Critical Literacy Pedagogy: Establishing the Factors of Critical Literacy Instruction Using Mixed Methods

Casey Medlock Paul, under the direction of Dr. Hiller A. Spires

Introduction

Background
- Critical literacy allows students to re-present themselves and redesign their society (Shor, 1999) by analyzing and questioning discourses, power relations, and identities as represented in text, media, and society.
- There are varying definitions of critical literacy as a pedagogy throughout literature (e.g. Freebody & Luke, 1990; Lewison, et al., 2002; Luke 2012, McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004).
- Lewison, et al. (2002) reviewed 30 years of literature and were unable to find a consistent definition.
- "Critical literacy is usually described as a theory with implications for practice rather than a distinctive instructional methodology" (Behrman, 2006, p.490).

Problem
- Critical literacy lacks "a consistently applied set of instructional strategies that would mark it as a coherent curricular approach" (Behrman, 2006, p. 490).
- As a result, critical literacy is difficult for teachers to incorporate and implement in their classroom.

Purpose and Research Questions

- Define and operationalize *critical literacy pedagogy* by focusing on the instructional practices in K-12 classrooms.
- Develop and establish validity for the Critical Literacy Pedagogy Scale.

1. How do researchers, teacher educators, and K-12 teachers define critical literacy? (qual)
2. How do teacher educators and K-12 teachers teach critical literacy in their classrooms? (qual)
3. What is the underlying factor structure of a scale that assesses critical literacy pedagogy? (QUANT)
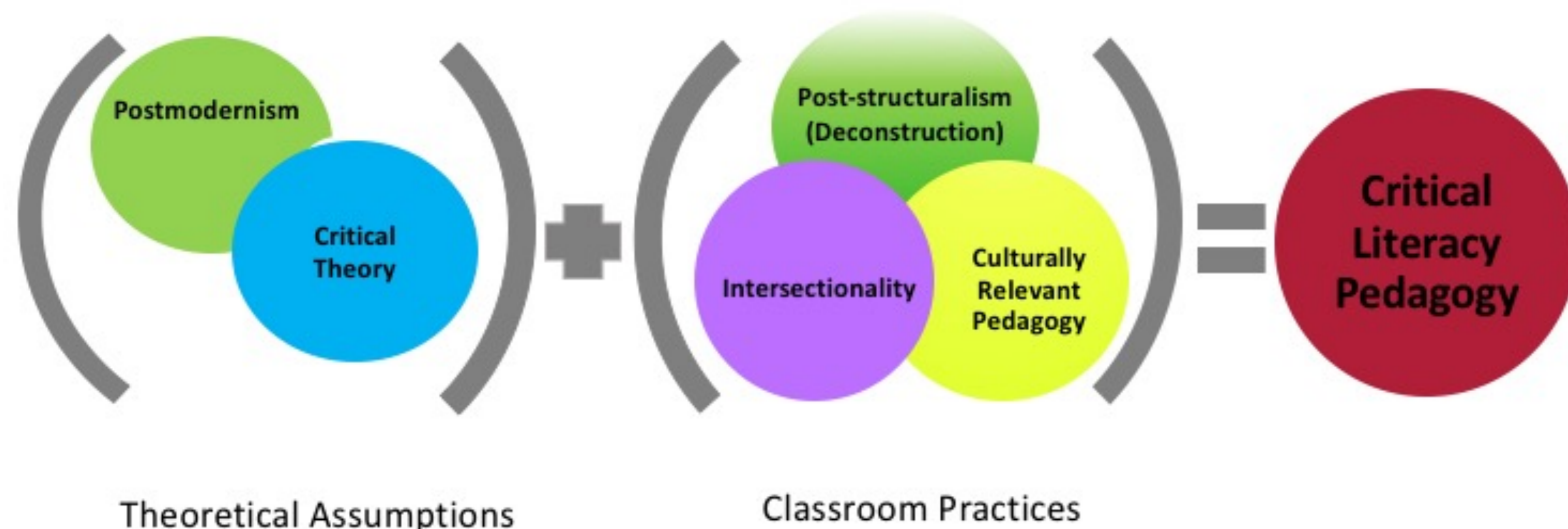
Theoretical Framework

Figure 1. Theoretical framework for Critical Literacy Pedagogy.

Postmodernism/ Poststructuralism
- Critical literacy rests on the idea of the postmodern historical condition.
- Poststructuralism rejects positivist thought, positing knowledge is socially constructed (Foucault, 1972).

