

Elementary School Principals' Reported Culturally Responsive Leadership Practices: A Quantitative Examination by Race

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Abstract

As student populations become increasingly diverse and educational inequities continue to disproportionately affect students from historically marginalized groups, culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) has emerged as an important framework for fostering equitable and inclusive learning environments. This quantitative study examined elementary school principals' practices of culturally responsive school leadership in Florida's Panhandle region during the post-COVID-19 era. Guided by culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally responsive school leadership frameworks, the study investigated whether principals' practices of culturally responsive leadership differed by race. Data were collected from 46 elementary school principals representing three racial groups: Black, Caucasian, and Hispanic. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire and the Culturally Responsive Principals Rating Scale (CRPRS), which assessed five domains:

school morale and pulse, ethics of caring, ethics of bonding, relationship building, and teacher effectiveness. Reliability analyses indicated strong overall internal consistency, with reliability coefficients exceeding .80. Descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation analyses, and Pearson chi-square tests of independence were used to examine the relationship between principals' races and practices of culturally responsive school leadership. Results indicated no statistically significant association between principals' race and culturally responsive school leadership practices, $\chi^2 (4, N = 46) = 4.14, p = .388$. The likelihood ratio test was also not statistically significant, $G^2 (4, N = 46) = 6.36, p = .174$. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was not rejected. These findings suggest that, within this sample, principals' practices of culturally responsive school leadership were not significantly associated with race. Rather than demographic characteristics alone, culturally responsive leadership may be shaped by professional experiences, ethical leadership dispositions, and relationship-centered approaches to school leadership. The findings underscore the importance of cultivating inclusive school climates, strengthening school-community partnerships, and providing ongoing professional development to support culturally responsive leadership in diverse educational settings. Implications for leadership preparation, educational policy, and future research are discussed.

Keywords: Culturally responsive school leadership; culturally responsive pedagogy; race; educational equity; achievement gaps; elementary school principals; school leadership; post-COVID-19 education

Introduction

Persistent racial and educational inequities continue to influence the experiences and outcomes of students from historically marginalized groups across the United States. Despite decades of educational reform, disparities affecting Black students and other students of color remain evident across school contexts (Berwick, 2021; U.S. Department of Education (DOE), 2016). These disparities have increasingly prompted scholars to examine the role of school leadership in creating equitable and culturally responsive educational environments (Ladson-Billings, 2006, 2007).

Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) and culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) provide important frameworks for addressing educational inequities. While CRP emphasizes culturally relevant teaching and learning, CRSL extends these principles to schoolwide leadership practices. Culturally responsive principals recognize students' cultural backgrounds, build meaningful relationships with families and communities, promote inclusive school climates, and examine practices that may contribute to inequitable outcomes. As school leaders, principals play an important role

in establishing the organizational conditions that influence teaching, learning, student belonging, and educational opportunities.

Race is an important consideration when examining culturally responsive leadership because principals bring diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to their leadership practices. However, culturally responsive leadership may also be influenced by professional preparation, leadership experience, school context, and relationships with students, teachers, families, and communities. Therefore, examining whether principals' practices of culturally responsive leadership differ by race can provide insight into the factors associated with culturally responsive leadership practices.

This study examined elementary school principals' practices of culturally responsive school leadership in Florida's Panhandle region during the post-COVID-19 era. Specifically, the study investigated whether principals' practices of culturally responsive leadership differed by race. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from 46 elementary school principals representing Black, Caucasian, and Hispanic racial groups. The Culturally Responsive Principal Rating Scale (CRPRS) was used to examine five domains of culturally responsive leadership: school morale and pulse, ethics of caring, ethics of bonding, relationship building, and teacher effectiveness. A Pearson chi-square test of independence was used to determine whether a statistically significant association existed between principals' races and their practices of culturally responsive school leadership.

By examining the relationship between race and CRSL practices, this study contributes empirical evidence to the growing literature on culturally responsive school leadership and educational equity. The findings may inform leadership preparation, professional development, and school improvement efforts aimed at supporting culturally responsive practices in diverse educational settings.

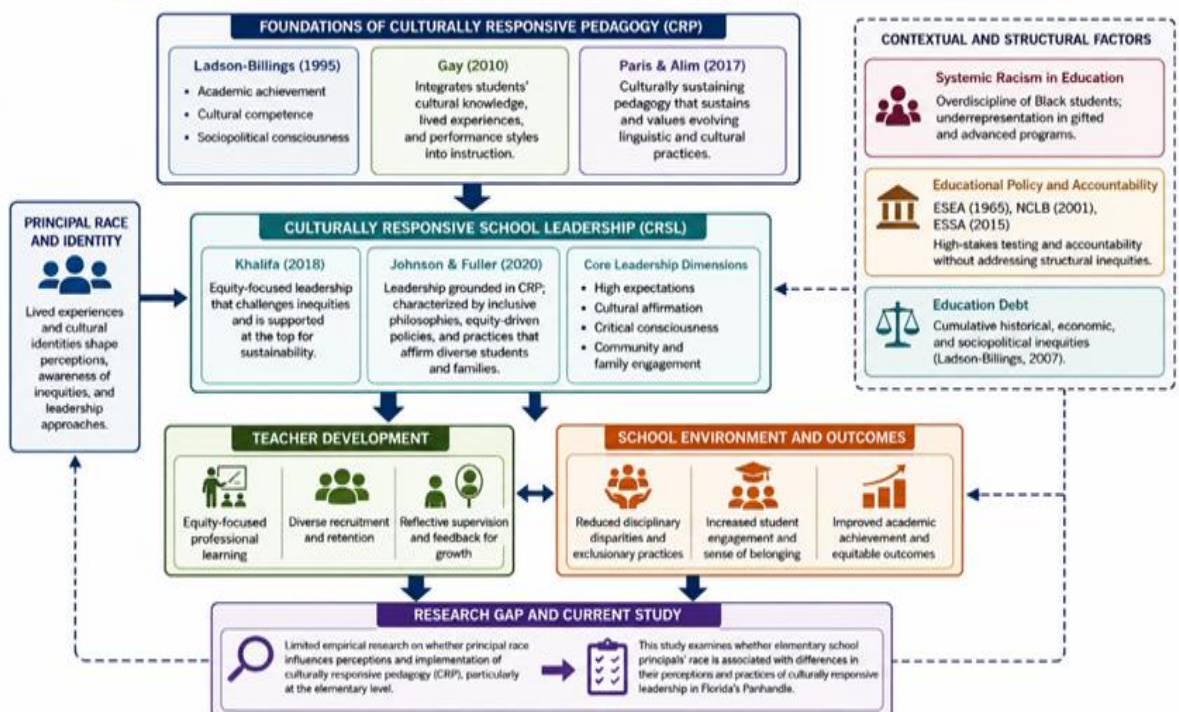
Research Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the development and theoretical foundations of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) and culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL). The review focuses on race, educational equity, leadership practices, and empirical research related to principals' practices of culturally responsive leadership. It concludes by identifying gaps in literature and the need for research examining the relationship between principals' races and practices of CRSL.

