systems to evaluate individual perspectives from power dynamics, social norms, social order, rituals, and symbolic acts. Transparency, another element of trust, requires information to be shared about self with others in timely and relevant ways (Bachmann et al., 2015)

Tschannen-Moran (2014) also highlights the importance of transparency through her facets of trust, specifically openness, the ability to communicate accurate information, and invites shared decision making, which increases empowerment. Lawson et al. (2017) found trust is increased in organizations that have leaders who employ the skill of empathetic listening, build trust through clarity and coherence of communication and provide shared responsibilities through collaborative work. Therefore, will the Emergenetics Profile influence how school leaders to differentiating their approach with others to build trust?

Another consideration for future research would be to investigate flexing from the perspective of the Emergenetics Profile. Understanding when and how school leaders decide to flex (step out of their comfort zones) to meet the needs of their communities could add to the body of research regarding CRSL leadership practices. In other words, does flexing support the work of CRSL school leaders and influence the growth of culturally responsive school cultures?

Expanding this current study to include all fifteen of the Emergenetics Profile types would be important to broaden implications to differentiate leadership approaches in the school community. This study included three of the sixteen Emergenetics Profile types, Mrs. Hamilton as a concrete thinker, Mr. Smith as a divergent thinker, and Mrs. Longford as an abstract thinker. The other Emergenetics profile types are convergent

thinking, combinations known as committee profiles, individuals with three or four preferences, and unimodal profiles, individuals with only one thinking preference (see Table 12). How might the current findings be similar or different from the other thirteen profiles? Furthermore, increasing the length of time for the study may provide a more comprehensive view of the strategies school leaders leverage to grow their staffs' knowledge and actions regarding the disruption of deficit thinking.

Table 12
Emergenetics Profile Types (Browning, 2018)

Profile Type	Definition	Profile Combinations
Unimodal	Singular thinking Attribute as a preference	Analytical Only Structural Only Social Only Conceptual Only
Bimodal	Two thinking Attributes as preferences	Analytical-Conceptual Analytical-Structural Structural-Social Social-Conceptual Structural-Conceptual Analytical-Social
Trimodal	Three thinking Attributes as preferences	Analytical-Structural-Conceptual Analytical-Structural-Social Analytical-Social-Conceptual Structural-Social-Conceptual
Quadrимodal	All four thinking Attributes as preferences	Analytical-Structural-Social-Conceptual

Still another consideration for future research would be to explore the influence of the Emergenetics Profile to deconstruct and reconstruct mental models to differentiate interactions along racial lines. When considering what some call “racial battle fatigue”, the unrelenting daily pressure of oppression and discrimination from the work of William Smith a critical race theorist (Smith et al., 2007), how is courageous leadership

influenced from a leader of color? In other words, how might the Emergenetics Profile influence school leaders of color who face making difficult decisions when disrupting deficit thinking?

As a final consideration for future research, an investigation into the influence of code switching and the impact on leadership behaviors for leaders of color would be valuable. It would be important to gain insight and understanding regarding the complexities of navigating an educational school system while deconstructing and reconstructing mental models as a leader of color. Examining how the Emergenetics Profile influences code switching in leadership would highlight the behaviors of leaders of color when thinking through their interactions from their cultural and leadership identities to disrupt deficit thinking practices.

Conclusion

Culturally responsive school leaders are instrumental to transformative school cultures. Ensuring an inclusive and equitable learning environment is the heart of social justice leadership. As CRSL leaders navigate the complexities of the educational system, they must understand how to pivot and demonstrate agility when working with diverse individuals who think and behave differently. The results of this study found the Emergenetics Profile provided a frame for critical self-reflection for three urban school principals. Furthermore, using the Emergenetics Profile to critically self-reflect shifted their thinking about the actions of others. Through this shift of mindsets or mental models, these three urban school principals could differentiate their approach with others to better understand, connect and communicate.

Tenet four of TLT (Shields, 2018) the presence of positive, respectful relationships converges trust and social identity positions is necessary for dialogue and discourse. Through this linguistic discourse, interpretations of truth, transparency, and information are filtered through trust, impacting one's understanding of self and interactions with another. The Emergenetics Profile provided a way for three urban school leaders to understand how information is filtered for themselves and others. This perspective supports the school leader's ability to clearly articulate the beliefs and values that influenced who they are as individuals and leaders.

This study contributes to the existing body of research on critical self-reflection by extending the theoretical concepts of critical consciousness (Capper et al., 2006) and interrogation of belief systems that informs leadership practices. According to Capper et al. (2006), school leaders need to build relationships to network people to engage with equitable practices. Integrating the Emergenetics Profile with critical self-reflection influenced three school leaders to differentiate their approaches to build relationships and communicate with clarity. Furthermore, the integration of the Emergenetics Profile with critical self-reflection highlighted strategies that were more aligned to individual needs. Equally important, all three principals critically reflected on their actions and attitudes to amend their behavior to interact productively with their staff.