Critical Theory
- Critical theory revolves around critiquing historical, ideological, and social forces of a culture in an attempt to transform society through words, language, and actions (Freire, 1970).
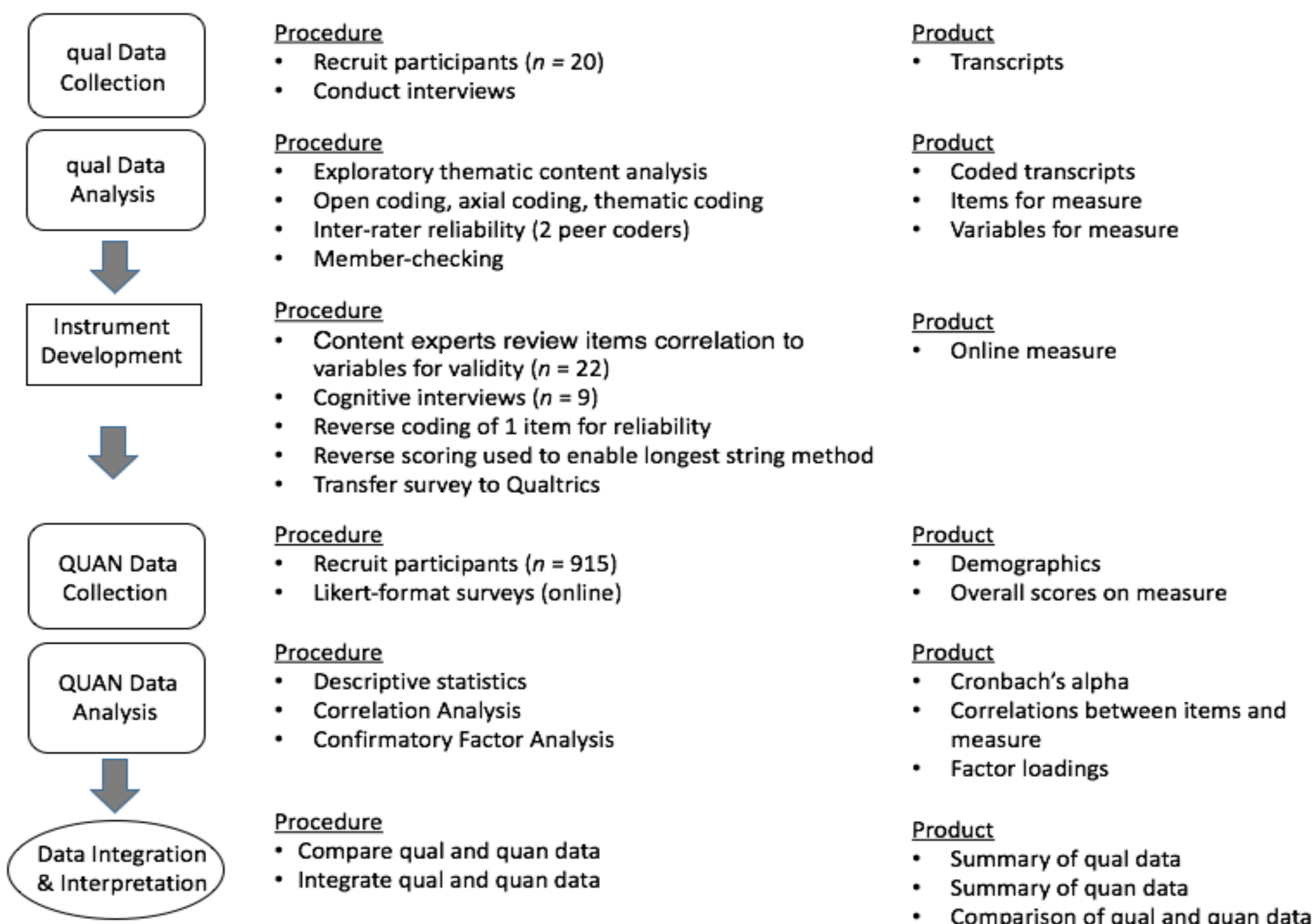
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
- CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995) frames instruction as inclusive to the cultures of the students in the classroom and involves multicultural education (Banks, 1993).

Intersectionality
- Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) focuses on the intersection of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, among other characteristics, on a personal, communal, and institutional level (Collins, 1990).

