SECONDARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THEIR ROLE IN WHOLE

CHILD EDUCATION: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

by

Rhonda Millesia Idris

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

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Abstract

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the experiences that secondary educators face when using whole child practices to teach minority students in Washington, DC, urban schools. The theory that guided this study was Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which highlights the culture of students as an essential way to interpret knowledge. Also, this theory identifies the zone of proximal development, which is the ideal starting point for students to retain knowledge. Whole child education, specifically student-centered instruction, places the student at the center and allows instruction to be influenced by students' backgrounds and interests. This study described how the teacher views student-centered instruction and its role in implementation. The central research question of this study was, "How do secondary education teachers perceive their role in student-centered learning?" This collective case study was set in an urban community in the Northeast United States and examined 15 secondary education teachers' experiences with student-centered learning using data collection methods that included teacher interviews, questionnaires, and letter writing. Qualitative data analysis methods were used to analyze, synthesize, and contextualize the data to create new understandings of how secondary education teachers respond to student-centered instruction and their perceptions of the benefits and barriers to implementation. Three major themes emerged from the findings which include (a) the school environment, (b) professional controls, and (c) meaningful interactions. An outlier finding included the student's home life.

Keywords: teach the whole child, secondary education, student-centered instruction, culturally relevant instruction

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my three children, Yusuf, Amirah, and Zakiyah. You have inspired me to strive for greatness. I hope I have made you proud. Also, I would like to dedicate this to my husband, Hamza, whose support is beyond measure.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Ziegler for her compassion, dedication, and continued encouragement throughout the dissertation process. If I had any thoughts of giving up, her words of encouragement and faith in my ability to complete this journey has helped me persevere. I would also like to thank Dr. Pannone for being a methodologist on my committee. Your feedback has been transformative. I have grown as a writer and researcher due to your diligence in this process over the past three years.

I must acknowledge my husband, Hamza, who has been my champion. Thank you for believing in me and weathering the storms with me throughout this process. I would also like to thank my friend, Andrea, for her continued support and words of encouragement over five years. You and my husband told me that I could start and finish this process. I am grateful for your faith in me.

Finally, I would like to credit my heavenly Father who is the author of my life. The scripture that kept me motivated through this process was Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (King James Version, 1908/1990).

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List of Abbreviations

ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development)

CDC (Center for Disease Control)

CFSA (Child and Family Services Agency)

CRT (Culturally Responsive Teaching)

ELL (English Language Learner)

IEP (Individual Education Plan)

NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress)

NCLB (No Child Left Behind)

PBIS (Positive Behavioral Incentive Systems)

SEL (Social-Emotional Learning)

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)

TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)

TBS (Teacher Belief's Survey)

UDL (Universal Design for Learning)

WCSS (Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child)

ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION
Overview

Some students may experience trauma, including neglect, abuse, hunger, or violence in the United States (Von Dohlen et al., 2019). These experiences of trauma can negatively impact educational outcomes (Adams et al., 2019; Lopez, 2016; Sibley et al., 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). In addition to student trauma, the family structure influences the educational experiences of students. Research conducted in the past ten years has emerged, demonstrating the need for student support systems and the role of schools, administrators, parents, and teachers within these systems of support (Adams et al., 2019; Sibley et al., 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). However, a review of the literature revealed an increased number of students who have experienced trauma, with declining outcomes, and current teacher preparation or professional development may be inadequate. Chapter 1 will discuss the history of Teaching the Whole Child in k-12 school systems (Adams et al., 2020; Daily et al., 2020; Lee & Lee, 2020). Second, Chapter 1 will describe the historical, social, and theoretical context of student-centered instruction in promoting whole child education, followed by my motivation to conduct this study. Third, an overview of the problem, purpose, and significance of this study will be provided. Lastly, in further sections of Chapter 1, the research questions and definitions within this study will be defined, and the chapter will conclude with a summary.

Background

This section will provide a summary of the relevant literature. The Background section summarizes the literature that is most relevant to student-centered instruction in secondary education. This summary is presented in three subsections: summarizing student-centered learning from a historical, social, and theoretical context. The historical context explains the evolution of the problem, and the social context provides an overview of how the problem affects

the community or education system. Finally, the theoretical perspective highlights the theories that have developed student-centered learning. To understand the secondary education teacher's perception of student-centered instruction as a whole child approach, it is important to review the history of whole child education, an overview of student-centered-instruction, the evolution of the teacher's role in teaching the whole child, and the benefits and barriers to student-centered instruction.

Historical Context

The majority of the nation's curriculum and standards were written with only the consideration of a singular culture or the majority culture (Cholwea et al., 2014). Additionally, the main outcomes of the education system had a narrow focus on academic proficiency (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017). Since the early 1970s, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has administered the same assessment in math and reading to a sample of nine, 13, and 17-year-old students (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017). These assessments identified a trend of inequity between the academic achievement of minority students compared to White students, which was called the achievement gap (Kunemund et al., 2020). Furthermore, according to the trend, White students performed 29 points above African American students in math and 28 points above in reading (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2022; Irwin et al., 2022). Although the achievement gap shrunk by 2010 to approximately a 25-point gap, there was still a significant gap (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2022). Moreover, despite the achievement gap narrowing, it widened in some smaller states, especially in southern states (Johnson et al., 2019). The trend illustrated a need for intervention to address the growing needs of minority students, impoverished communities, and especially low-performing schools.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was passed in 2002 to address the low proficiency of the United States education system, particularly the inability of United States students to compete academically on a global scale (Johnson et al., 2019). Additionally, this law mandated that schools boost the performance of specific groups of students, such as English Language Learners (ELL), minority students, and students in special education. Although compliance with this law was voluntary, schools that failed to increase proficiency scores risked losing Title 1 funds from the federal government (Barger et al., 2019). The NCLB act further perpetuated the narrow focus on the academic achievement of students, with the belief that pressuring schools to increase the scores of these special groups would narrow or close the achievement gap (Barger et al., 2019; Byrd, 2020).

The whole child initiative was developed in 2007 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) to address this narrow focus on academic outcomes and expand the policies to address the multiple skills students need to be 21st-century citizens outside of academic outcomes (Byrd, 2020). These skills, such as social-emotional wellness and multicultural engagement, have been shown to impact academic outcomes positively (Kearney et al., 2019). Therefore, the whole child initiative was conceived and influenced by various pedagogy such as culturally responsive teaching (CRT), social-emotional learning (SEL), and restorative justice (Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017; Kerney et al., 2019; Malo-Juvera et al., 2018). Furthermore, there are five tenants of whole child education that students should experience: health, safety, engagement, support through personalized learning, and academic challenge.

Curriculums and educational practices that address, include, and respond to multiple cultures are most effective in increasing the student achievement of minority students and are

considered whole child approaches (Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Most curriculums in the United States utilize instruction that satisfies the perspectives of the White majority (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). However, schools with multicultural pedagogies improved academic outcomes for students from inner cities and rural areas classified as general education students and students in special education (Hoover et al., 2018; Lopez, 2016; Mcklesky et al., 2014). Schools with a majority African American demographic that implement African-centered curriculum or lessons based on Black culture experience high academic achievement among African American students (Garro et al., 2021; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). In addition to policies, since 2007, curriculums have been adapted to incorporate whole child education, such as CRT. Subsequently, many teacher preparation programs have adopted training and professional development regarding whole child education in school districts nationwide, particularly in areas with lower socio-economic status and minority students (Keung et al., 2020; Shogren et al., 2015: Wiggan & Watson, 2016).

Since the promotion of whole child initiatives, the number of immigrant students significantly increased over the past ten years in the United States, leading to immigration being the projected cause of population increase instead of natural increase (difference between births and deaths) (Vespa et al., 2020). Furthermore, 51.3% of public-school enrollments in the United States in the fall of 2015 were minority students compared to 39% in fall 2000 (Vespa et al., 2020). As students' social and cultural needs change, schools with pre-k to grade 12 responded by adopting teach the whole child programs (Lopez, 2016; Sharif Matthews & López, 2019). Additionally, this ever-changing student demographic in our nation's classrooms increases adaptations of instructional practices, pedagogies, and school-wide interventions that respond to students' culture and language. Therefore, as student demographics evolve, teacher preparation

and professional development also evolve to improve teachers' capacity to address the needs of the whole child (Adams et al., 2019).

Social Context

As laws like NCLB attempt to address the underachievement in low-income communities since 2002, it failed to address some factors in students' home lives that are correlated to underachievement. Although most students come from homes with both parents, 35% of students in the United States come from homes with single mothers (Ostrovska et al., 2015). Furthermore, this data represents 65% of African American children, 41% of Hispanic children, and 53% of American Indian children in single-parent homes compared to 24% of non-Hispanic White children (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2020). Additionally, children from single-parent family structures demonstrate an increased need for individualized academic supports and are more likely to seek teacher approval (Irwin et al., 2022). Therefore, there is a large population of students of color in the United States who need supports in school that promote the development of the whole child because research indicates that various non-academic factors are correlated to academic experiences and outcomes.

Researchers, schools, and policymakers use terms to describe whole child education, including student-centered approaches such as culturally responsive teaching, social-emotional learning, trauma-informed instruction or restorative justice, and Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) program. Since whole child education adapts to the demographic needs of the student population, the elements of the whole child education programs may be fundamentally different in schools (Lotter et al., 2016). Therefore, for this study, student-centered learning is a type of whole child education strategy and is defined as a

pedagogical strategy that adapts to students' cultural, social, emotional, and health needs by utilizing student-centered activities to increase academic outcomes (Talbert et al., 2019).

There have been multi-layered or tiered systems of support and comprehensive whole school support systems that provide interventions for all students with disabilities and those in general education (Robertson et al., 2022; Shogren et al., 2015). These various comprehensive or universal support systems provide schools with a rich environment for students with disabilities to obtain most of their education with general education students in a general education classroom (Bettini et al., 2021; Piazza et al., 2015; Simmons, 2018). The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) "is an approach to instruction that promotes access, participation, and progress in the general education curriculum for all learners" (Katz, 2013, p. 157). UDL could be considered a teaching the whole child approach since it addresses a specific academic need of students for the improved educational experience of all students. Schools that effectively implement this inclusive model experienced improved educational experiences for students with disabilities and general education students (Katz, 2013; Shogren et al., 2018).

Teachers' cultural background or linguistic experiences can be seen as major aspects of classroom representation that influence the feeling of cultural mismatch. Although a teacher's race does not directly increase student outcomes, students who experience cultural continuity tend to be more responsive to instruction (Taggart, 2017). Furthermore, when students experienced cultural discontinuity between home and school, they experienced lower GPAs than students who experienced lower levels of cultural discontinuity. Students' race, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds are the major considerations in CRT practices. Teachers who are confident in their ability to address the whole child needs of students experience dramatic academic gains

and improved teacher-student relationships, which can be leveraged in classroom management (Lopez, 2016; Ray, 2020; Wiggan & Watson, 2016).

Cultural mismatch is a term that could be used to describe the feeling of students in classrooms with these singular cultural lessons that they cannot relate to (Garro et al., 2021). The cultural mismatch between teachers and students can be harmful to the educational process of students as well. Research suggested that this can be especially detrimental for minority students, students who speak other languages, and even students with learning disabilities (Choi et al., 2017; Garro et al., 2021; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Therefore, teachers who do not look like their students should make every effort to represent student cultures within the classroom and lessons (Choi et al., 2017). Students should experience cultural continuity between home and their school or classrooms. Although an increase in the diversification of staff was a significant strategy to improve student outcomes, "… it is important for teachers, regardless of their race or ethnicity, to become culturally responsive to meet students' needs" (Wiggan & Watson, 2016, p. 770). In 2007, the ASCD developed the whole child approach, which transitions from a solely academic view of schooling to a focus on the long-lasting development of students (Adams et al., 2019).