Theoretical Foundations of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) is founded on the principle that students' cultural backgrounds and experiences should be recognized and incorporated into the teaching and learning process. Drawing from multicultural education, critical race theory, and social constructivism, CRP emphasizes equity, inclusion, and academic excellence for all students. The framework encourages educators to build meaningful connections between students' cultural identities and classroom instruction while maintaining high expectations and fostering positive learning environments. Understanding these theoretical foundations is essential for promoting educational practices that support diverse learners and improve student outcomes.

Figure 1. Theoretical Foundations of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive School Leadership



Note. CRP = culturally responsive pedagogy; CRSL = culturally responsive school leadership; ESEA = Elementary and Secondary Education Act; NCLB = No Child Left Behind Act; ESSA = Every Student Succeeds Act.

The conceptual framework is grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). Ladson-Billings (1995) identified academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness as core elements of CRP, while Gay (2010) emphasized integrating students' cultural knowledge and lived experiences into educational practice. CSP extends these principles by emphasizing the sustaining and valuing of students' cultural and linguistic identities (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

CRSL applies these principles to school leadership through equity-focused practices, cultural affirmation, relationship building, high expectations, and community engagement (Khalifa, 2018; Johnson & Fuller, 2020). The framework also recognizes the influence of systemic racism, educational policy, and historical inequities or education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2007). Consistent with the purpose of this study, race is examined as a demographic characteristic in relation to principals' practices of CRSL. This framework supports the study's examination of whether elementary school principals' practices of culturally responsive school leadership differ by race.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership and Cultural Context

Research suggests that effective leadership practices may vary across cultural contexts and communities (Bryant, 1998; Hofstede, 1991). Scholarship on leadership in marginalized communities highlights traditions of resistance, collective responsibility, and community advocacy, particularly within Black and Latino educational contexts (Taylor, 2010). Johnson and Fuller (2020) describe culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) as grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy and characterized by inclusive philosophies, equity-focused policies, and practices that affirm students and families from diverse cultural backgrounds. CRSL also emphasizes high expectations, critical consciousness, community engagement, and structures that support historically marginalized students (Khalifa, 2018). Some scholars suggest that leaders lived experiences with marginalization may influence their awareness of educational inequities (Gooden & O'Doherty, 2023). These perspectives provide a basis for examining whether principals' racial backgrounds are associated with differences in practices of culturally responsive school leadership.

Advocacy, High Expectations, and Critical Consciousness

A consistent theme in culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) research is the importance of maintaining high expectations while affirming students' cultural identities. Culturally responsive leaders serve as "warm demanders," combining academic rigor with care, trust, and strong relationships (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Irvine, 1990). They also advocate for marginalized students by challenging deficit perspectives and addressing inequitable school practices (Aleman, 2009). Critical consciousness is central to this work and involves examining race, bias, power, and institutional practices that may contribute to inequity (Gooden, 2005). These principles are relevant to the present study because they reflect key dimensions of culturally responsive leadership and provide context for examining principals' practices of CRSL across racial groups.

Teacher Development and Culturally Responsive School Environments

Teachers' preparation and professional development for working with culturally diverse students are important components of culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL). School leaders support culturally responsive practice by providing professional learning, equity-focused supervision, and opportunities for teachers to examine cultural differences and instructional practices (Gay, 2010). CRSL also emphasizes inclusive discipline, culturally affirming learning environments, and strong school–community relationships, particularly in addressing racial disparities in disciplinary outcomes (Khalifa, 2012; Skiba, 2002).

Educational policy and accountability systems also shape the context in which principals enact culturally responsive leadership. Although federal policies, including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), No Child Left Behind Act (2001), and Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), sought to improve educational outcomes and address disparities, accountability efforts have often emphasized standardized achievement measures while broader structural inequities remain (Ravitch, 2016; U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), 2017). Ladson-Billings' (2007) concept of education debt further emphasizes that educational disparities reflect accumulated historical, economic, and sociopolitical inequities rather than individual student deficits. These policies and structural conditions provide important context for understanding principals' practices of culturally responsive school leadership and the role of race within those practices.

Implications for Leadership and Equity

The literature indicates that educational inequities cannot be addressed through surface-level reforms or test-based accountability alone. Culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) provides an equity-focused approach by emphasizing cultural affirmation, community engagement, critical reflection, and inclusive school environments (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Effective leaders can support these goals through equitable practices, sustained professional learning, and attention to the experiences of historically marginalized students.

