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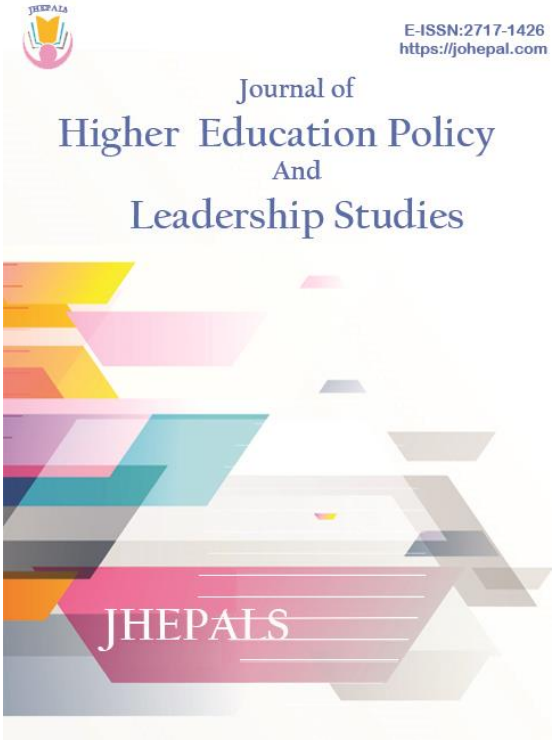

Book Review: **Operationalizing Culturally Relevant Leadership Learning**

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Operationalizing Culturally Relevant Leadership Learning

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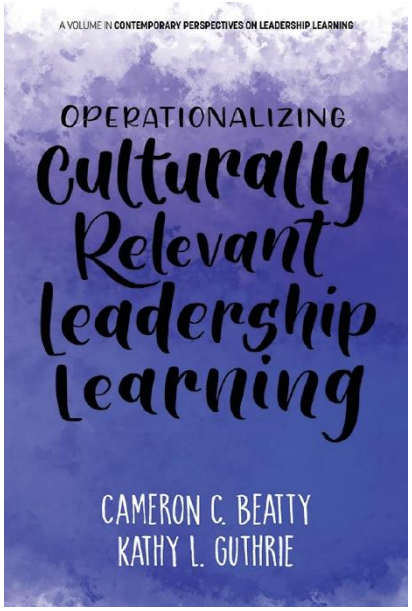

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As a continuation in the series titled Contemporary Perspectives on Leadership Learning, *Operationalizing Culturally Relevant Leadership Learning*, explores the ways that leadership educators utilize the Culturally Relevant Leadership Learning Model (CRLL) in their everyday work as educators, practitioners, and scholars. The text contains thirteen chapters in which the conversations and applications of CRLL are emphasized with authored texts and narratives from scholars and practitioners in various fields of study. As we open the conversation around culturally relevant leadership learning, it is important to understand the meaning of the term, "culturally relevant". It is important to note that for leadership educators to focus on socially just and culturally relevant leadership education, we must focus "on moving toward a more socially just leadership praxis by offering a pedagogical

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approach; one that considers the complexities of leadership educators" (Beatty & Manning-Ouellette, 2018, p. 230) and of those around us.

CRLL has a goal of being "responsive to inclusion and matters of equity and positions leadership educators to address the complexities of social inequality in leadership learning" (Bertrand Jones et.al., 2016, p. 11; see Guthrie et. al., 2021 for additional resources about CRLL) and this book offers a space to engage with this framework, and as the title suggests, operationalize this model in our work as leadership educators. Although not explicitly stated, this book can be seen as separated into three different sections, an introduction to the culturally relevant leadership learning model framework (Chapters 1-3), operationalizing, implementing, and applying the culturally relevant leadership learning model framework in different environments (Chapters 4-10), and finally, the intersections of CRLL with socially just leadership education and additional resources on how to start and where to continue this work (Chapters 11-13). Throughout the text, there are narratives that are shared from leadership educators that offer a unique perspective into contextually operationalizing the culturally relevant leadership learning model.

The first chapter of the book invites us into a conversation to interrogate the CRLL and its applications. As outlined in the chapter, it is our responsibility to interrogate these frameworks to better understand and operationalize them in our work as leadership educators in curricular and co-curricular spaces. The second chapter of the book builds off the foundations of leadership education and CRLL that were presented in the previous chapter to help us understand more of the specifics and mechanics of what encompasses CRLL. The five critical domains of CRLL (history of inclusion/exclusion, compositional diversity, psychological, organizational/structural, and behavioral dimensions) are explored to help us cultivate an understanding of these domains and our personal leadership process (Bertrand Jones et. al., 2016; Beatty & Guthrie, 2021). The third chapter of this book builds off the first two chapters and showcases the environmental contexts that need to be considered when operationalizing CRLL. This chapter specifically examines how our national, institutional, and personal contexts play a role in operationalizing CRLL and our roles as leadership educators in that process.