Theoretical Context

Although the benefits of whole child development have been widely acknowledged in past literature, studies have described the roles and stakeholders for effective student-centered instruction (Onurkan & Özer, 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2016: Willgerodt et al., 2021). These studies have indicated the intersectionality and connection of the teacher, family, and community's roles in the development of the whole child. Many researchers use Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological systems theory to describe the interwoven connections of the

various environments that influence student development. This theory posits student-centered learning wherein the student is at the center of learning experiences, surrounded by various influences (Barger et al., 2019; Keiler, 2018; Serrano et al., 2019). However, most studies report that student-centered learning activities are beneficial in early childhood education by utilizing play-based strategies (Keung & Cheung, 2019). Also, culturally relevant instruction is a prominent instructional strategy reported to increase student outcomes in elementary and secondary education (Lopez, 2016; Marlo-Juvera et al., 2018; Taagart, 2017). The teacher plays an essential role in facilitating student-centered learning; any negative influences of student-centered outcomes can be mediated by parent involvement, highlighting the need to acknowledge the interconnectedness of student environments' influence on learning (Barger et al., 2019).

Since teachers are viewed as facilitators of learning, they are expected to modify instruction to meet the needs of all learners in the classroom. Bandura's theory (1977) suggests that an individual's beliefs in his ability to complete a task affect his ability to accomplish this task. Therefore, if individuals believe in their ability to accomplish a goal, they tend to persevere through difficulties and complete them. Although Bandura's theory will not guide this research, it is essential to understand since teachers' confidence in their ability to utilize whole child practices or teach at-risk students will be described. According to the theorist, higher self-efficacy is achieved when an individual is willing to overcome increased challenges to complete or accomplish a goal. Teacher self-efficacy was defined by Bandura (1977) to describe teachers' willingness to persevere beyond failures and stress to meet the demands of the profession. Therefore, the self-efficacy of teachers influences the effectiveness of instructional delivery and, thus, the learning environment (Bandura, 1993). There is a large body of research regarding

teachers' self-efficacy and how it contributes to classroom outcomes (Keung et al., 2020; Lotter et al., 2016; Yoon & Martin, 2019). Particularly, self-efficacy regarding classroom management, teacher burnout, and stress has been a well-developed body of literature over the past ten years (Hayes et al., 2019; Sibley et al., 2017; Von Dohlen et al., 2019). A prominent study of effective teaching reported person-centeredness as essential for teaching and learning (Asby & Roebuck, 1977). Self-efficacy, the feeling of competency and control, is a prerequisite for learning and intrinsic motivation for students. Teachers who utilize student-centered instructional strategies have experienced increased positive student outcomes because students experience feelings of competency, increasing their confidence and leading to sustained learning (Rogers, 1969; Rogers et al., 2014).

The theory that guided this study was Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. Vygotsky (1978) theorized that students have a point in their learning capacity that teachers can tailor learning activities to promote proficiency which is considered the zone of proximal development (ZPD). It was crucial to understand secondary educators' knowledge, experiences, and attitudes regarding student-centered learning, a whole child approach that is used to address students' ZPD.

Problem Statement

The problem is that many secondary educators do not feel equipped to teach the whole child in urban schools due to limited professional development, knowledge of whole child pedagogies, and support (Sibley et al., 2017). However, teaching the whole child may improve the academic outcomes of minority students in the United States. Therefore, teacher preparation programs and professional learning communities must develop the self-efficacy of secondary educators to promote whole child education. The United States Census Bureau (2018) projects

that over 50% of the population will be people of color by 2045, leading to an increased minority student population. Research suggested that as the cultural and linguistic demographic of classrooms in the United States shift, the instructional strategies must address the whole child (Choi et al., 2017: Hoover et al., 2018: Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Additionally, research indicated that students from certain demographics are most at-risk of experiencing negative student outcomes such as poverty, hunger, single-parent household, minority, ELL, and special education (Choi et al., 2017: Piazza et al., 2015). A large body of research over the past 20 years illustrates whole child education as the pedagogical approach to mitigate these risk factors for students, particularly in early childhood education (Adams et al., 2017: Keung et al., 2020: Yoon & Martin, 2019).

In response to the need for whole child education, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) created the WSCC model, which has been implemented by various states and local policymakers (Chiang et al., 2015). Additionally, various pedagogical approaches were developed to teach the whole child, such as CRT, SEL, and trauma-informed instruction (Von Dohlen et al., 2019). Subsequently, teacher preparation programs and schools adopted professional development opportunities to equip teachers for teaching the whole child. Research indicated a need for professional learning communities or teacher preparation to increase teacher self-efficacy to address the learning needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students in early childhood education (Atiles et al., 2017). A review of the literature showed substantial research regarding teachers' role and impact on teaching the whole child in early childhood education, elementary, and secondary education (Atiles et al., 2017; Sibley et al., 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2018). Although limited, there was also a body of literature on the teachers' view of their capacity to teach the whole child in early childhood education (Adams et al., 2017: Keung et al., 2020: Yoon

& Martin, 2019). However, there was a significant gap in the literature regarding teachers' views of their ability to teach the whole child or implement student-centered instruction in secondary education. Moving beyond the benefits of teaching the whole child to experiences and self-efficacy was the scope of this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the experiences that secondary educators face when using whole child practices to teach minority students in Washington, DC, urban schools. At this stage in the research, whole child pedagogy was defined as instructional strategies that consider and respond to at-risk students such as minority students, linguistically diverse students, and students experiencing trauma (Van Dohlen et al., 2019). Thus, students are placed at the center of learning, and teachers facilitate instruction based on the learning needs of students (Keiler, 2018). The theory that guided this study was Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory.

Significance of the Study

Secondary education teachers may feel they need more confidence teaching the whole child or equipped to utilize student-centered learning practices. The results of this study provided a significant perspective on the experience of secondary educators regarding whole child education. The significance of this study can be described from the following perspectives: empirical, theoretical, and practical. The findings of this study contributed to the benefit of inner-city low-income neighborhoods since the greatest need for whole child practices are among urban schools (Sibley et al., 2017). Additionally, teacher self-efficacy in implementing student-centered instructional strategies impacts the effectiveness of implementing whole child practices (Atiles et al., 2017). Since whole child education improves educational outcomes, teacher

preparation programs and professional development must improve teachers' capacity to use whole child pedagogical practices. Therefore, the findings of this research have implications for further professional development opportunities for teachers.

Empirical Significance

This study added to the current research by organizing and analyzing the perceptions of secondary educators regarding student-centered learning. According to Hoover et al. (2018), various non-academic factors influence the educational outcomes of minority students, which contributes to the current achievement gap. This study further added to the limited body of research regarding the role of student-centered learning in developing student self-efficacy by teaching the whole child. Although teaching the whole child practices responds to various needs of students, the culturally responsive practices provide these students with improved instructional experiences, thus increasing academic outcomes for all students in an inclusive environment, especially minority students (Daily et al., 2020; Lopez, 2016; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Research was lacking in secondary educators' perception of whole child or student-centered instruction. The prior researched perceptions of whole child education were at the primary and elementary levels, which suggested a strong relationship between teachers' confidence in their role and student academic gains from the implementation of whole child practices like student-centered learning (Keung & Cheung., 2019; Keung et al., 2020; Yoon et al., 2016). Also, the educational benefits of student-centered learning were facets of the secondary educator's perceptions (Keiler, 2018; Onurkan & Özer, 2017).

Theoretical Significance

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory postulated various influences on learning, including culture, language, beliefs, teachers, and peers. Additionally, Vygotsky conveyed that

students' cognitive development is influenced by their environment. Therefore, a student's environment and cognitive development were strong proponents of student-centered learning. Researchers (Barger et al., 2019; Bondie et al., 2019; Keiler, 2018; Onurkan & Özer, 2017; Rao et al., 2017; Serin, 2018; Serrano et al., 2019) conducted various studies over the past decade to describe the benefits and barriers to student-centered learning. Vygotsky (1978) identified the ZPD as the point in the capacity of the learner to master a skill, also considered the "sweet spot" of learning (Wright, T. et al., 2019). Teachers can identify students' ZPD and tailor instruction to meet students where they are. Students will experience growth in their ZPD as their master skills. This concept is a proponent of student-centered learning. The sociocultural theory was chosen for this study because the teacher is responsible for creating a classroom culture and student-centered activities to address students' ZPD. Since student-centered instruction positively influences student self-efficacy, teachers play a role in promoting student motivation to learn. Therefore, teachers' understanding of their perceptions of student-centered roles or student self-efficacy can benefit teachers' implementation of student-centered instruction in secondary education. The findings of this study extended the role of teachers, particularly secondary educators, in utilizing ZPD to improve student learning.

Practical Significance

Various teaching the whole child approaches addressed the risk factors that urban students may face, such as SEL, CRT, restorative justice, and WSCC (Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017: Wassel et al., 2015: Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Since high self-efficacy increased the successful completion of a task, this study described themes related to the high efficacy of teachers in teaching the whole child and suggest areas of growth in professional development for teaching the whole child (Hayes et al., 2019). Teaching the whole child positively affects student

behavior since it improves teacher-student relationships, leveraged to improve student behaviors (Lopez, 2016). Therefore, this study suggested instructional strategies and relationship-building strategies used by teachers with high self-efficacy to teach the whole child (Hayes et al., 2019).

Research Questions

This collective case study posed the following central question and sub-questions:

Central Research Question

How do secondary education teachers who teach minority students describe teaching the whole child?

Sub Question One

How do secondary teachers describe the benefits of student-centered learning?

Sub Question Two

How do secondary teachers describe their understanding and confidence in utilizing student-centered learning with minority students?

Sub Question Three

What barriers do secondary teachers experience when using student-centered learning with minority students?

Definitions

1. *Culturally Responsive Teaching* – An instructional strategy that incorporates the students' culture into the curriculum (Gay, 2010).

2. *Disenfranchised* – groups within society who experience barriers to social mobility, prejudice, trauma, and underserved populations (Papouli, 2019).

3. *Self-efficacy* – the belief that individuals hold regarding their ability to complete a task or accomplish a goal (Bandura, 1977).

4. *Teach the Whole Child* – Teachers must address student needs, considering learning
   styles, race, neighborhood, and home experiences. (Sibley et al., 2017).

Summary

The problem is that many secondary educators do not feel equipped to teach the whole child in urban schools due to limited professional development, knowledge of whole child pedagogies, and support. The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the experiences that secondary educators face when using whole child practices to teach minority students in Washington, DC, urban schools. The theory that guided this research was Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. Teaching the whole child has been shown to improve the academic outcomes of minority students. The problem of this collective case study was the lack of understanding of how secondary teachers used whole child practices like student-centered learning in urban schools. Specifically, the participant experiences assisted in describing how this instructional strategy could impact instruction in secondary classrooms.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter two includes a review of the literature related to whole child education. In this section, an overview of the theoretical framework used to guide this study was presented. The theory used to structure the theoretical framework is the sociocultural theory. Also, this chapter will describe how the sociocultural theory influences other relevant theories. The first section of this chapter investigated the sociocultural theory, the principles related to student-centered instruction, and secondary educators' perception of their role in implementing student-centered instruction. This chapter summarized teaching the whole child approach and the impact on the educational experiences or outcomes of diverse students in inclusive classrooms. Relevant literature identifying the student-centered approach as a prominent whole child practice was discussed as well. Teaching the whole child was defined throughout the chapter. A literature review was conducted, with an analysis of substantial relevant articles. Additionally, this study provided an overview of whole child education and student-centered instruction, drawing from the literature of other researchers. In addition to the overview, emerging themes were presented, including various needs for whole child education, barriers to this approach, positive academic outcomes associated with student-centered instructional strategies, student-centered instructional strategies in secondary education, and the teacher's role in implementing student-centered instruction.