Despite growing scholarships on CRSL, limited empirical research has examined whether principals' racial backgrounds are associated with their practices of culturally responsive leadership, particularly among elementary school principals. This gap supports the need for quantitative research examining the relationship between principals' races and practices of CRSL. Accordingly, the present study investigated whether elementary school principals' race was significantly associated with their practices of culturally responsive school leadership in Florida's Panhandle region. The findings may

inform leadership preparation, professional development, and equity-focused school improvement efforts.

Equity and the Role of Principals in the U.S. and International Contexts

Equity-centered leadership positions principals as important influences on school practices that address disparities in access, opportunity, and achievement. In the United States, principals can advance equity by fostering inclusive school climates, addressing bias in discipline, supporting culturally responsive instruction, and strengthening family and community engagement. Research suggests that culturally responsive leadership may be shaped by professional preparation, reflective practice, and leadership experiences rather than demographic characteristics alone (Khalifa et al., 2016).

International research similarly highlights the role of school principals in advancing equity through culturally responsive leadership practices that influence school culture, instruction, and community engagement (Highfield et al., 2024; Jumaah et al., 2025). These findings provide broader context for the present study's examination of whether principals' race is associated with differences in practices of culturally responsive school leadership among elementary principals in Florida's Panhandle region.

Culturally Responsive Practices in Elementary Schools

Empirical studies demonstrate that elementary school principals who engage in culturally responsive leadership practices, such as culturally affirming instruction, inclusive school climates, and intentional family and community engagement are more likely to support equitable outcomes for diverse student populations (Khalifa et al., 2016; Theoharis, 2007)

Evidence shows that elementary principals who use culturally responsive leadership practices, such as culturally affirming instruction, family engagement, and inclusive school environments are more likely to support equitable outcomes for diverse student populations (Highfield et al., 2024; Mugisha, 2013). Despite this evidence, limited research has examined how principals' racial identities influence culturally responsive leadership practices in elementary school settings, particularly across international contexts (Jumaah et al., 2025).

Overall, the literature indicates that culturally responsive leadership is a critical mechanism for advancing equity in elementary schools across both U.S. and international contexts. Principals who intentionally center culture, identity, and community engagement are better positioned to disrupt inequities and create inclusive learning environments. However, the limited focus on how principals' racial identities intersect with leadership practice highlights a significant gap in the research. Addressing this gap is essential for

strengthening equity-focused leadership preparation and for deepening understanding of how leadership identity influences culturally responsive decision-making in elementary schools globally.

Summary and Research Gap

The literature identifies culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) as an important approach to advancing educational equity through inclusive school climates, relationship building, cultural affirmation, and community engagement (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2006). However, limited research has examined whether principals' race is associated with differences in practices of CRSL, particularly among elementary school principals.

This study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between race and practices of culturally responsive school leadership among 46 elementary school principals in Florida's Panhandle region. Using the CRSL Rating Scale and Pearson chi-square test of independence, the study provides empirical evidence regarding whether principals' practices of CRSL differ by race.

Research Methodology

Research Design and Purpose: The purpose of this study was to determine whether principals' race was associated with differences in reported culturally responsive leadership practices. Specifically, the study examined whether female and male elementary school principals differed in their reported implementation of culturally responsive leadership practices within their school contexts. The study was guided by the Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) framework, which emphasizes equity-centered leadership, critical self-awareness, culturally responsive instructional practices, inclusive school environments, and meaningful engagement with students, families, and communities (Khalifa et al., 2016). The CRSL framework provided the theoretical foundation for examining how principals perceive and implement culturally responsive leadership practices within diverse educational settings.

Population and Sample: The study was conducted across fourteen school districts in Florida's Panhandle region, representing rural, suburban, and urban school settings. The target population consisted of sixty-six elementary school principals employed within these districts. All sixty-six principals were invited to participate in the study, and forty-six completed the survey, which yielded a 70% response rate.

Participants represented diverse racial backgrounds reflective of the demographics within this region of Florida, including African American (non-Hispanic) (58.7%), Caucasian (21.7%), and Hispanic (19.6%). Purposeful

sampling was utilized to ensure representation of the school principals' race. This sampling approach supported the inclusion of varied perspectives regarding culturally responsive leadership practices among elementary school principals (Florida Department of Education (FDOE, 2022); National Teacher and Principal Survey, 2021).

Table 1: Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Participating Elementary School Principals

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency (n)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Sample</i>	<i>Participating elementary School Principals</i>	46	100.0%
<i>Races</i>	<i>African American</i>	27	58.7%
	<i>Caucasian</i>	10	21.7%
	<i>Hispanic</i>	9	19.6%
<i>Years of Leadership Experience</i>	<i>1 year</i>	22	48.4%
	<i>2 years</i>	6	13.0%
	<i>3 years</i>	3	6.5%
	<i>4 years</i>	4	8.7%
	<i>7 years</i>	7	15.2%
<i>Years at Current School</i>	<i>1 year</i>	23	50.6%
	<i>3 years</i>	6	12.9%
	<i>5 years</i>	8	17.6%
	<i>8 years</i>	9	19.6%

Note. N = 46. Percentages are based on the total sample. The reported leadership-experience frequencies currently account for 46 participants.

Summary

The sample consisted of 46 elementary school principals. African American (non-Hispanic) principals represented the largest racial group, with 27 participants (58.7%), followed by Caucasian principals with 10 participants (21.7%) and Hispanic principals with 9 participants (19.6%). The sample also reflected variation in principals' years of leadership experience and tenure at their current schools. Overall, the demographic characteristics demonstrate that the study included principals with diverse racial backgrounds and varying levels of professional leadership experience, providing context for examining reported culturally responsive leadership practices across racial groups.