The CRSL Agility framework shows promise to support the growth of CRSL leaders to enact change and disrupt deficit thinking. CRSL leaders who can understand how different individuals prefer to think, learn, and communicate will leverage this information to match rapport quickly. Engaging in examining through multiple perspectives will lead to understanding and connection, promoting critical conversations

to inform inclusive and equitable practices. Each school leader is a unique leader. Finding ways to support the school leaders will be important. Critically reflecting through the Emergenetics Profiles promotes growth through self-awareness and understanding of others through social awareness. Through this connection, school leaders can encourage inclusive learning environments where diversity is honored.

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Appendix A



University of Denver Consent Form for Participation in Research

Title of Research Study: Culturally Responsive School Leadership Agility: A Journey

Through Critical Self-Reflection

Researcher(s): Debbie Brown
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Kristina Hesbol

Purpose

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research is to understand how your Emergenetics® Profile influences your culturally responsive leadership strategies through critical self-reflection.

Procedures

If you consent to be part of this research study, you will be invited to participate in a CRSL Agility Leadership Dispositional Survey, reflective journaling and a 45 minute interview.

Voluntary Participation

Participating in this research study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose **not to answer any question during the interview or during the survey** for any reason without penalty or other benefits to which you are entitled.

Risks or Discomforts

The researcher has taken steps to minimize the risks of this study. Even so, as a participant, you may still experience some risks related to feelings that may be evoked from questions being asked in the interview or from the survey. The study may include other risks that are not known at this time. If, however, you feel embarrassed or uncomfortable at any time to answer a question, you may decline to answer the questions or end the interview or the survey. You may also choose to withdraw from the study. There will be no penalty, no negative consequences, and no removal of other benefits to which you are entitled if you decline to answer any question, end the interview, or withdraw from the study.

Benefits

While there may not be any other direct benefit to your participation in this research study you may benefit indirectly from the contribution of your experiences and perceptions to the learning of teacher collective efficacy and network improvement structures.

Incentives to participate

You will receive a \$ 20.00 Amazon Gift Card for participating in this research project.

Study Costs

You will not be expected to pay any costs associated with the study.

Confidentiality

The researchers will make all efforts to keep your information private. There will no identifiers linking you to this study and a pseudonym will be used to keep your information safe throughout the study. The name of the school district will also be kept confidential and a pseudonym for your school district will be used. The researcher will destroy the original data once it has been transcribed and the study is completed. The results from this research will be used for learning purposes only. Information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law.

Member Checking:

Your transcribed interview will be sent to you as a follow-up to ensure that your responses were recorded accurately. If you do not agree with any parts of the written transcription or feel that your responses were not accurately recorded please let the researcher know.

Questions

If you have any questions about this project or your participation, please feel free to ask questions now or contact Debbie Brown at debbie.brown@du.edu at any time.

Options for Participation

Please initial your choice for the options below:

___ The researchers may audio record me during this study.

___ The researchers may **NOT** audio record me during this study.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Participant Signature

Date

CRSL Agility Dispositional Survey

Please respond to each of the statements below as you consider how your Emergenetics® Profile influences your work as a school leader.

Participant ID:

Strongly Disagree=1 Disagree=2 Somewhat Disagree=3 Neutral=4 Somewhat agree=4 Agree=6 Strongly Agree=7

Self-Reflection

To what extent am I able to leverage my Emergenetics® Profile to:

Identify and confront bias toward others.

Identify what make me feel “scratchy”/uncomfortable and shift my perspective.

Connect my cultural experiences.

Identify how my decision making is influenced through my preferences.

Identify the assets that another brings to the team

Close the communication gap (intent-impact) by flexing into my least preferred attribute,

Take a multiple perspectives position from different combinations of thought.

Differentiate my approach toward another.

Humanizing

To what extent am I able to leverage my Emergenetics® Profile to:

Invite community based knowledge into my school.

Provide opportunities to incorporate community based knowledge to influence the curriculum in my school.

Invite Indigenous voices to contribute to all aspects of my school

Support teachers in seeing the assets students bring to the classroom for learning.

Relational Trust

To what extent am I able to leverage my Emergenetics® Profile to:

Trust all teachers in my school have the best interest of all students.

Ensure all teachers trust one another.

Ensure my staff takes collective responsibility for the treatment, successes and failures of all students.

Enhance the trust all teachers have in me as the school leader

Promoting Inclusion of Social and Capital Wealth

To what extent am I able to leverage my Emergenetics® Profile to:

Engage teachers to incorporate the cultural capital of their students in the classroom.

Engage teachers to utilize the funds of knowledge students bring to the classroom in their lessons.