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory was used to assess and describe teaching the whole child approaches. The sociocultural theory provided essential perspectives in literacy education and the field of education. This theory presented an argument for the importance of

culture and social experiences and their impact on learning. Vygotsky (1978) found that a person's culture informs their learning process, and that language is an essential aspect of education that influences literacy, reading fluency, and reading comprehension (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, social experience comes before development, and development precedes learning. The sociocultural theory also highlighted "the dominant role of cultural experiences in human development," thus highlighting that a child's development starts socially, promoting individual development (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 22). This theory has significant implications for educational instruction.

Vygotsky believed that "all higher mental functions originated in the social environment" (Schunk, 2016, p. 313). The school and classroom, where children spend most of their day, provide various social experiences. Students who experience cultural continuity from home to their classrooms should be primed for learning. Students' ZPD is the learning potential of a student given various instructional strategies and best practices (Schunk, 2016; Webb et al., 2019). Therefore, should teaching the whole child approaches be considered best practices, these approaches should help bridge the gap in students' ZPD.

Since the teacher's role in a student-centered classroom with disenfranchised students should be a facilitator of student inquiry instead of the traditional authority figure, educators must demonstrate self-efficacy to fulfill this facilitator role (Rogers, 1994). Furthermore, at-risk students need developed teachers who are aware of the implications of students' backgrounds and consciously mitigate them (Freire, 1970). This study presented the words and different perceptions of multiple individuals to provide evidence of the beliefs regarding implementing student-centered instruction from the perspective of secondary educators who teach minority

students. Furthermore, the researcher then reported the emerging themes based on the

participants' various perspectives.

      Since language is a vital aspect of learning, instructional practices should respond to the

linguistic needs of learners (Vygotsky, 1978). Identifying students' ZPD is fundamental to

meeting the needs of all learners, a vital aspect of teaching the whole child (Vygotsky, 1978).

Since the development of this theory, there have been attempts to develop pedagogy to consider

students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and individual needs.

      The socio-cultural theory influenced the development of pedagogies to explain the need

to address the needs of learners on an individual basis and the non-academic barriers for minority

students, including behavior interventions, whole-school comprehensive approaches, response-

to-interventions, social-emotional learning (SEL), culturally responsive teaching (CRT), and

universal design for learning (UDL) (Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2016).

CRT requires teachers to adapt their instructional approaches to represent the culture of their

students (Chuang et al., 2020; Gay, 2002; Sibley et al., 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2016).

Furthermore, CRT can provide students with cultural continuity, which positively influences

motivation for learning. Additionally, CRT positively affects student behavior since it helps

teachers build relationships or connect with students (Wright, T. et al., 2019). Positive student-

teacher relationships built through CRT and other whole child approaches can be leveraged to

improve student behaviors, including minority students who have experienced trauma such as

hunger, violence, and abuse.

      CRT also benefits students with disabilities and ELLs, especially those from minority

backgrounds (Choi et al., 2017; Hoover et al., 2018; Lopez, 2016). Students with disabilities can

receive their educational instruction in a self-contained classroom. Self-contained classrooms are

separated from students not receiving special education services (Schnorr et al., 2016). A self-contained classroom is the most familiar model for delivering special education services. However, the alternative model and most preferred model of delivering special education services in 21st-century education is the inclusive model (Glock et al., 2019; Sibley et al., 2017). The inclusive model rosters students with individual education plans (IEPs) in the general education classrooms with special education support from a special educator (Schnorr et al., 2016). This approach is considered the least restrictive environment (Glock et al., 2019; Goldberg et al., 2018). This least restrictive environment benefits students with disabilities, including minority students with disabilities, and CRT improves behavioral and academic outcomes for these students (Freire, 1970; Sibley et al., 2017).

According to Freire (1970), educators should promote positive changes in behavior which is the crucial outcome of critical consciousness. Critical consciousness is a theory that endorses critical thinking to identify oppression and inequity and generate solutions for one's reality (Heberle et al., 2020). The critical pedagogy theory posits that educators should be aware of the injustices that minority students or disenfranchised students may experience, which is considered oppression in the education system (Freire, 1970). Then, teachers should adapt to these barriers that students experience to liberate students in the education system. Therefore, there should be a constant adaptation of instructional practices to address the barriers that students face (Freire, 1970). Furthermore, as society changes, so should the education system. Cultural responsiveness is a key practice to employing critical consciousness and an essential practice born from the critical pedagogy theory (Gay, 2002).

The critical pedagogy theory suggests that teachers investigate the economic and cultural experiences of their students to mitigate them (Freire, 1970). Since Vygotsky reported the social

environment as an essential influence on learning, teachers are responsible for creating the class culture for students after investigating student backgrounds. Also, teachers should consider their identities as potential oppressors within the education system and establish their role in the classroom as a facilitator of educational equity (Adams et al., 2019). Therefore, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory influenced many theories which suggest that the identity of teachers and their students can influence student-teacher relationships, school climate, the whole child approach, and student outcomes (Biag & Castrechini, 2016; Daily et al., 2020; Ransom, 2020). Additionally, various factors contribute to educational inequity, such as limited resources, limited access to highly qualified teachers, systemic racism, poverty, and trauma (Lewallen et al., 2015). There are several systemic oppressive barriers to educational equity for minority students. Although there are systemic oppressive practices that lead to educational gaps for minority students, educators can utilize critical pedagogy to teach the whole child and close the education gap (Freire, 1970; Lewallen et al., 2015).

Supporting Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Carl Rogers reported that a student-centered approach is a learning experience that can improve the educational outcome of at-risk students (Rogers, 1976). Furthermore, increased student interest in the subject matter promotes learning. These theories challenge the notion of knowledge and learning, suggesting that knowledge may be influenced by culture (Freire, 1970; Rogers & Frieberg, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). If teachers can identify the areas of need for students and their ZPD, they can create learning outcomes based on their needs and interests. These learning activities are considered student-centered (Barger et al., 2019). Student-centered learning and self-initiated learning, as a whole child approach, increase students' capacity to retain proficiency in learning objectives. Therefore, student-centered instruction increases the ZPD of students. The history of whole child

instruction, benefits, and barriers of student-centered learning was demonstrated in the literature reviewed and the data obtained in this collective case study.

Related Literature

The following section examined the literature related to student-centered instruction as a whole child approach. The literature review described the following topics: historical background, whole child approaches in secondary education, student-centered instruction in the United States, and benefits and barriers to student-centered instruction. Each section provided a synthesis of the literature related to this study which will describe the role of the educator in student-centered instruction from the perspective of secondary educators. Also, each section was organized into subsections to provide a detailed overview of the relevant literature on whole child education to identify the gap in the literature for this case study.

Historical Background

The following section includes a report on the historical background of whole child education as this concept progressed over time in the United States. This section provided an overview of the achievement gap, the diverse needs in the classroom, and the shift from a one-size-fits-all model. Additionally, this section provided a detailed overview of whole child approaches such as student-centered instruction, social-emotional learning, and whole child curriculums. Finally, student-centered instruction as a whole child approach will be discussed.

Undoubtedly, students across states and jurisdictions come from various cultures, socio-economic statuses, disabilities, family structures, and different neighborhoods. The life of a student in an inner-city is different from that of a student in rural or suburban areas. Some students have access to district-wide school buses, while others must take public transportation or walk to school. Some students may experience trauma, including neglect, abuse, witness to

violence, or hunger. Although most students come from homes with both parents, 30% of

students come from homes with a single parent, and 21% of children live in a single-mother

household (United States Census Bureau, 2020). The family structure at home can influence the

experiences of students, which can inform their behavior during instruction. Instruction that

considers and responds to these varying student experiences creates a sense of continuity to meet

the needs of all learners.

The Achievement Gap and Educational Inequity

Various stakeholders have different roles in closing the minority achievement gap and

promoting educational equity (Byrd, 2020). Some of these stakeholders include parents, teachers,

students, and school leaders. A vast body of literature describes and defines the achievement gap,

which indicates the difference in achievement levels between minority students and their White

counterparts (Byrd, 2020; Choi et al., 2017). Although some students identify potential solutions

to closing the achievement gap, most are limited to solutions that target early childhood and

elementary students (Durham et al., 2019; Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018; Keung & Cheung,

2019). There are limited research studies that seek a sustainable solution for closing the

achievement gap at the secondary level (Tanase & Lastrapes, 2018; Prewett et al., 2019). While

many quantitative studies report on the definition, cause, and stakeholders of the achievement

gap, qualitative studies are scarce, even more so at the secondary level (Wiggan & Watson,

2016; Yamagata, 2018). Therefore, future quantitative analysis, descriptions, and perceptions of

solutions to the achievement gap will provide the basis for the gap in the literature that this

research study aimed to fill.

For the purposes of this study, the achievement gap was defined as a group of students

consistently performing at a higher level than another group of students (Byrd, 2020). In the

United States, White students consistently outperform Black/Hispanic students (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017). Coleman et al. (1966) highlighted this gap in achievement in the infamous Coleman Report because President Johnson required a solution to the lack of equal opportunities for students of color. Prior to this mandate, *Brown vs. Board of Education* already mandated that "separate but equal" would no longer be the status quo (Byrd, 2020). Instead, integration started normalizing in the United States after 1954, leading to more diversified schools. However, despite strides in diversifying schools, the notion that integration would result in equality without gaps in knowledge between groups of students was challenged (Byrd, 2020; Coleman et al., 1966). The conclusion of the Coleman Report was a catalyst for identifying the cause of the achievement gap between the races. The findings showed that the background of a student's family, including their socio-economic status and parental involvement, were significant factors in student academic outcomes (Coleman et al., 1966). Therefore, educational researchers sought strategies to build relationships between families and schools of at-risk students to promote closing the achievement gap.

The achievement gap is usually measured and analyzed using quantitative data obtained from standardized testing and school-based summative assessments (Byrd, 2020; Wagner et al., 2020). In 2002, an attempt was made to promote the achievement gap closure. The NCLB act mandated that all public schools in the United States would be held to the same set of academic standards. However, this policy is widely criticized by researchers as ineffective in meeting the academic and social needs of minority students and instead promotes teaching to the test (Burroughs & Barakauskas, 2017; Charles & Stone, 2019). The standardized test would report the outcome of schools' performance based on the mandated standards. In response to the criticism and to be more effective, the NCLB transformed into the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Some changes to the standards were that states had more flexibility in setting goals, created their

own summative or standardized testing, had flexibility in setting academic standards, and

included school quality factors in reporting processes (Byrd, 2020). The data are reported based

on socio-economic status, disability, and race/ethnicity standards (National Assessment of

Educational Progress, 2017). However, despite efforts, the achievement gap was not significantly

smaller (Hipp, 2018). The achievement gap became wider over time in some school districts in

the United States.

      Researchers identified the causes of the achievement gap to be the most challenging task

in closing the achievement gap (Daily et al., 2020; Dover & Rodriguez-Vails, 2018; Geerlings et

al., 2018). In addition to parental involvement, researchers identified the following factors

contributing to the achievement gap: lack of quality teachers, over-classifying students in special

education, diversity needs in the classroom, and the one-size-fits-all instructional model (Bondie

et al., 2018; Grönqvist & Vlachos, 2016). Urban schools, schools with a large population of

minority students, and Title 1 schools tend to be overstaffed with underqualified teachers who

are either less effective or trained through alternative licensure programs (Cherng & Halpin,

2016). Therefore, students attending these schools experience less rigorous instruction and lower

teacher expectations compared to schools with a majority White student population (Hoover et

al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2018; Keiler, 2018).