Research Context and Setting: This study was conducted in the Florida Panhandle, a geographic region located in the northwestern portion of Florida. The region extends approximately 200 miles from Escambia County to Jefferson County and includes a range of rural, suburban, and urban communities. The region includes diverse educational contexts, including rural, suburban, and urban communities. This geographic diversity provides an important context for examining culturally responsive leadership practices

because schools within the region serve students from varied cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds.

The study included elementary school principals from fourteen public educational settings located throughout the Florida Panhandle. Participating districts included Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes, Washington, Bay, Jackson, Calhoun, Gadsden, Leon, Jefferson, Gulf, and Madison counties, as well as Florida A&M University Developmental Research School. These educational settings represent diverse school contexts, including small rural districts, suburban communities, and larger metropolitan areas. Examining principals across these contexts provided an opportunity to explore culturally responsive leadership practices across varied educational environments.

Participants and Sampling Procedures: A purposive sampling approach was used to identify elementary school principals who met the study criteria. Purposive sampling is appropriate when researchers seek participants with specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research purpose (Yin, 2016). This approach allowed the study to examine principals reported culturally responsive leadership practices across race and leadership experience categories.

A total of sixty-six elementary school principals were invited to participate in the study. Forty-six principals completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 69.7%. The final analytic sample consisted of 46 elementary school principals, including 27 (58.7%) African Americans, 10 (21.7%) Caucasians, and 9 (19.6%) Hispanics principals (45.7%). Regarding professional experience, most participants reported one to two years of leadership experience (67.4%) and one to three years of service in their current school assignment (65.2%). The demographic composition of the sample provided representation across race groups and leadership experience levels relevant to examining culturally responsive leadership practices.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: Participants were included in the study if they met the following criteria: (a) currently served as an elementary school principal within one of the participating Florida Panhandle school districts, (b) held responsibility for instructional leadership and school improvement initiatives, and (c) voluntarily consented to participate in the study. Individuals were excluded if they were not currently serving as elementary school principals, served only in assistant principal or district-level administrative roles, or did not provide sufficient survey responses for inclusion in the final analysis. Only completed surveys were included in the final analytic dataset.

Instrumentation: Data was collected using the Culturally Responsive Practices for Principals Survey (CRPRS), a self-report instrument designed to measure principals' culturally responsive leadership practices. The CRPRS was developed from research conducted through the National Monitoring

Study of Student Achievement and the University of Otago and was originally designed to examine culturally responsive educational practices and relationships between educators and Māori students (Berg, 2012). Because the original instrument was developed within a Māori educational context, careful consideration was given to its adaptation for use with elementary school principals in Florida public schools. The adaptation process focused on maintaining alignment with the original constructs while examining culturally responsive leadership practices within a U.S. educational context. Constructs measured by the CRPRS, including ethical leadership, relationship building, cultural responsiveness, and equity-oriented practices, align with established dimensions of culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016). Items were reviewed for contextual relevance to elementary school leadership while maintaining the conceptual intent of the original instrument. Although prior research demonstrated evidence of reliability and construct validity, adapting an instrument developed within a Māori educational context represents a potential limitation. Therefore, findings should be interpreted with consideration that additional validation studies across diverse U.S. educational settings are needed. Permission to use the CRPRS was obtained from the instrument developer, Dr. David Berg.

Scoring Procedures and Categorization: The CRPRS utilizes a four-point Likert-type response scale consisting of 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Usually, and 4 = Always. Responses were initially collected and scored using the original four-point scale.

Inferential analyses: composite culturally responsive leadership scores were recoded into three categorical levels to support chi-square analysis and address concerns related to sparse cell frequencies. The categories were defined as:

- Low culturally responsive leadership: Mean scores ranging from 1.00–2.00.
- Moderate culturally responsive leadership: Mean scores ranging from 2.10–3.00.
- High culturally responsive leadership: Mean scores ranging from 3.10–4.00.

The “Never” response category contained limited responses within the current sample and was combined with “Sometimes” to form the low responsiveness category. This recategorization was used solely for inferential analysis and did not alter the original instrument scoring procedures.

Reliability and Validity of the Instrument: Previous research examining the CRPRS reported factor correlations ranging from 0.52 to 0.90, indicating moderate to strong relationships among instrument domains (Berg, 2012). Reliability analyses from prior studies demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with overall coefficient alpha values exceeding the

recommended threshold of .80. Evidence supporting construct validity included confirmatory factor analysis, factor correlations, and reliability estimates reported during instrument development (Berg, 2012). These findings suggest that the CRPRS adequately measures dimensions of culturally responsive leadership practices. For the current study, internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha based on responses from the participating principals. Reliability estimates from the present sample were evaluated to determine whether the instrument demonstrated acceptable consistency within the Florida Panhandle sample.

Data Collection Procedures: Following IRB approval and district authorization, electronic surveys were distributed to eligible elementary school principals using Google Forms. Participants received information regarding the purpose of the study, confidentiality procedures, voluntary participation, and informed consent requirements before completing the survey. Survey responses were collected electronically and exported into IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28 for analysis. Data collection procedures were designed to protect participant confidentiality and ensure accurate reporting of principals' practices and practices related to culturally responsive leadership.

Data Screening and Missing Data Handling: Prior to analysis, survey data were screened for completeness, accuracy, and potential data entry errors. Responses were reviewed to determine whether missing data patterns required additional statistical procedures. Only completed survey responses were included in the final dataset. No missing data requiring imputation procedures were identified; therefore, analyses were conducted using complete cases.