Methods

Sequential Exploratory Mixed Methods Design (Creswell & Clark, 2011)

qual Data Collection

Procedure
- Recruit participants (n = 20)
- Conduct interviews

Product
- Transcripts

qual Data Analysis

Procedure
- Exploratory thematic content analysis
- Open coding, axial coding, thematic coding
- Inter-rater reliability (2 peer coders)
- Member-checking

Product
- Coded transcripts
- Items for measure
- Variables for measure

Instrument Development

Procedure
- Content experts review items correlation to variables for validity (n = 22)
- Cognitive interviews (n = 9)
- Reverse coding of 1 item for reliability
- Reverse scoring used to enable longest string method
- Transfer survey to Qualtrics

Product
- Online measure

QUAN Data Collection

Procedure
- Recruit participants (n = 915)
- Likert-format surveys (online)

Product
- Demographics
- Overall scores on measure

QUAN Data Analysis

Procedure
- Descriptive statistics
- Correlation Analysis
- Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Product
- Cronbach's alpha
- Correlations between items and measure
- Factor loadings

Data Integration & Interpretation

Procedure
- Compare qual and quan data
- Integrate qual and quan data

Product
- Summary of qual data
- Summary of quan data
- Comparison of qual and quan data

Results

Critical Literacy Pedagogy is:

- **Relevant** — Designing the class and curriculum to be relevant and inclusive of students' identities, lives, experiences, cultures, and current events.
- **Reflexive** — Acknowledging, exploring, and/or learning about one's biases, as well as how to bracket those biases.
- **Deconstructive** — Deconstructing or dissecting texts, videos, or other media to look at the language features; authorial bias, intent, and purpose; as well as the way the text, video, or media might perpetuate grand cultural narratives. Also involves working to deconstruct these grand cultural narratives.
- **Dialogic** — Exploring literacy as a social practice by exploring multiple perspectives and meanings of a text or media. In particular, this exploration may occur through dialogue and questioning.
- **Empowering** — Examining issues of power in text, media, classroom, school, and/or society in order to counter deficit mindsets and empower students.
- **Transformative** — Considering how texts, media, and/or society can be transformed to be more equitable and creating opportunities for social action.
- **Intersectional** — Involves intersecting the six previous themes, as well as considering how systems of oppression, such as race, class, and gender, interact in texts, media, the classroom, and/or society.

Figure 2. The 7 factors of CLP.

Qualitative Findings
- See Figure 2.
- First 6 factors are themes.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis
- See Figure 3.
- Revealed 7th factor: Intersectional.

Scale Reliability
- Cronbach's α = 0.89
  - Relevant = 0.41
  - Reflexive = 0.73
  - Deconstructive = 0.86
  - Dialogic = 0.71
  - Empowering = 0.88
  - Transformative = 0.61
  - Intersectional = 0.70

Goodness of Fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999)
- CFI = 0.95
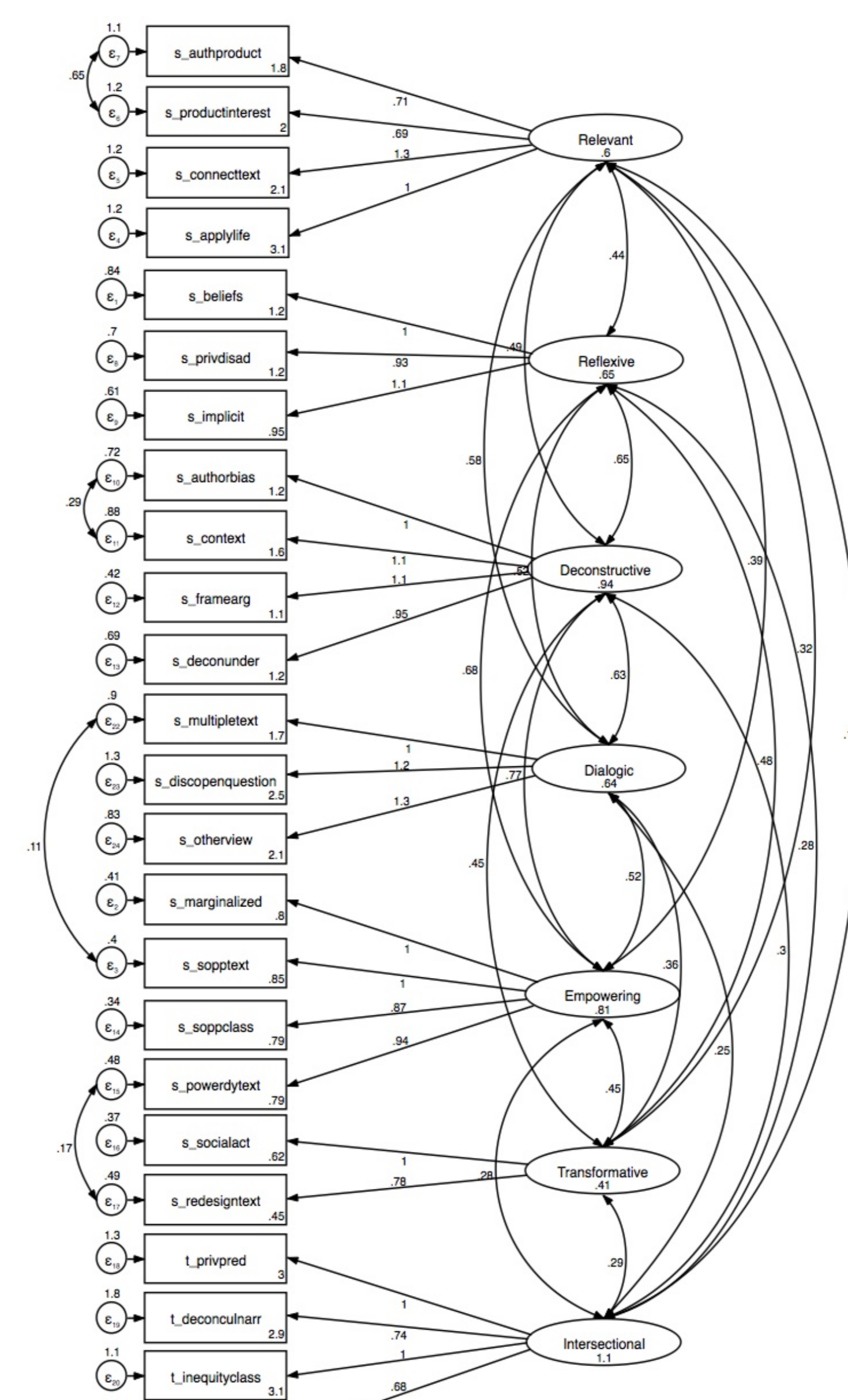- TLI = 0.94
- RMSEA = 0.05
- SRMR = 0.05