      Researchers sought to identify strategies to narrow the achievement gap and to identify

strategies that previously worked at the classroom and school levels. Also, studies assessed the

needs of students beyond the quantitative data (Byrd, 2020; Hoover et al., 2018; Johnson et al.,

2018). Since a parent's socio-economic status is a major factor in the academic outcomes of a

student, it is unsurprising that parents from lower socio-economic status and parents with lower

education levels tend to have lower expectations of the academic success of their children (Byrd, 2020; Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018). Although the information may indicate that students from a lower socio-economic status will experience low academic achievement, this is not always true. Parents from higher socio-economic statuses tend to have more resources to support their children learning outside of school. The inequities between schools in higher-income neighborhoods compared to schools in a lower-income neighborhoods highly populated with minority students is a factor that contributes to the low achievement of minority students (Byrd, 2020; Hoover et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2018).

Diversity Needs in The Classroom

Years after integration, classrooms across the United States continued to diversify, and although teachers of minority students may be certified, they lacked cultural competency and understanding of racial inequity (Bonner et al., 2018; Roofe, 2018). Institutional racism coupled with Eurocentric curriculums only widened the achievement gap because minority students found it difficult to connect. Education professionals soon realized the need to adjust the current instructional strategies to address the concerns of minority achievement. Since the primary source to interpret knowledge is the child's culture, researchers realized that students from different cultures might interpret information differently (Vygotsky, 1978; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). A child's culture encompasses various experiences and activities such as religion, household/family structure, socio-economic status, sexuality, and parents' educational level (Byrd, 2020; Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018). Therefore, schools must employ approaches that will address the multifaceted cultural background of diverse students.

However, the utilization of instruction that addressed the learning needs of one group of students but failed to address underachieving students prevailed in United States schools for

decades (Byrd, 2020; Choe et al., 2017; Hoover et al., 2018). Schools continue to show an increased number of immigrants, and schools mostly populated with minority students, inner-city schools, or urban schools continue to underperform academically (Choi et al., 2017). Increased immigration increased the significant diversity needs in schools in the United States. The United States is diverse, which prevents a one-size-fits-all approach from being successful in classrooms. The ever-changing demographics of students in our nation's classrooms must increase adaptations in instructional practices, pedagogies, and school-wide interventions. As student demographics change, linguistic needs also arise since 5.1 million students in the United States are ELLs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Instructional approaches must also adjust to these linguistic needs.

One-Size-Fits-All Model

The academic level of students can vary drastically in a classroom. Despite this, teachers have historically planned lessons based on average or grade-level students (Bondie et al., 2019). This type of one-size-fits-all model is typically delivered through whole group instruction. Like dumping into an empty vessel, the one-size-fits-all model of instruction treats students as empty vessels ready to receive information (Bondie et al., 2019; Freire, 1970). All students receive the information at the same time and with the same learning materials from the teacher at the front or center of the room (Keiler, 2018). In a study comparing the impact of student-centered and teacher-centered learning, the author found that students who engaged in teacher-centered learning activities demonstrated lower retention of learning objectives (Yamagata, 2016). A recent study found that teacher-centered learning styles contributed to student reading anxiety, while student-centered learning styles improved reading comprehension (Dong et al., 2019).

The Development of Whole Child Approaches

The whole child approach is a holistic approach to educating children based on their individual needs, primarily discussed in early childhood education (Chen & Chang, 2006). These approaches typically involve building a network of student support with parents, educators, and the community. The main purpose of this network of support is to coordinate learning experiences, policies, and resources that address the health, emotional well-being, and cultural experiences of students to promote the academic achievement of all learners (Biag & Castechini, 2016; Daily et al., 2020; Webb et al., 2019). The literature review indicates that meeting the needs of all learners requires multiple instructional approaches, a ground-breaking curriculum, and culturally responsive educational practices (Castro & Calzada, 2021; Kazanjian, 2019; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2021). The importance of the structure of the inclusive classroom emerged as a theme from the review of the literature. The inclusive classroom provides students with special needs with academic and social inclusion (Katz, 2013). There were three essential considerations for an impactful inclusive classroom that were identified. The first was the UDL and how schools structure their practices based on this design. The second structure is the implementation of specialized instruction in and out of the classroom. Finally, structures that addressed the needs of ELLs within inclusive classrooms were also identified as critical (Castro & Calzada, 2021; McLesky et al., 2014). Therefore, four salient approaches emerged to teaching the whole child: CRT, UDL, specialized instruction, and addressing linguistic needs.

Student-Centered Instruction

The following section provides information about student-centered instructional strategies utilized in the United States. These strategies are implemented to meet the diverse needs of learners utilizing culturally responsive teaching, university design for learning,

specialized instruction, multicultural pedagogies, collaborative learning, and small group instruction. Lastly, this section reviews how student-centered learning has been adapted in the secondary education setting and how secondary educators use these practices to benefit students.

Student-Centered Learning as An Alternative

Due to the decrease in academic outcomes in the United States, particularly affecting low-income and minority students, a shift occurred in the field of education away from teacher-centered instruction (Keiler, 2018; Serin, 2018; Serrano et al., 2019). The notion of teacher-centeredness has been challenged, and teachers are no longer seen as simply a facilitator of knowledge (Serin, 2018). In contrast to teacher-centered instruction, student-centered instruction utilizes the experiences and backgrounds of students to stimulate their learning activities (Grönqvist & Vlachos, 2016; Serrano et al., 2019). In this learning environment, students take charge of their learning experiences. According to researchers, students who engage in student-centered learning are more engaged in learning, develop critical thinking, and are more likely to retain knowledge (Dong et al., 2019; Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Sharif Matthews & López, 2019).

CRT Is Student-Centered Instruction

Studies on teaching the whole child practices identified culturally responsive pedagogy as a notable student-centered approach to meeting the needs of all learners (Morrison et al., 2021; Peyrefitte & Lazar, 2018; Quillinan et al., 2019). CRT is defined as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (Gay, 2010, p. 31). Various schools and teachers implemented practices that addressed cultural mismatch to ensure equity (Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Other factors that most CRT addressed were race and ethnicity to promote educational equity (Hoover et al., 2018; Lopez, 2016; Wiggan & Watson,

2016). Student-centered instruction puts the student at the center, and other influences guide instruction, such as the students' experiences, cultural backgrounds, and learning styles (Payaprom & Payaprom, 2020). CRT is identified as a prominently used student-centered strategy to incorporate the culture of students in their learning activities or consider and respond to their culture (Payaprom & Payaprom, 2020; Rogers et al., 2014).

As teachers adapt instruction based on the culture of students, language is a major facet of culture for teachers to explore. Language is an essential element of culture that influences social development (Freire, 1970). The increases in immigrant families over the past three decades caused the number of ELLs to increase from 9.2% in the fall of 2010 to 10.4% of the student population in the fall of 2020 (Irwin et al., 2022). Many ELLs were identified as students with learning disabilities, but eventually, researchers identified a need to adjust teaching strategies to include multi-lingual needs (Lopez, 2016). These instructional practices, such as response cards, collaboration, visual representations, technology, bilingual instruction, and books in various languages, were found to be impactful in increasing the educational experiences of these students and improving academic outcomes (Castro & Calzada, 2021; Hoover et al., 2018; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2021; Sharif Matthews & López, 2019).

Students with a primary language other than English were often placed with students with disabilities (Sanders et al., 2018; Shrogen, 2015). In early childhood interventions, ELLs could be easily classified as having a learning disability. However, for the significance of culture in the classroom, ELLs emerged as a significant theme related to CRT. Various studies that evaluated the impact of CRT on ELLs with disabilities found that CRT improved the academic and social experiences of students who are ELLs.

Student-centered instruction influenced the design of various curricula and pedagogies to address students' academic, social, emotional, and cultural needs. However, some studies found that the active role of teachers in student-centered activities is correlated to successful student outcomes (Morrison et al., 2021; Pörn & Hansell, 2020; Quillinan et al., 2019). Therefore, a balance of student-managed and teacher-managed learning activities is essential, especially for struggling learners. Additionally, student-centered learning can be used to address the ZPD of students by scaffolding and differentiating activities (Vygotsky, 1978).

Student-centered instruction is considered a whole child approach, leading to the WSCC model in 2014. WSCC is an infrastructure with built-in policies and practices that a school can utilize to coordinate health and academic success (Willgerodt et al., 2020). There are other student-centered strategies from a whole child approach. In a recent study, a principal used two student-centered strategies: culturally responsive leadership and teacher self-efficacy, which found that teachers who were confident in their content knowledge or pedagogies teach high-impact lessons because they can mediate the needs of the students within the lesson (Viloria, 2019). A student's culture can be used as the catalyst for learning (Rhea & Bauml, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). Also, if teachers feel confident in their capacity to teach the whole child, they demonstrate teacher self-efficacy by meeting their students' academic and social needs, thus developing student self-efficacy in the learning process (Kearney et al., 2019). In addition to culture, policy, and teacher self-efficacy, student-centered learning is also interconnected with parent/family involvement (Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018).

Student-Centered Instructional Strategies

Studies report that student-centered instructional strategies allow students to manage their learning experience, promote inclusion, and address students' social, emotional, and

academic needs (Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018; Wright, M. C. et al., 2019). Furthermore, student-centered instructional strategies promote positive teacher-student relationships (Dover et al., 2018; Rao et al., 2017). Student-centered learning reduces student stress and encourages collaborative learning, increasing the retention rate of learning (Wright, T. et al., 2019). Teachers who employ these strategies promote intercultural understanding, which helps students understand the whole around them to be student advocates and problem solvers (English, 2016).

There are various types of student-centered instructional strategies that have improved academic outcomes. Collaborative learning is an approach that is utilized in most student-centered classrooms, including secondary education (Kallery & Loupidou, 2016). Students can improve their retention of content knowledge when they interact with their peers in the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978). Students can work in partners, pairs, or small groups to problem-solve or discover new concepts. Also, through collaborative learning, a student can partake in project-based learning, another student-centered instructional approach (Torres-Neches et al., 2020). Through cooperation among peers, students can investigate problems and problem-solve. In a study investigating project-based learning in the secondary classroom, disagreements among groups were not addressed appropriately or monitored in a timely fashion (Torre-Neches et al., 2020). This study showed that teachers played an active role in setting high expectations and holding students accountable for project-based learning. Therefore, teachers should seek professional training to implement this strategy effectively. Otherwise, the failed implementation would be detrimental to student learning outcomes.

In addition to collaborative learning activities, teachers need to identify students' learning styles. Identifying students' learning style is a great starting point for designing student-centered instruction (Payaprom, 2020). Learning styles are the preferred ways learners receive

information: auditory, visually, kinesthetically, and read/write. Research indicates that individuals learn differently, which is why teachers should consider the learning style of their students. This practice was also positively correlated with student engagement (Payaprom, 2020).

Cross-content and cross-level curricula are also student-centered strategies that effectively improve academic outcomes (Huf & Raggl, 2015). Students have been grouped by age into grade levels for the past 150 years (Byrd, 2020). However, less traditional learning approaches allow students to be grouped into a classroom based on their ZPD (Payaprom & Payaprom, 2020). Also, teachers can improve the retention of knowledge for students by implementing cross-content lessons. Cross-content lessons involve main concepts taught in a core content class but are influenced by other content (Pavón Vázquez, 2017). Furthermore, interdisciplinary lessons are student-centered instructional strategies that improve student understanding, especially if the content is connected to student interests.