Data Analysis: Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were calculated to summarize participant demographic characteristics and response patterns. A Pearson chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine whether a statistically significant association existed between principals' race and culturally responsive leadership practice categories. Two-way contingency tables were generated to evaluate observed and expected frequencies across race and leadership practice categories. Because of the relatively small sample size ($N = 46$), expected cell frequencies were examined prior to interpretation of the chi-square results. The likelihood ratio chi-square statistic was also evaluated because of its utility when expected frequencies are limited. Statistical significance was determined using an alpha level of .05. The null hypothesis stated that there was no statistically significant association between principals' race and their reported culturally responsive leadership practices in Florida's Panhandle.

Research Results

Racial Distribution of Public K–12 Elementary Principals in Florida’s Panhandle

The racial composition of school principals provides important context for examining culturally responsive school leadership, particularly because leaders’ professional experiences and perspectives may influence how they understand and enact equity-oriented practices (Warren, 2017; Khalifa et al., 2016). In the present study, African American principals represented the largest racial group (58.7%), followed by Caucasian principals (21.7%) and Hispanic principals (19.6%). This distribution provides descriptive context for examining reported culturally responsive leadership practices across racial groups. However, the findings did not indicate a statistically significant association between principals’ race and reported culturally responsive leadership practices, $\chi^2(4, N = 46) = 4.14, p = .388$. Therefore, racial identity should not be interpreted as a determinant of culturally responsive leadership practices based on the findings of this study.

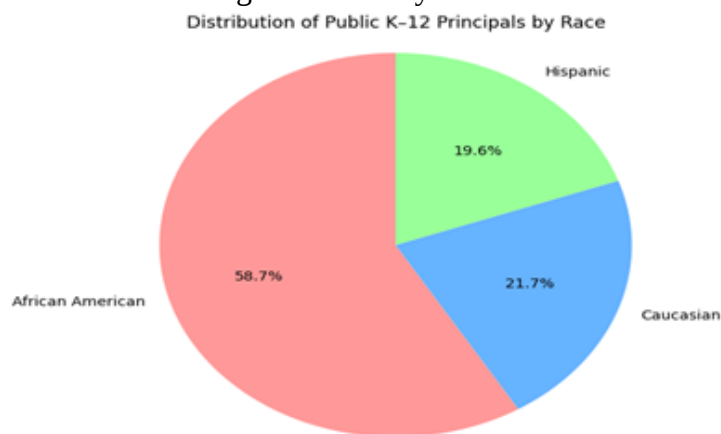


Figure 2: Distribution of Public K–12 Principals by Race

The pie chart titled “*Distribution of Public K–12 Principals by Race*” illustrates the racial composition of principals across three groups: African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic. Overall, the data indicate that African American principals represent much of the sample at **58.7%**, which is more than half of all reported principals. Caucasian principals comprise the second largest group at **21.7%**, followed closely by Hispanic principals at **19.6%**. These findings suggest a racially diverse principal workforce within the sample, though representation is not evenly distributed across groups. African American principals are disproportionately represented compared to the other two groups, which are similar in proportion. This distribution may be important for understanding leadership demographics in K–12 settings and for informing discussions on representation in school leadership.

Principals' Practices of Culturally Responsive Leadership by Race

A cross-tabulation analysis (contingency table) was conducted to examine the distribution of principals' practices of culturally responsive leadership across racial groups. The groups were comprised of Black (n = 27), Caucasian (n = 10), and Hispanic (n = 9). Responses on the Culturally Responsive Rating Scale for Principals were categorized into four levels: **Never**, **Sometimes**, **Fairly Often**, and **Always**. The results revealed that most participants reported engaging in culturally responsive leadership practices **Fairly Often** (n = 36, 78.3%). **Always** reported (n = 8, 17.4%), **Sometimes** (n = 2, 4.3%), and **Never** (n = 0, 0.0%).

Table 2: Culturally Responsive Outcomes by Race

Culturally Responsive Outcomes by Race						
Race						
Culturally Responsive Outcomes	Black		Caucasian		Hispanic	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	6	22.2%	2	20.0%	0	0.0%
Fairly Often	19	70.4%	8	80.0%	9	100.0%
Sometimes	2	7.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Never	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	27	100.0%	10	100.0%	9	100.0%

These findings suggest that principals perceived themselves as frequently engaging in culturally responsive leadership behaviors. The predominance of responses within the **Fairly Often** category indicates a strong commitment to culturally responsive practices among school leaders. Furthermore, the relatively small proportion of respondents selecting **Sometimes** suggests that culturally responsive leadership was viewed as a consistent component of leadership practice among the principals included in the study.

Hypotheses: To address the null hypothesis, Chi-Square analyses using a two-way contingency table (also called a cross-tabulation) was conducted to determine whether statistically significant relationships existed among participant race and culturally responsive leadership responses (McHugh, 2013). Hypothesis testing procedures were used to examine elementary school principals' practices and implementation of culturally responsive leadership practices across racial groups and school contexts.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school principals' race and their practices of culturally responsive leadership.

Chi-Square Test of Independence for Principals' Race and Culturally Responsive Leadership

To determine whether differences existed between principals' race and their culturally responsive leadership practices, a chi-square test of independence was conducted using observed and expected frequencies. The analysis examined whether the distribution of culturally responsive leadership practices varied significantly across race categories.

Results indicated that there was no statistically significant association between principals' race and culturally responsive leadership practices, $\chi^2(4, N = 46) = 4.14, p = .388$. Similarly, the likelihood ratio test was not statistically significant, $G^2(4, N = 46) = 6.36, p = .174$. Because the obtained p-values exceeded the .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected. These findings suggest that principals' race was not significantly related to differences in culturally responsive leadership practices among the study participants.