Figure 3. Standardized factor loading for the seven-factor CFA.

Discussion

Critical Literacy Pedagogy Scale

Relevant
- I ask my students to create a product that responds to a real-life situation regarding students' lives & community.
- I ask my students to create a product that revolves around or includes their own interests.
- I ask my students to connect text and media read/watched to their lives, experiences, & current events.
- I ask my students to discuss how what they learn in class applies to life.

Reflexive
- I ask my students to explicitly question their previously held beliefs.
- I ask my students to examine their own privileges and/or disadvantages.
- I ask my students to explicitly discuss their implicit biases.

Deconstructive
- I ask my students to focus on how an author's bias affects how and why they create text or media.
- I ask my students to focus on looking at the context of when text or media was written or produced.
- I ask my students to focus on the way text or media frames an argument.
- I ask my students to focus on deconstructing why they understand text or media the way they do.

Dialogic
- I ask my students to examine multiple texts or perspectives on a single topic.
- I ask my students to discuss questions that have no correct or singular answer.
- I ask my students to consider another person's viewpoint on a debated topic.

Empowering
- I ask my students to explicitly examine who is marginalized and is not marginalized from text or media.
- I ask my students to focus on how systems of oppression are manifested in text or media.
- I ask my students to discuss how systems of oppression are manifested in the classroom, school, & community.
- I ask my students to examine how power dynamics are enacted within text, media, and/or society

Transformative
- I ask my students take social action to counteract systemic inequity.
- I ask my students to redesign text or media to create a version of the work that promotes equity.

Intersectional
- I explore issues of privilege and prejudice in my classroom.
- I work with my students to deconstruct grand, cultural narratives.
- I explore issues of inequity with my students, as they expand from the classroom, the school, & the community.
- I design my curriculum and instruction to intentionally counter systemic inequity.

Limitations

- This research did not use a random sample.
- Construct validity is difficult to achieve without another measure. Future research will continue to investigate construct validity of the scale.
- Reliability of Relevant and Transformative subscales is low.

Significance

- Educators and researchers now have a better idea of the widespread practices that can be used to teach critical literacy, which enables them to better prepare future teachers to engage in this type of instruction.
- Researchers will be able to use the scale to further investigate critical literacy and the classroom practices that lead to students engaging in socially transformative work both now and in the future.
- This study applied quantitative methods to explore a postmodern, post-structural, critical pedagogy.
  - By engaging more with the quantitative, critical researchers can counteract the traditional notions regarding quantitative research as well as further the ideas within the critical field.

Future Directions

- Future research will work to improve the reliability of the Relevant and Transformative subscales.
- Future research with random samples can determine the current state of critical literacy instruction in practice and test across group hypotheses.
- The scale can also be used to inform teachers on instructional practices that promote teaching critical literacy.
- Future research can examine teachers' best instructional practices that lead to critical literacy as well as student outcomes, hopefully leading to critical literacy for all students.

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