The Teacher's Role in Culturally Responsive Education

The majority of the nation's curriculum and standards were written with only the consideration of a singular culture or the majority culture (Cholwea et al., 2014). Cultural mismatch is a term that could be used to describe the feeling of students in classrooms with these singular cultural lessons that they cannot relate to (Garro et al., 2021). The cultural mismatch between teachers and students can be harmful to the educational process of students as well. Research suggested that this can be especially detrimental for minority students, students who speak other languages, and even students with learning disabilities (Choi et al., 2017; Garro et al., 2021; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Therefore, teachers who do not look like their students should make every effort to represent student cultures within the classroom and lessons (Choi et

al., 2017). Students should experience cultural continuity between home and their school or classrooms. Although an increase in staff diversification was a significant strategy to improve student outcomes, "…it is important for all teachers, regardless of their race or ethnicity, to become culturally responsive to meet students' needs" (Wiggan & Watson, 2016, p. 770).

Teachers' cultural backgrounds or linguistic experiences of teachers can be seen as major aspects of classroom representation that influence the feeling of cultural mismatch. Although a teacher's race does not directly increase student outcomes, students who experience cultural continuity tend to be more responsive to instruction (Taggart, 2017). Furthermore, when students experienced cultural discontinuity between home and school, they experienced lower GPAs than students who experienced lower levels of cultural discontinuity. Students' race, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds are the major considerations in CRT practices. African-centered curriculums celebrated multiculturalism and emphasized anti-racism were characteristics of CRT practices within higher-performing African American schools (McLesky et al., 2014; Wiggan & Watson, 2015). CRT practices that were linguistically relevant such as bilingual instruction, directions written in Spanish, and language integration in instruction, were correlated with improved academic outcomes for special education students who were ELLs (Garro et al., 2021; Hoover et al., 2018; Kieran & Anderson, 2019; Piazza et al., 2015).

Universal Design Learning

UDL is a student-centered approach that places students with special needs at the center of instruction. There have been multi-layered or tiered systems of support and comprehensive whole-school support systems that provide interventions for students with disabilities and those in general education (Shogren et al., 2015). These various comprehensive or universal support systems provided schools with a rich environment for students with disabilities to obtain most of

their education with general education students in a general education classroom (McLeskey et al., 2014; Piazza et al., 2015). UDL "is an approach to instruction that promotes access, participation, and progress in the general education curriculum for all learners" (Katz, 2013, p. 157). UDL could be considered a teaching the whole child approach since it addresses a specific academic need of students for the improved educational experience of all students. UDL schools that effectively implement this inclusive model experience improved educational experiences for students with disabilities and general education students (Katz, 2013; Shogren et al., 2018).

Classrooms have become more diverse than in prior decades and are expected to continue to increase in diversity. However, teachers are also expected to adapt their instruction to students with special needs (Dover et al., 2018). Another essential structure of the inclusive classroom identified as impactful for all learners was implementing specialized instructions. Many schools with the inclusion model have two teachers in the classroom: a special education teacher and the other identified as a general education teacher (Shogen, 2018). In these classrooms, students had significantly more touchpoints with teachers who could implement other culturally responsive practices. Students with disabilities were pulled from classrooms for mandated specialized instruction in small groups, which effectively improved literacy and mathematic scores (Hoover et al., 2018; Katz, 2013).

Curriculums and educational practices that address, include, and respond to multiple cultures are most effective in increasing student achievement (Kazanjian, 2019; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Most curriculums in the United States utilize instruction that satisfies the perspectives of the White majority (Hoffman et al., 2021; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). However, schools with multicultural pedagogies improved academic outcomes for students from inner cities and rural areas classified as general education and students in special education (Hoover et

al., 2018; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2021; Lopez, 2016). Schools with a majority African American demographic that implement African-centered curriculum or lessons based on Black culture experience high academic achievement among African American students (Garro et al., 2021; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2021; Wiggan & Watson, 2016).

Social Emotional Learning

Although academic achievement is the ultimate desired outcome in closing the achievement gap, intellectual achievement is not the sole purpose of education. Researchers report that closing the achievement gap requires schools to develop students socially, emotionally, and ethically (Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017). As Cohen (2001) defines, SEL pushes students to self-awareness and self-regulation, promoting social-emotional intelligence. This would enable students to interpret their emotions as well as the disposition of others (Cohen, 2001). Therefore, SEL can improve student problem-solving skills, manage, and navigate learning challenges, resolve emotional experiences, communicate effectively, be solution-oriented, form friendships, and demonstrate self-motivation (Andolina & Conklin, 2021; Kim et al., 2021; Moreno-Gómez & Cejudo, 2019).

SEL programs help students understand themselves and others (Hoffman et al., 2021; Nathanson et al., 2016). SEL can be integrated across a whole school or in individual classrooms. Since SEL improves the emotional environment of classrooms, it also improves classroom management and thus aids in student engagement (Kim et al., 2021; Nathanson et al., 2016). Also, SEL improves students' decision-making progress and overall improves academic outcomes. SEL programs are widely implemented in primary and elementary grade levels. Although SEL is present in secondary education, it is less consistent and less likely to be utilized across the school (Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017; Goldberg et al., 2018). However, SEL can be

impactful for secondary education students, particularly minority students, at-risk students, or students who experienced trauma.

Benefits And Barriers

Although whole child approaches were developed and discussed primarily in early childhood education, the topic is not foreign to secondary education (Hoover et al., 2018; Piazza et al., 2015; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). A large body of research indicates some efforts to teach the whole child in middle and high schools, such as school climate, SEL, and culturally relevant teaching (Daily et al., 2020; Riekie et al., 2016). A study in a high school with a majority of African American students demonstrated the significance of multicultural pedagogy, race/ethnicity in lessons, and positive relationships with teachers that led to improved academic outcomes (Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Another study conducted with Latino high school students also found increased academic outcomes related to culturally responsive pedagogy to promote whole child education (Kang & Keinonen, 2018; Piazza et al., 2015).

Despite the overwhelming evidence that suggests positive academic outcomes are associated with whole child education in secondary schools, there was limited information regarding secondary teachers' perceptions of teaching the whole child (Keung et al., 2020). Furthermore, research indicates a need for professional development among educators to address the needs of minority students since the role of the teacher in promoting whole child education is vital (Daily et al., 2020; Riekie et al., 2017). Therefore, researchers specified a demand for teacher preparation and professional development to equip teachers in primary to grade 12 to be culturally responsive, but secondary educators are less likely to demonstrate positive perceptions of culturally responsive teaching and other student-centered instructional strategies (Chuang et al., 2020; Hayes et al., 2019). If teachers are not knowledgeable about the theory of student-

centered learning, they find it difficult to differentiate learning materials and learning activities to fit a student-centered model (Aliusta & Ozer, 2016; Corkin et al., 2019).

Since CRT, a main tenant of the whole child approach is strongly correlated to increased academic achievement of minority students, it is important to evaluate secondary teachers' view of teaching the whole child. Additionally, Bandura (1977) theorizes that individuals are more likely to employ a skill if they can execute it. This self-efficacy theory was used to explain teachers' belief in their capability to utilize instructional practices influencing their perseverance and effectiveness in the profession (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1993; Tschannen-Moren et al., 1988). Therefore, it is essential that secondary teachers are confident in their ability to effectively teach minority students, which will influence their effectiveness in teaching the whole child (Hayes et al., 2019; Keung et al., 2020; Lotter et al., 2016: Yoon & Martin, 2019).

The introduction and implementation of whole child education have many reported benefits. Student-centered instruction increases the intrinsic motivation of students, which leads to increased student engagement in learning activities (Byrd, 2020). Since students feel like they have a choice and can take charge of their learning experience, it leads to student self-efficacy. Also, student-centered learning encourages utilizing student experiences and cultural influences on structure and facilitates instruction (Keiler, 2018; Onurkan & Özer, 2018). This practice also assists in developing student self-efficacy, promotes cultural continuity, and increases student engagement (Paulo et al., 2019; Siwatu, 2011; Siwatu et al., 2017).

Although student-centered instruction and whole child approaches reduce student stress, they can contribute to teacher stress and, thus, teacher burnout (Glock et al., 2018). Teachers use various strategies to employ whole child approaches, such as differentiation, scaffolding, culturally relevant instruction, trauma-informed practices, positive behavioral incentive systems

(PBIS), and small group instruction (Op den Kelder et al., 2018; Roofe, 2018; Taggart, 2017). However, some teachers are overwhelmed by the additional planning time required to implement these strategies. Although some school districts utilize scripted lesson plans or detailed curricula that may even incorporate whole child strategies, there may be restrictions regarding curriculum modification. In contrast, some school districts utilize a curriculum that requires extensive modifications from teachers to be culturally responsive or inclusive.

Stakeholder Perception and Responsibility

A review and analysis of relevant literature showed that teachers' perceptions or beliefs are connected to effective instruction and classroom management (Bonner et al., 2018; Keung et al., 2020; McMillen et al., 2019; Prewett et al., 2019). In this section, an overview of the teacher's role in student-centered instruction will be provided. Additionally, the following will be described: a synthesis of the literature that refers to teacher self-efficacy, student-teacher relationships, and the teacher's identity in promoting effective implementation of student-centered instruction. Then the role of non-instructional stakeholders such as the school, administration, students, and parents will be discussed. Finally, information regarding the role of the teacher in working in tandem with stakeholders to teach the whole child will be provided.

Teachers' Profession Needs

Teachers must be confident in their capacity to utilize the whole child approach to achieve student-centered instruction. Low teacher self-efficacy can lead to limited utilization of these strategies or ineffective implementation (Poulou et al., 2019). Therefore, professional development is needed to build teacher self-efficacy to promote whole child education.

Researchers indicated a need for teachers to be professionally developed to teach the whole child (Adams et al., 2019; Wright, M. C. et al., 2019). Since increased knowledge is

strongly correlated with self-efficacy, it is essential for teacher preparation programs, professional learning communities, and professional development workshops to implement instruction or training to improve teacher self-efficacy to teach the whole child (Vamos et al., 2020; Velma et al., 2019). It is especially concerning that teachers who do not have the same cultural identity as their students are less likely to demonstrate positive perceptions of CRT; a whole child approach that improves academic outcomes of minority students (Lopez et al., 2016; Piazza et al., 2018; Sibley et al., 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Although studies have evaluated the perceptions of teachers to teach minority students or teach the whole child in early childhood and elementary, limited studies describe the perceptions of secondary teachers to teach the whole child (Adams et al., 2019; Ransom, 2020; Reikie et al., 2016). Additionally, the studies that examined the effects of the whole child approach in secondary education often had a narrow focus on health education or physical education (Krieder, 2018; Michael et al., 2015).

Teacher's Role and Responsibility

Teacher belief is a common theme in the literature that explains the essential role of teachers in utilizing student-centered education (Bonner et al., 2020; Durham et al., 2019; Tanase & Lastrapes, 2018). Recently, research on teacher self-efficacy in teaching minority students has increased. Studies show that teacher self-efficacy, which is confidence in using instructional practices, has a causal relationship with strong classroom management, high academic achievement, and teacher retention (Miller et al., 2017; Wright, M. C. et al., 2019). Teachers must demonstrate self-efficacy in the instructional task they facilitate and the content knowledge they possess (Choa et al., 2017). Also, teacher self-efficacy is related to effective classroom management, which is essential for effective teaching and student learning (Suprayogi et al., 2017). Since research shows that teacher self-efficacy is related to multiple factors, including a

passion for teaching, teachers should participate in reflection and professional learning opportunities to build self-efficacy and maintain a passion for teaching (Moe, 2016).