Table 3: Observed and Expected Frequencies for Race

<i>Observed and Expected Frequencies for Race</i>			
<i>Chi-Square Tests</i>			
	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymptotic Significance (2 -sided)</i>
Pearson Chi-Square	4.136	4	.388
Likelihood Ratio	6.357	4	.174
N of Valid Cases	46		

Statistical Analysis: A Pearson chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between elementary school principals' race and levels of cultural responsiveness. The dependent variable, principals' cultural responsiveness, was initially measured using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 4 (Always/Very Often). An overall cultural responsiveness score was computed by summing responses across all survey items, and domain-specific scores were also generated based on key constructs, including school climate and time allocation, ethic of care and relationship building, teacher effectiveness, and relational practices.

To meet the assumptions of the chi-square test, the continuous/ordinal cultural responsiveness scores were recoded into three categorical levels: low cultural responsiveness (mean scores of 1.0–2.0), moderate cultural responsiveness (2.1–3.0), and high cultural responsiveness (3.1–4.0). The independent variable, principals' race, was treated as a nominal categorical variable (Black/African American, White, and Hispanic/Latino principals). Cross-tabulations were generated to display observed frequencies, and a Pearson chi-square test of independence was conducted to determine whether

a statistically significant association existed between principals' race and levels of cultural responsiveness.

The results of the chi-square analysis indicated there was no statistically significant association between principals' race and levels of cultural responsiveness, $\chi^2 (4, N = 46) = 4.136, p = .388$. These findings suggest that principals' race was not significantly related to differences in cultural responsiveness levels within this sample.

Descriptive Findings: The sample consisted of forty-six elementary school principals. The majority identified as African American ($n = 27$), followed by Caucasian ($n = 10$) and Hispanic/Latino ($n = 9$). Most participants were early in their administrative careers, with fewer than three years of experience in their current principalship.

Inferential Analysis: A Pearson chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine whether principals' race was associated with differences in levels of culturally responsive leadership. To meet the assumptions of the test, overall cultural responsiveness scores were recoded into categorical levels (low, moderate, and high cultural responsiveness). Results indicated no statistically significant association between principals' race and levels of culturally responsive leadership, $\chi^2 (4, N = 46) = 4.136, p = .388$. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Research Discussion

The findings indicate that there was no statistically significant association between principals' race and their reported culturally responsive leadership practices, $\chi^2 (4, N = 46) = 4.14, p = .388$. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Within this sample, the results do not provide sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic elementary school principals differed in their overall reported levels of culturally responsive leadership practices. These findings suggest that culturally responsive leadership practices may be evident across racial groups and should not be assumed to be determined by principals' racial identity alone.

Although race and lived experience may influence how leaders understand and respond to issues of culture and equity, culturally responsive leadership is also shaped by professional preparation, reflective practice, relationships, organizational conditions, and opportunities for professional learning (Howard, 2010; Khalifa et al., 2016; Warren, 2017). The nonsignificant finding in the present study reinforces the importance of examining these contextual and professional factors when studying culturally responsive leadership. Rather than interpreting race as a direct determinant of leadership practice, the findings support a broader examination of the

conditions under which culturally responsive leadership is developed and enacted.

The results also contribute to the literature by highlighting the importance of examining race within the broader context of school leadership. Principals from different racial backgrounds may share similar commitments to equity and culturally responsive practices while experiencing different personal, professional, and institutional contexts. Consequently, racial identity should be considered an important contextual characteristic rather than a stand-alone explanation for differences in leadership practice. Future research should examine how race intersects with leadership preparation, years of administrative experience, professional development, school demographics, and organizational expectations.

These findings have implications for leadership preparation and professional learning. Because the present study did not identify a statistically significant association between race and reported culturally responsive leadership practices, professional learning should not assume that culturally responsive leadership competencies are inherently associated with a particular racial group. Instead, leadership preparation programs should provide all principals with opportunities to develop cultural humility, critical self-reflection, knowledge of systemic inequities, culturally responsive instructional leadership skills, and strategies for engaging students, families, and communities (Khalifa et al., 2016). Such preparation may help leaders translate commitments to equity into consistent leadership practices across diverse school contexts.

The findings should also be interpreted considering the study's methodological limitations. The sample consisted of only 46 elementary school principals, and participants were distributed across three racial groups. The relatively small sample and potentially sparse chi-square cells limit the statistical power of the analysis and warrant caution when interpreting the nonsignificant result. A nonsignificant finding does not establish that racial groups are identical in their leadership practices; rather, it indicates that this study did not find sufficient statistical evidence of an association within the available sample. Larger samples with more balanced racial representation would provide greater statistical power for examining potential differences.

Overall, the findings suggest that race alone does not explain variation in reported culturally responsive leadership practices within this sample. The results support a more contextualized understanding of culturally responsive school leadership in which racial identity is considered alongside leadership preparation, professional experience, reflective practice, professional learning, and school context. Future research should use larger and more diverse samples and, where appropriate, mixed methods approach to examine

both the measurable patterns and the lived experiences through which culturally responsive leadership practices are developed and enacted.

Implications for Leadership Preparation, Policy, and Future Research

The study's findings have implications for leadership preparation, policy, and professional development. Although no statistically significant association was found between principals' race and reported culturally responsive leadership practices, districts and leadership preparation programs should continue to provide professional learning that emphasizes critical self-reflection, cultural humility, ethical decision-making, relationship-centered leadership, and equity-focused practices (Khalifa et al., 2016). These opportunities should be available to principals across racial backgrounds and should be responsive to the cultural and demographic contexts of the schools they serve.