The next two chapters of the book focus explicitly on personal and professional development utilizing CRLL as a framework to engage with. The fourth chapter of this book emphasizes the ways we can operationalize CRLL in a way that advances our personal development. In this chapter, we are introduced to the narratives and lived experiences of leadership educators and how they have utilized the CRLL framework to work on aspects of their personal identities ranging from teacher identity, racial and ethnic identity, and accountability, to name a few. The fifth chapter of this book emphasizes the ways we can operationalize CRLL in our professional development as leadership educators. In this chapter we are introduced to the narratives of individuals who are advancing their professional identities utilizing the CRLL framework. From a narrative speaking about specific identities as leadership educators in specific contexts, to narratives about utilizing CRLL as a framework for anti-racist work, this chapter helps center the lived experiences and context of professional identity development within CRLL.

The next four chapters of this book highlight the ways we can develop and implement the CRLL in both curricular and cocurricular spaces. The sixth chapter of this book highlights

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program development in cocurricular spaces. Although these teachings are centered around the work of higher education professionals, it is important to acknowledge that the teachings from these conversations and narratives can be applied to different fields outside of the education field. In this chapter we are introduced to the narratives of student affairs professionals from a wide variety of functional areas such as student conduct, student organizations, and graduate student leadership programs, to name a few. The seventh chapter of this book shifts the conversation to implementing CRLL in cocurricular programs. This chapter highlights the narratives of leadership educators who serve in a practitioner lens on college campuses and within leadership learning organizations. These narratives address some of the successes and challenges that come with operationalizing CRLL in their programs.

The eighth chapter of this book shifts the conversation from cocurricular programs to curricular and academic programs and how they used CRLL as a framework to guide their work. The narratives presented in this chapter talk about the experiences of leadership educators who serve in academic roles and their development of academic programs. Some of the topics these narratives touch upon in the chapter range from culturally relevant syllabus development, course creation, and perspectives on experiential learning. The ninth chapter of this book allows us to see how the conversations and narratives of the last chapter were implemented, specifically in courses that are meant to create change agents and that centered the understanding of leadership from other cultures. These specific narratives allow for academic programs and departments to gain a glimpse into incorporating CRLL into their specific courses and understanding the value that it presents in curricular spaces.

The next two chapters of the book allow us to see a glimpse into how we can utilize CRLL and apply it towards theoretical frameworks in scholarship and how we can incorporate CRLL into socially just research methods. The tenth chapter of this book gives us a glimpse into applying CRLL to interrogate traditional and emerging theoretical frameworks in our scholarship. As outlined in the chapter, there has been a call for "stronger empirical evidence in order to develop and implement high-impact practices in socially just leadership education" (Chunoo et. al, 2019; as cited in Beatty & Guthrie, 2021, p. 161). The narratives presented in this chapter highlight ways in which CRLL was used to better understand different identities as a researcher, and how to fill in literature gaps as they pertain to the five domains of CRLL. The eleventh chapter of this book highlights the need to include CRLL in socially just research methods. The narratives provided in this chapter center CRLL and how it should be utilized, alongside research methods, to develop a socially just approach to our research agendas both in and out of leadership education.

In the final two chapters of the book, we are reminded of where we should start with this work and are given some suggested resources to better engage as leadership educators with CRLL. In chapter twelve, the authors review the initial concepts covered in the book surrounding CRLL and its five domains. This chapter highlights the way we should start doing this work, which at times, may be the most difficult part of this process. In the final chapter, Chapter 13, additional resources are presented to offer leadership educators the opportunity to further engage in this work of culturally relevant and socially just leadership education. At the conclusion of each chapter, the authors provide a table with questions we

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should consider as they relate to the each of the five domains of CRLL. These critical questions allow us to engage in critical reflection. Based on the experiences that critical reflection provides us, we can see that reflection allows us to "analyze our experiences and engage in learning in order to synthesize knowledge" (Volpe-White et. al., 2019, p. 25).

All in all, the purpose of this book is to showcase the need to incorporate culturally relevant and socially just practices into our praxis as leadership educators. After all, we are invited and asked as leadership educators to interrogate these practices to better inform our field (Beatty & Guthrie, 2021). This book does just that; by highlighting the narratives from leadership educators and the ways in which we can operationalize and implement CRLL into our praxis, we are able to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the work presented in this book to advance the field of leadership education.

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