One study with participants of elementary school teachers found that the teachers demonstrate less self-efficacy in teaching minority students, especially in classrooms where there are fewer minority students compared to White students (Geerlings et al., 2018). Furthermore, this study posits that there is more likely to be low self-efficacy in teaching minority students when behavioral concerns are a factor. In another more recent study, race mismatch between teacher and student is related to positive teacher perception (Kunemond et al., 2020). Furthermore, Kunemond et al. (2020) found that teachers who do not share the same race or ethnicity as most of their students experience low self-efficacy with classroom management, leading to low self-efficacy in promoting whole child education. Although this study contributes to the body of research regarding teacher self-efficacy in teaching minority students, the participants of this study were only preschool teachers (Kunemond et al., 2020).

In addition to teacher self-efficacy, teachers must foster positive teacher-student relationships in student-centered classrooms. Teachers must trust their students to participate in activities like collaborative learning, small group instruction, and other self-regulated activities (Lee et al., 2019). Teacher trust is a product of a positive student-teacher relationship and is necessary for successfully implementing student-centered approaches. Also, students demonstrate increased intrinsic motivation when they trust their teachers. Therefore, teachers must take the time to create a positive class culture and environment for learning. Since most classrooms are diverse, teachers must also consider and adapt their approach to building student relationships based on their linguistic, social, emotional, and cultural backgrounds. Building

relationships with students is also essential because students from various cultural backgrounds may have different expectations of how teachers support their learning (Lee et al., 2018).

Teachers should still consider their identities, as this plays an essential role in culturally responsive instruction (Kieler, 2018; Riekie et al., 2017). The teachers' identities can be described as how they view themselves and their roles as instructors (Keiler, 2018). There is an interconnectedness between the implementation of pedagogy and the teachers' identity. Teachers' personal and professional experiences impact the development of their identity as a teacher (Keiler, 2018). Additionally, students play a role in developing the teachers' identity. Since bias and triggers can be rooted within a teacher's identity, educators must self-reflect on how their identity will affect their role in the class and mitigate this dilemma (Kunemund et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2019; Ransom, 2020). Self-reflection will assist teachers in building trust with students as they build positive relationships with students.

Building trust among teachers and students also improves classroom management and thus promotes a positive class culture and school climate (Poulou, 2017; Poulou et al., 2019). Since diverse student populations desire to be viewed as individuals, supported by the utilization of student-centered instruction, exclusion is a shunned concept in culturally responsive learning environments (Byrd, 2019). Therefore, teachers must create a classroom culture where students feel accepted, promoting belonging. Then teachers can guide students to self-regulated and inquiry-based learning activities in a comfortable and supportive environment (Keiler, 2018). Due to the trust, positive classroom environment, and sense of belonging, students experience increased confidence in their learning abilities.

Limited research was available regarding teachers' self-efficacy in teaching minority students in secondary education. Therefore, the aim of this study was to describe the perceptions of secondary educators to teach the whole child and their self-efficacy to teach minority students.

Non-Instructional Stakeholders' Roles and Responsibilities

Since student-centered instruction is a holistic approach, some non-instructional stakeholders influence the implementation of effective student-centered strategies (Onurkan & Özer, 2017; Rao et al., 2017; Serin, 2018; Serrano et al., 2019). Administrators and leaders play a vital role in personalized learning. The administration should create a positive school climate to feel a sense of belonging to the overall school population (Daily et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2019). School climate has been positively correlated to improved student outcomes and increased student engagement (Daily et al., 2020; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Furthermore, teachers perceive student engagement as essential for student-centered learning activities. School leadership should also provide teachers with curriculum and professional expectations that align with culturally relevant instruction. Researchers reported that PBIS improves students' sense of belonging and positively affects classroom management (Daily et al., 2020). Also, school leaders can improve teacher self-efficacy to implement student-centered activities by providing relevant professional learning communities and professional development opportunities (Adams et al., 2020, Kallio & Halverson, 2020; Kearney et al., 2019).

In addition to administration, parents play a role in effective student-centered strategies, according to the teachers' perceptions. Teachers believe student engagement is influenced by how parents are involved in their child's education (Barger et al., 2019). Despite a commonly held belief, parents of minority students are not less likely to want their children to succeed and are, in fact, aware that they have some responsibility as co-teacher at home (Janssen &

Vandenbroeck, 2018). However, research shows that parents believe that the school is mainly responsible for the academic development of their children and, thus, view teachers as the primary educators bearing the major role as an educator (Byrd, 2020). The view of teachers as the primary educator is due to the significant amount of time students spend in school during the workweek compared to home, so parents feel that schools should create a student-centered learning environment for academic success.

Although most parents desire to be involved, some feel it is best to take a hands-off approach and wait for the teacher to reach out to them if needed (Mattecci, 2016; Park et al., 2017). Therefore, teachers should proactively communicate with parents to encourage active involvement. Students tend to maintain or increase interest in classroom activities when their parents are connected to the classroom community (McMillen et al., 2019). Teachers are encouraged to build relationships with parents and families to promote parent involvement. Furthermore, parent involvement is associated with many key factors that influence the effective implementation of whole child instruction, such as positive student-teacher relationships, increased student engagement, increased classroom management, improved class culture, and increased student outcomes (Byrd, 2020; Keung et al., 2020). Despite these reported outcomes, research indicates that parent involvement decreases as the student advances through the educational system (Barger et al., 2019). Therefore, secondary educators face a desperate need to improve student involvement.

Limited parent involvement, lack of professional development, low teacher self-efficacy, and limited resources are just a few barriers to student-centered learning from the perspective of a teacher (Kieler, 2018; Onurkan & Özer, 2017; Rao et al., 2017; Serin, 2018; Serrano et al., 2019). Moreover, there is limited research on whole child implementation in secondary

education and less regarding the secondary teacher's role in student-centered instruction. However, there is a wealth of information regarding the positive outcomes of student-centered instruction in STEM classes.

Teaching the whole child is still a relevant and essential practice for students across the nation (Sibley et al., 2017). Additionally, the teacher's role in whole child education has been extensively researched, and the demand for professional development of teachers to teach the whole child is discussed in the literature (Shogren et al., 2018; Taggart, 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Despite this documented need to equip teachers to use student-centered instructional strategies, especially to teach minority students, there is limited research regarding secondary education. Studies have primarily looked at teaching the whole child in early childhood and elementary education. Addressing the cultural needs of students has been shown to increase the academic outcomes of minority studies (Piazza et al., 2018; Wiggan & Watson, 2016).

Additionally, the cultural identities of teachers and their students are associated with the teacher-student relationship, which influences a teacher's self-efficacy with classroom management (Geerlings et al., 2018; Kunemond et al., 2020). Building trust between students and teachers is essential to promoting positive student-teacher relationships (Prewett et al., 2019; Wright, T et al., 2019). Positive student-teacher relationships, as well as parental involvement, are necessary for the successful implementation of student-centered instructional strategies. Although student-centered instruction is needed in secondary education to narrow the achievement gap, more research is needed to identify the barriers to successfully implementing these strategies in secondary education. Further research is needed to describe secondary education teachers' perceptions regarding teaching the whole child and their self-efficacy in

teaching minority studies. Additionally, more information is needed regarding the professional development needs of secondary teachers to teach the whole child.

Teaching the whole child is a sensationalized concept in education, and the body of research continues to grow. CRT was a significant strategy to address a student's sense of cultural continuity, which may benefit minority students. While there is extensive literature on CRT practices, limited studies evaluate the differences between CRT practices in public and private schools, as well as account for indirect factors such as classroom size and socio-economic status.

A gap in the literature was the need to describe the relationship between self-efficacy in teaching minority students and the implementation of whole child approach pedagogies, specifically in secondary education. Since research has shown a significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teacher effectiveness, this was an essential topic to study (Bandura, 1977). By employing a qualitative methodology, this study allowed participants to share their experiences and provide multiple realities to contribute to the research surrounding the phenomenon of student-centered instruction in secondary education (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants was also able to describe the benefits and barriers to implementing student-centered instructional strategies.

Virtual Learning Considerations

In 2020, most school systems in the United States transitioned to virtual learning instruction due to the COVID-19 global pandemic (Cummings, 2021; Ironsi, 2022). This unprecedented moment in history highlighted the inequity in schools and the significance of the need to close the achievement gap (Goudeau et al., 2021; Shtaleva et al., 2021). Although many school districts successfully transitioned to virtual live classes, many schools struggled to

provide all students with devices, many students faced challenges without internet at home, and attendance suffered. These challenges lead to significant unfinished learning for students in urban schools, low-income communities, ELLs, and students with disabilities (Goudeau et al., 2021). There is a more urgent need to teach the whole child, and the education system struggles to provide quality education to all students in a virtual environment (Sari & Nayir, 2020).

Summary

This chapter synthesized the relevant literature on the impact of teaching the whole child practice on the educational experiences of diverse students in inclusive classrooms. Also, an overview of the historical background of whole child education was discussed. The achievement gap was discussed as a significant catalyst for diversity needs in the United States, in addition to immigration. Due to increased diversity needs, instruction had to evolve to address the needs of all learners. Grounded in the sociocultural theory, this study identified students' culture and language as notable factors influencing learning. Four themes emerged in teaching the whole child practices: achievement gap, student-centered instruction, culturally responsive instruction, and the teacher's role in whole child education. Although the literature supported the claim that teaching the whole child practices improved the academic experience of all learners, there was limited research on the secondary educators' perceptions of teaching the whole child. Empirical research is needed to describe the perception of secondary educators regarding the barriers to student-centered instruction in secondary education classrooms. Additionally, studies should explore the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and the frequency of utilizing student-centered instructional strategies. This research sought to describe the needs of teachers and their lived experiences teaching the whole child by employing student-centered instruction.

In summary, this study is significant because it provided theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions to the body of research regarding secondary educators' self-efficacy in teaching minority students. Also, this study informs teacher preparation programs, professional learning communities, and professional development for secondary teachers to promote whole child education. Additionally, this informs future policies and practices that may improve secondary educators' self-efficacy in teaching minority students (Aldrige et al., 2016).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the experiences that secondary educators' face when using whole child practices to teach minority students in Washington, DC urban schools. Teachers' self-efficacy is an integral factor in effectively utilizing whole child education pedagogies (Bandura, 1977). By describing the experiences of secondary teachers educating the whole child, professional development strategies were identified to enhance the self-efficacy of secondary teachers to utilize whole child pedagogy. This chapter the research design of this study is described, including its qualitative nature. A rationale for selecting a collective case study approach is also provided to better understand secondary educators' perceptions of student-centered instruction. Also, this chapter includes the research questions, setting, and describes the participants of this study. The procedure of this study is explained in detail and described so that another researcher can recreate it. Furthermore, the role of the researcher is explained, detailing any assumptions or paradigms. Finally, the strategies used to establish trustworthiness and the ethical consideration of this qualitative collective case study are described.

Research Design

Although a qualitative or quantitative research design could be utilized to conduct this study, a qualitative case study research design was chosen. The rationale for choosing a qualitative case study design was that this allowed the researcher to use participants' voices through interviews and in-depth questioning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While a quantitative design would provide essential information regarding outcomes and trends, the qualitative research design would allow the researcher to focus on the voices of participants to describe their

experiences and self-efficacy to promote whole child education (Yin, 2014). The qualitative

collective case study approach was appropriate for this research design because the research

questions were framed with "how" (Yin, 2009). The central research question was, "How do

secondary education teachers who teach minority students describe teaching the whole child?"