Future research should examine the factors that may contribute to culturally responsive leadership beyond racial identity. Larger samples and longitudinal designs could provide greater statistical power and allow researchers to examine how culturally responsive leadership practices develop over time. Mixed-methods research could also provide a more comprehensive understanding of how principals' reported practices align with observed leadership behaviors and school-level outcomes. Including perspectives from teachers, students, families, and community members could further strengthen the understanding of how culturally responsive leadership is experienced within school communities.

Future studies should also examine the intersection of race with other contextual and professional factors, including leadership experience, professional preparation, professional development, socioeconomic context, school demographics, and geographic location. Such research may provide a more nuanced understanding of the conditions under which culturally responsive leadership practices are developed and implemented.

Because racial inequities remain a significant concern in education, continued research should examine how school leaders address inequities in areas such as discipline, academic opportunities, resource allocation, family engagement, and access to rigorous instruction. However, research should avoid treating race as a singular determinant of leadership behavior. Instead, scholars should examine how racial identity interacts with institutional structures, leadership preparation, professional experiences, school contexts, and organizational expectations.

Finally, future research should consider how culturally responsive leadership is enacted across diverse educational contexts, including rural, suburban, and urban schools. Examining these contextual differences may help identify effective leadership preparation, mentoring, and professional

development strategies that support principals in creating culturally affirming, inclusive, and equitable school environments.

Research Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing literature on culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) by examining the association between principals' race and their reported culturally responsive leadership practices. The analysis did not identify a statistically significant association between principals' race and reported culturally responsive leadership practices, $\chi^2 (4, N = 46) = 4.14, p = .388$. Therefore, the findings do not provide sufficient statistical evidence that principals reported culturally responsive leadership practices differed by race within the study sample.

Although race was not significantly associated with reported culturally responsive leadership practices, the findings reinforce the importance of examining culturally responsive leadership as a multidimensional and context-dependent practice. Leadership preparation, critical self-reflection, ethical decision-making, relationship building, professional learning, and school context may all contribute to how principals develop and implement culturally responsive practices. These findings support the perspective that culturally responsive leadership should not be understood as an identity-based practice determined by race alone but as an approach that can be developed through intentional preparation, reflection, and professional growth.

As elementary schools continue to serve increasingly diverse student populations, culturally responsive leadership remains important to creating inclusive and affirming school environments. Leadership preparation programs, district policies, and professional learning opportunities should intentionally develop principals' capacity to recognize cultural differences, examine inequitable practices, build trusting relationships, support culturally responsive instruction, and engage students, families, and communities. Embedding equity-focused coursework, experiential learning, mentoring, and sustained professional development into leadership preparation may strengthen principals' capacity to respond effectively to diverse school communities.

The CRPRS provided a framework for examining multiple dimensions of culturally responsive leadership practices, including school morale, school pulse, ethics of caring, ethics of bonding, relationship building, and teacher effectiveness. These dimensions reflect interconnected aspects of leadership practice and school climate. Collectively, they emphasize the importance of creating supportive school environments, developing meaningful relationships, demonstrating ethical and caring leadership, and supporting teachers in their efforts to meet the needs of diverse learners.

The findings should be interpreted within the limitations of the study. The sample consisted of 46 elementary school principals from selected educational settings in the Florida Panhandle, with participants distributed across three racial groups. The relatively small sample and potentially sparse chi-square cells limit statistical power and caution against broad generalizations. In addition, the study relied on self-reported leadership practices, which may not fully capture how culturally responsive leadership is enacted in daily school operations.

Future research should use larger and more diverse samples to further examine the relationship between race and culturally responsive leadership practices. Mixed-methods and longitudinal designs could provide greater insight into how leadership preparation, professional experience, school context, and professional learning contribute to the development of culturally responsive practices over time. Including the perspectives of teachers, students, families, and community members could also provide a more comprehensive assessment of how culturally responsive leadership is experienced and enacted.

Overall, this study suggests that race alone does not explain variation in reported culturally responsive leadership practices within the sample. Rather than viewing race as a singular determinant of leadership practice, future scholarship should examine the interaction of racial identity with professional preparation, leadership experience, organizational context, and opportunities for professional learning. Such an approach can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how school leaders develop and sustain practices that promote culturally responsive, inclusive, and equitable elementary school environments.

Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this research. The authors have no financial, professional, or personal relationships that could have influenced the research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of findings, or reporting of results.

Data Availability Statement: The data collected and analyzed for this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. To protect participant confidentiality and comply with ethical research requirements, all data were de-identified prior to analysis and reporting.

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Declaration of Human Participants

This study involved human participants and was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines for educational research. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the **Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University Institutional Review Board (IRB)/Ethics Committee (IRB Approval Number: 071-24)**. The principles and ethical standards outlined in the **Declaration of Helsinki** were followed throughout the research process.

Prior to participation, all participants were informed of the purpose and procedures of the study, confidentiality protections, and their rights as research participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. All participant information was maintained confidentially, and findings were reported only in aggregate form to protect participant privacy and anonymity.

Conflict of Interest: The authors reported no conflict of interest.

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School Based Measure of Culturally Responsive Principal Rating Scale

This self-assessment tool is designed to help you explore your individual cultural responsiveness. The purpose is to help you consider your own skills, knowledge, and awareness in your interactions with others, and recognize what you can do to become more effective working and living in diverse environments. The assessment will take about 20 to 30 minutes to complete. The term cultural responsiveness includes not only race, race, and ancestry, but requires having the ability to understand cultural differences, recognizing potential biases, and looking beyond differences to work productively with children, families, and communities' whole cultural contexts are from one's own. For this tool, the focus is primarily on cultural responsiveness. Culturally responsive practices in education aim to engage learners whose experiences and cultures have traditionally been excluded from educational settings. These practices foster an inclusive environment for culturally responsive learners. Read each entry in the five content sections. Place a check mark in the appropriate column which follows. At the end of each section add up the number of times you have checked that column. Multiply the number of times you have checked: (1) "Never", (2) "Sometimes/Occasionally", (3) "Fairly Often", and (4) "Always/Very". The responses will be totaled at the end of the survey based on the following: (1) "Never" = 1 point, (2) "Sometimes/Occasionally" = 2 points, (3) "Fairly Often", = 3 points, and (4) "Always/Very" = 4 points) to measure how consistently culturally responsive practices are demonstrated across the school.