Additionally, this study identified multiple units of study, teachers, which was the rationale for a

collective case study design (Yin, 2009). Finally, this study collected in-depth information from

secondary teachers utilizing multiple data collection methods to describe this phenomenon.

Therefore, this case study was a descriptive approach (Yin, 2009).

Furthermore, a case study design was chosen specifically because case studies are useful

for providing in-depth descriptions of a phenomenon, event, or issue in a real-life context

(Creswell & Poth, 2018: Crow et al., 2011). Therefore, a case study design allowed the

researcher to provide an in-depth description of the experiences of secondary teachers in whole

child education and their self-efficacy in educating minority students. Additionally, case studies

can be used to describe events, phenomena, or experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Furthermore, a case study design allows the researcher to understand a particular issue more

inadeptly (Noor, 2008; Yin, 2014). The issue was the self-efficacy of secondary teachers to teach

the whole child. This included secondary educators' attitudes and beliefs about whole child

education. The experiences secondary educators face in using whole child education was

essential to explore to inform policy and professional development.

A qualitative study was utilized because these types of research designs can help identify

varied experiences and attitudes. As a qualitative methodology, the case study design is a

research method that researchers may use to collect descriptive data about cases or entities such

as people, social and natural events, programs, organizations, and other phenomena (Flick,

2006). Furthermore, the data collected in a case study provides an in-depth understanding of the cases' information in a real-world context, which would be organized and used to develop a narrative. To develop this narrative, researchers may interact with the participants and the research audience in distinctive ways. Oftentimes, researchers may collaborate with the participants to collect data. Then, researchers identify themes in the data to present this narrative description of the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Yin (2014), case studies can be exploratory, explanatory, causal, and descriptive, like all other methodologies. The five components of the case study design assist in developing this methodology: the research questions, the study's propositions, the rationale that links the data to the proposition, and the measures used to interpret the findings (Yin, 2014).

The most essential aspect of a case study is the ability to explore a subject in-depth; therefore, identifying the object of the study or case is essential (Merriam, 1998). Since The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences that secondary educators face when using whole child practices to teach minority students, including self-efficacy in teaching minority students, multiple cases may be selected for this study. A collective or multiple-case study involves gathering information from multiple cases and may be in one setting (Yin, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The objects or units of this case study would be secondary teachers; therefore, a collective case study is appropriate.

Additionally, utilizing the collective case study approach enabled this study to describe differences between the whole child education experiences of secondary education teachers. To ensure feasibility or a reasonable scope, this case study was bonded in time and place (Creswell, 2003). Additionally, binding the case by definition and context prevented a broad scope of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This allowed the researcher to describe the complexities of

teacher experience from multiple secondary teachers and provide a contextual understanding of this phenomenon. Furthermore, this study was limited in location to Washington, DC.

Research Questions

This collective case study posed the following central question and sub-questions:

Central Research Question

How do secondary education teachers who teach minority students describe teaching the whole child?

Sub Question One

How do secondary teachers describe the benefits of student-centered learning?

Sub Question Two

How do secondary teachers describe their understanding and confidence in utilizing student-centered learning with minority students?

Sub Question Three

What barriers do secondary teachers experience when using student-centered learning with minority students?

Setting and Participants

The setting for this study was in Washington, DC. According to the 2019 DC School Report Card (2019), 89% of Washington, DC students are students of color, and 47% are classified as at-risk. The District of Columbia (2019) classified a student as at-risk if they experience homelessness, qualified for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), under the care of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA or "foster care"), and high school students who are older than the expected age for their grade. Therefore, Washington, DC, is an appropriate setting because there

is an increased number of at-risk and minority students, which are populations of high need for whole child education (Wiggan & Watson, 2016).

CC School and I-Deal Education Campus

There are public, private, and public charter schools in Washington, DC (DC Report Card, 2019). Participants will be selected from two school districts in Washington DC to limit the scope of the study: CC School and I-Deal Education Campus. Both schools were assigned pseudonyms for this study to conceal the identity of the sites. CC School is a public charter school in the District of Columbia, in Northeast DC. The school has been in existence since 2008. This school also serves 281 students in grades PreK-8 (DC Public Charter School Board, 2019.). Additionally, in this school population, 100% of students receive reduced or free lunch. Sixty-one percent of students are African American, 35% Hispanic, and 4% multi-racial (DC Public Charter School Board, 2019). Based on the student demographic, most students are from low-income households, and 62% are from single-family households (DC Public Charter School Board, 2019). This school meets the criteria for a case in this study due to a large population of minority students in Washington, DC, from grades six to eight.

I-Deal Education Campus (a pseudonym) is a public school district in Washington, DC. The school has a population of 551 students in grades six through eight. The school was opened in the 2019-2020 school year and piloted the Schoolwide Enrichment Model during its founding year. The school's main goal is to promote college and career readiness through rigorous instruction, culturally relevant teaching, and schoolwide enrichment (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2020). In the Title 1 school chosen for this study, 95% of students receive free or reduced lunch (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2020). 55% of students are African American, 43% Hispanic, and 2% multi-racial. The school leadership includes a female

principal, two male assistant principals, and one female assistant principal from minority

backgrounds. Aside from leadership, I-Deal Education Campus has 62 staff members, of which

42 are instructional staff. 56% of the staff are Black or Hispanic (District of Columbia Public

Schools, 2020). The purpose of this collective case study is to describe the experiences that

secondary educators face when using whole child practices to teach minority students in

Washington, DC, urban schools; therefore, the setting must currently have a large population of

minority students and serve students in secondary grade levels (6th – 12th). I-Deal Education

Campus meets these criteria. The sites were selected based on convenience and because these

schools' student demographics are mostly minority students.

Participants

Purposive sampling was utilized to select secondary educators as units for this study in

Washington, DC. Criteria were developed to determine the participants selected for this study.

Random sampling was not utilized since participants needed to meet specific criteria such as

having been a teacher for at least one year, being a secondary educator, and having experience

teaching minority students (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The rationale for this sampling procedure

included the fact that these teachers would be considered knowledgeable informants regarding

their experience in Washington, DC, and knowledgeable informants were essential to this study

to share their experiences as a teacher (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of secondary education teachers. Teachers

with at least one year of teaching experience, specifically in Washington, DC, was chosen for

this study. A total of 15 participants were selected for this study, although the typical guidelines

for a sample size of a case study are 20-30 participants (Creswell, 1998). Participations from

various races/ethnicities were selected for this study. Participants from both genders and non-

binary were included in the study to prevent gender imbalance (Dickerson et al., 2012). The findings of this study are not expected to apply to the general population and, thus, do not need to have a sample population representative of a population (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, a non-probability sampling procedure was used to identify a purposive sample, and the researcher selected participants from the group of secondary teachers at the two chosen sites. The researcher then obtained permission and consent forms before any participants take part in research activities.

<div align="center">**Researcher Positionality**</div>

In this section, I describe my motivation for conducting this research study. I provide an overview of my research paradigm or interpretive framework. Interpretive frameworks include post-positivism, constructivism, pragmatism, and transformative frameworks (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). My interpretive framework consists of post-positivism and remains consistent throughout the study. I describe why this interpretive framework was selected and the reasons the remaining interpretive frameworks do not apply. Then, I discuss the three philosophical assumptions that guide this study: ontological, epistemological, and axiological. Finally, I describe my role in this study as the researcher.

Interpretive Framework

I utilized an interpretive framework with a social constructivism research paradigm in this case study. Also, I acknowledged that my professional values or philosophies of education affect my interpretation of the findings of this study since I assumed that whole child education is an essential practice in urban education. I continued to explain my professional position and demographics that may be biased regarding information gathered in the field, such as my personal experience with teacher preparation to teach the whole child, race and cultural identity,

and previous experiences with trauma as a student. Therefore, my interpretive framework was further developed through a social constructivism paradigm. The social constructivism paradigm was a desire for the researcher to understand their world and defined the meaning of the social interactions in their world (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Also, the social constructivism paradigm seeks to describe the varied perceptions of participants so that I, as the researcher, identified the complexities of these views (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Philosophical Assumptions

This section describes three philosophical assumptions: ontological, epistemological, and axiological. An axiological assumption includes values and ethics that apply to me as the researcher, such as religious, cultural, or other ethical values (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a teacher who was required to employ whole child education strategies and experienced teacher preparation or professional development, I have formed a value regarding teachers' capacity to teach the whole child (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumption describes my belief regarding the nature of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this research, I embrace the idea that multiple realities exist by reporting the experiences of secondary teachers with teaching the whole child. Research indicates that teaching the whole child positively impacts the achievement of minority students (Byrd, 2020; Daily et al., 2020; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2021). This is the belief that I used to conduct this research and interpret this study. However, relying on the ontological assumption, I utilized multiple data collection strategies to report the multiple realities or perspectives of teachers' experiences teaching the whole child (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I was able to describe teachers' perceptions, acknowledging that participants have different views of their reality due to their

varied firsthand experiences and knowledge of whole child practices. Furthermore, I described various teachers' views regarding their ability to teach the whole child using their words collected from interviews and present these perspectives using themes.

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption addresses how I classify knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since this was a qualitative collective case study, the evidence was subjective because it was gathered from individual views. Furthermore, the knowledge was gained from subject matter experts regarding teaching the whole child. However, I used various data collection methods to get close to obtaining the participants' experiences. Additionally, this study is more subjective; the knowledge I gained from participants cannot be regarded as facts or generalizable to all secondary teachers' experiences teaching the whole child.

Axiological Assumption

The axiological assumption requires researchers to report their values and bias to gather and interpret information gained in the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In quantitative research, the researcher's values should not influence the study and are not typically described. However, since this was a qualitative study of a subjective nature, I conveyed my values, context, and bias to efficiently identify the truth in the data I collected for my final report. As a middle school mathematics teacher in urban schools, I spent nearly a decade educating minority students. Moreover, student trauma is a significant issue that I had first-hand experience addressing in the District of Columbia. I also had first-hand experience with student trauma in my formative years as a student. I am a Black immigrant who moved to the United States and experienced significant trauma, hunger, and poverty. However, without fail, I demonstrated grit to experienced significant academic achievement and social mobility.

My individual experiences as a student certainly influenced my desire to conduct this study. It also influenced my value regarding the need for whole child education. As an educator, although the demands for my professional practice to adapt to the learning needs of students were overwhelming, I attempted to meet the standard of being an inclusive teacher. However, further demands were made by the administration for me to consider the non-academic factors that may influence the educational outcomes of students. My goal in conducting this study was to give voice to teachers regarding their views on their ability to meet these demands.

Personally, I have experienced teacher burnout due to the overwhelming expectations to meet the needs of all learners. Additionally, I felt unprepared to truly teach the whole child in my first year of teaching. Professionally, after a decade in the field of education, I am confident in my ability to teach the whole child. Because of this confidence, I utilized these strategies more often, leading to increased student engagement and achievement. Although teaching the whole child and student-centered learning has become sensationalized catchphrases of education, their application is critical for student success, particularly those in low-income neighborhoods (Sibley et al., 2017). It is important to acknowledge that due to my professional experience with success utilizing whole child practices, I hold a bias regarding the essential need for whole child practices in classrooms with minority students and students from vulnerable populations.