The chart represents the ***Culturally Responsive Principals Rating Scale (CRPRS)*** as a structured evaluation rubric used to assess culturally responsive leadership practices in schools. It is organized into five main domains:

- **School Morale, Time, and Pulse (STMP):** Focuses on school climate, welcoming environments, and engagement with families and community.
- **Ethics of Bonding (EB):** Emphasizes collaboration, community involvement, culturally relevant curriculum, and student participation in school life.
- **Building Relationships (BR):** Highlights teacher-student-family relationships, trust, communication, and integration of students lived experiences in learning.
- **Ethics of Caring (EC):** Centers on respect, restorative practices, cultural affirmation, and celebrating student achievement.
- **Teacher Effectiveness (TE):** Focuses on instructional leadership, equity-focused professional development, language support, and shared decision-making.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRINCIPALS RATING SCALE (CRPRS)

RATING SCALE KEY

1 pt	2 pts	3 pts	4 pts
Never	Sometimes / Occasionally	Fairly Often	Always / Very Well

Directions: Read each indicator and rate the degree to which the school demonstrates the stated practice. Select only one rating (1–4) for each item.

CONTENT #1: SCHOOL MORALE, TIME, AND PULSE (STMP)		1 pt Never	2 pts Sometimes / Occasionally	3 pts Fairly Often	4 pts Always / Very Well
Item	Indicator				
STMP1	The school provides an appropriate and welcoming environment for students and visitors (including visual displays, appropriate use of curriculum).	☐	☐	☐	☐
STMP2	Parents and community members are included in school gatherings, and their roles are understood by students and teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐
STMP3	We are successfully able to engage with our students in consultation (e.g., parent teacher and other school meetings and activities).	☐	☐	☐	☐
STMP4	We are successfully able to engage with members of the community in consultation and whole school visits are a regular component of the school curriculum.	☐	☐	☐	☐
STMP5	Parents are attracted to this school and actively seek to enroll their children here.	☐	☐	☐	☐
CONTENT #2: ETHICS OF BONDING (EB)		1 pt Never	2 pts Sometimes / Occasionally	3 pts Fairly Often	4 pts Always / Very Well
Item	Indicator				
EB1	School-wide planning incorporate students/teachers' perspectives through ongoing collaboration and consultation, which has led to change.	☐	☐	☐	☐
EB2	The school actively engages in community events and celebrations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
EB3	All students are offered the opportunity to participate in school and community celebrations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
EB4	Individual curriculum areas reflect an authentic and contemporary worldview and include innovative resources and topics that meet priorities and goals expressed by the school students and their cultures.	☐	☐	☐	☐
EB5	Intensive study options are available to students (tutoring from staff and students).	☐	☐	☐	☐
EB6	Teachers and the wider school community appreciate the value of language and cultural perceptions for all students.	☐	☐	☐	☐
CONTENT #3: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS (BR)		1 pt Never	2 pts Sometimes / Occasionally	3 pts Fairly Often	4 pts Always / Very Well
Item	Indicator				
BR1	Teachers get to know all students and learn about their family context.	☐	☐	☐	☐
BR2	Staff successfully build strong relationships with the students and their families, having implemented ideas from the school's family group.	☐	☐	☐	☐
BR3	Are they older siblings-younger siblings' relationships are in place throughout the school.	☐	☐	☐	☐
BR4	All students know their teachers/principal's care about them and have high expectations for them, and teachers communicate this to them.	☐	☐	☐	☐
BR5	Staff provide opportunities in class for students to use their prior knowledge and experiences and to share their world views and knowledge in ways that enhance learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
CONTENT #4: ETHICS OF CARING (EC)		1 pt Never	2 pts Sometimes / Occasionally	3 pts Fairly Often	4 pts Always / Very Well
Item	Indicator				
EC1	All school staff members know the language and names of the students in the schools and places in the school area.	☐	☐	☐	☐
EC2	All school staff members demonstrate an ethic of care by affirming, respecting, and supporting students from diverse cultures.	☐	☐	☐	☐
EC3	Restorative-centered justice approaches are used to hear different thoughts' perspectives and restore relationships between students and teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐
EC4	Student achievement in academic and other areas such as leadership, performance, and oratory is explicitly celebrated, valued, and encouraged.	☐	☐	☐	☐
CONTENT #5: TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS (TE)		1 pt Never	2 pts Sometimes / Occasionally	3 pts Fairly Often	4 pts Always / Very Well
Item	Indicator				
TE1	The school is meeting the specific short, medium, and long-term goals for students set out in its strategic plan.	☐	☐	☐	☐
TE2	The school has successfully encouraged a teacher representation on the school board that provides a valued and informed voice and leadership.	☐	☐	☐	☐
TE3	Teachers are encouraged and supported to learn the students' native language.	☐	☐	☐	☐
TE4	Some teachers are fluent in students' language.	☐	☐	☐	☐
TE5	Teachers have ongoing professional development from various perspectives including equity issues relating to different events.	☐	☐	☐	☐
TE6	Systems developed with the school's families Group/staff advisors to check that school resources are culturally appropriate for the students in place and working.	☐	☐	☐	☐
TE7	Decision-making and resources regarding education programs are made with the school's family group/staff advisor.	☐	☐	☐	☐