Researcher's Role

The researcher was the primary instrument in a research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher in a case study can be an evaluator, interpreter, advocate, teacher, or biographer (Stake, 1995). I am a secondary teacher in Washington, DC entering my ninth year in education. I conducted this qualitative case study to be a human instrument within this study. My goal was to understand the experiences and beliefs of secondary teachers with whole child education,

including self-efficacy to educate minority students. Therefore, as an instrument of this study, I described my own self-efficacy to teach the whole child. As an educator in urban schools, I observed the need for whole child education and experienced the demands of that need. These experiences could influence bias as a researcher toward the need for whole child education, experiences with whole child education, and experiences as a middle school teacher. As a secondary education teacher in Washington, DC, I have experiences regarding the setting and cases that inform my decision-making process when utilizing purposive sampling. Since I did not use random sampling, I made attempts to avoid bias using triangulation in data collection and review of the study by my research committee. I have an extensive number of years working in Washington, DC. Subsequently, some participants were current or previous colleagues, but no participants were a subordinate of mine. Although I did not serve as a participant in the study, I conducted interviews, collect, and analyze data.

Procedures

In this section, I describe the steps I used to conduct this study. I explain the permissions obtained, such as site permissions and participant informed consent. Furthermore, I provide more detailed information about securing Instructional Review Board (IRB) approval. I describe the process I used to solicit participants. Then, I describe the plan I used to collect and analyze the data, including my plan to achieve triangulation.

Permissions

It is essential to gain the appropriate permissions to conduct this study. The first step was to apply for IRB through Liberty University. I successfully obtained IRB approval to conduct this study (see Appendix A). IRB approval was obtained through Liberty University. I intended to obtain permission from both sites to conduct this study but learned that site permission was

not mandatory once I gained IRB approval. However, I did gain permission from I-Deal campus (see Appendix B). The discussions to gain site permission was done via email. The final permission I obtained was the participants' agreement to participate in this study by signing an informed consent form (see Appendix C).

Recruitment Plan

After receiving IRB approval, purposive sampling was obtained to identify participants for the study. To choose this sample, an email was sent to school leadership requesting permission to solicit participants for this study from the sample pool at two sites: CC and Ideal Campus. Once approval was attained from school leadership, a second email was sent through the school's staff email list to invite secondary teachers to participate in the study. The participant list was analyzed to identify and select teachers who met the following criteria: secondary education teacher and at least one full year of teaching experience in Washington, DC. The email contained a Google form for participants to indicate a desire to participate in this case study voluntarily and gather demographic information such as race/ethnicity, age, years of experience, gender, teacher preparation program, and content specialty (See Appendix E). Participation in this study was voluntary, and participants completed an informed consent form prior to data collection (see Appendix C). A sample size of 15 secondary education teachers were selected from multiple races/ethnicities and a mix of genders using purposive sampling by utilizing a random group generator (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

<div align="center">

Data Collection Plan

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In this section, I describe the various data collection strategies and approaches I used to conduct this study. First, I describe the plan to collect data by interviewing each participant. I also provide an outline of interview questions. Furthermore, I discuss my plan used to analyze

the data collected from interviews. Secondly, I describe the plan I used collect and analyze data from a letter-writing prompt administered to participants. Then to achieve triangulation, I discuss my plan that I used to collect and analyze data from a questionnaire administered to participants.

Individual Interviews

Perception may be considered a person's reality (Rutjens & Brandt, 2019). The most effective method to describe each participant's reality was by conducting interviews (Creswell, 2013: Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, data collection began with individual interviews. Interviews were a critical aspect of this collective case study to describe the experiences of secondary educators in teaching the whole child. Since Creswell and Poth (2018) advise using interviews to collect qualitative data, I utilized a single interview protocol with all participants in this study (See Appendix G). Interviewing participants allowed me to capture differing views and describe the complexities of this case study (Stake, 1999).

Interviews are sessions where individuals ask and answer questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I utilized semi-structured interviews to gather information from participants and allow some flexibility to ask follow-up questions (Stake, 1999). Using open-ended questions provided me with the opportunity to explore themes or trends in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). First, the participants signed a written consent and verbal consent to record their interviews (See Appendix C). Due to the uncertainty of hosting in-person meetings in Washington, DC, during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, in-person interviews were not feasible. Therefore, I conducted interviews using a Microsoft Teams, video-conferencing platform, lasting 30 to 60 minutes. Interviews were recorded using a recording service through Microsoft Teams and saved to SharePoint, transcribed, and checked by participants to confirm the accuracy of the transcriptions. The recordings were stored on an external hard drive and locked in a file cabinet

for safe storage. As the researcher, only I had access to the key for the file cabinet. All interviews were transcribed through SharePoint then manually reviewed by the researcher. The transcribed interviews were then returned to the respective participant for review. Although participants could strike out or redact their interviews, this practice was discouraged during the review process to ensure accurate data analysis. There was no participant who opted to redact or strike out any information in their interview. Additionally, participants were asked to add any additional reflections after their review.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself with your name, the grade you teach, the content area, and your years of experience in teaching. CRQ

2. Describe your current teaching situation. CRQ

3. Tell me about your understanding of teaching the whole child practices. CRQ

4. Of the listed teach the whole child practices (CRT, restorative practices, PBIS, SEL), describe your experience with using these practices? SQ2

5. Describe your confidence in student-centered instructional theories? SQ2

6. In your professional experience, what factors influence student achievement? SQ1

7. Please describe a typical day for you during your teacher preparation program. CRQ

8. How do your teacher preparation program and school professional development teachers utilize CRT, restorative practices, PBIS, or SEL? SQ2

9. Describe your experience with whole child development professional development? SQ2

10. How does your school or district provide professional development on SEL? SQ2

11. How does your school or district provide professional development on Restorative Justice? SQ2

12. How does your school or district provide professional development on CRT? SQ2

13. How does your school or district provide professional development on PBIS? SQ2

14. What is your philosophy regarding classroom management? SQ1/SQ3

15. How do you build positive teacher-student relationships? SQ3

16. What classroom strategies do you use when students are exhibiting undesirable behaviors? SQ3

17. How do you handle classroom disruptions? SQ3

18. Describe a situation when you had to deal with a challenging student. How did you handle the situation? SQ3

19. How do you adapt your current curriculum to be culturally responsive? CRQ/SQ1

    a. Probes: During planning, instruction, homework

20. How do you address the learning needs of a student who speaks English as a second language? CRQ/SQ1

21. What characteristics do you think influence a teacher's self-efficacy? SQ2

22. How does self-efficacy affect your ability to use the four whole child practices (SEL, CRT, PBIS, Restorative Justice)? SQ2/SQ3

23. Thank you for your time and feedback. Is there anything else you think would be essential for me to know about your use of whole child strategies?

After finalizing the questions for the interview, all questions were reviewed by experts in the field at Liberty University to ensure that each question applies to the central and sub-questions of this study. Interview questions one to 23 relate to the central question, "How do secondary teachers experience teaching the whole child?"

Question one is meant to be an easy question to answer and provide ease to the start of

the interview. This question, along with question two, also provided relevant context to the experiences of each participant. The remaining questions allowed participants to reflect on their experiences with student-centered learning as a whole child pedagogy.

Question three allowed participants to describe their understanding of whole child pedagogy, which may help provide an understanding of terminologies the participant uses throughout the interview to describe activities. Questions four and five provided the participant with a more concise list of whole child pedagogy and allowed them to describe their experiences and confidence in implementing these strategies. This aligned with sub-question two and allowed teachers to describe their self-efficacy with whole child practices.

Question six related to sub-question one and allowed participants to list educational strategies or other factors that impact student achievement. This question was an introductory way to gather information for sub-question one. In turn, I was able to gather information about how and if teachers describe whole child pedagogies or student-centered learning as a benefit for student achievement.

Questions seven and eight allowed teachers to describe their professional learning experience with whole child approaches. While question seven aligned with the central question, question eight aligned with sub-question two and helped teachers describe their confidence or self-efficacy with whole child teaching. In question nine, participants described the activities they participate in to be professionally developed, which aligned with sub-question two. Then in questions 10-13, teachers specifically described their professional learning experiences with each whole child pedagogy as defined in this study.

Questions 14-18 related to the central question as well as sub-question three. Question 14 allowed participants to describe their perceptions of classroom management and whether it is a

barrier to whole child approaches. Since SEL, Restorative Justice, and PBIS were whole child approaches that influence student behaviors; it was important to ask participants to describe their specific experiences with each approach. In question 15, participants described how they connect with students, which is essential for SEL and restorative justice approaches. Questions 16-18 allowed participants to describe their experiences that may be aligned with SEL, restorative justice, and PBIS. These questions also relate to sub-question three because participants identified barriers to utilizing these whole child approaches.

Questions 19-20 related to the central question and sub-question one. These two questions provided participants with the opportunity to describe their experiences implementing CRT, which researchers identified as an instructional whole child approach that positively impacts student achievement (Taggart, 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2016).

Questions 21 and 22 related to sub-question two and three. In these two questions, participants described their confidence in teaching the whole child. In question 21, participants described factors that they perceive influence teachers' self-efficacy. Then in question 22, they further expanded on their perception of their self-efficacy and whether it can be a barrier to teaching the whole child. Question 23 closed the interview and allowed participants to provide their concluding thoughts.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Case studies' "data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence to draw empirically based conclusions" (Yin, 2009, p. 126). I used open-coding techniques and Atlas.ti coding as a part of the coding methods for interviews. First, participants' interviews were transcribed in SharePoint, then Microsoft Word. I entered the information in Microsoft Excel, which organized the data for analysis in the study. In Microsoft

Excel, I organize the data in three columns: the raw data, preliminary codes, and the final codes (Hatch, 2002). After the raw data was entered in Microsoft Excel, I then conducted manual pre-coding methods using thematic coding to generate preliminary codes and gain familiarity with the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Furthermore, manual coding aided in my development of distinct excerpts from common themes in interviews and then created codes for these excerpts (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Then, I used Atlas.ti coding to identify final codes produced from the transcribed participant responses.

Letter-Writing: Letter to a Secondary Teacher

A second data collection method that I used in this study was letter writing. I requested letters from all participants interviewed from each school. The combination of interviews and letter writing allowed me to gather these complex and diverse perspectives regarding experiences with the whole child. Participants were asked to draft a one-page letter to a new secondary teacher. This letter primarily addressed sub-questions one and two. The secondary teachers received a prompt to describe activities, strategies, and learning goals that teach the whole child, specifically student-centered. Also, the prompt asked them to describe the benefit of these student-centered approaches and their confidence or ability to complete these activities: "If you could advise yourself in the first year of your teaching career about what was to come in the future, 1) what experiences would you encourage yourself to celebrate when teaching students of color in urban schools, 2) how will you be prepared to teach the whole child, and 3) what experiences would you prepare yourself to have solutions for?" The participants received the prompt in an email with a request to respond to the prompt via email.

Letter-Writing Data Analysis Plan

I collected the letter from each participant. Since the participants wrote this letter, no

transcription was needed. I then highlight quotes from the letters that are significant to the research questions, particularly sub-questions one and two. I continued to repeat this process until I identified keywords, phrases, and themes. Like the interviews, I used open coding to chunk keywords and themes (Creswell, 2018).

After identifying keywords, phrases, and themes, I organize the data in Microsoft Excel as a pre-coding procedure. Then I used Atlas.ti to identify the final codes. This is a data analysis procedure that helped me categorize data that is essential to the core of this study.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a method that I used for this collective case study. The questionnaire was given to all participants of the study. I created a qualitative questionnaire with questions related to self-efficacy guided by my research questions (Appendix D). The questionnaire was utilized to determine the teacher's self-efficacy and was modified to include some open-ended questions. It was administered to the group of secondary education teachers and gathered information about their knowledge of whole child pedagogy and perceptions regarding these strategies. Participants receive an email with the link to a Microsoft Form with the questionnaire, which provided me with quick access to participant responses. After reviewing each participant's response, I hand-write notes to capture my reflections.

Questionnaire Questions

1. How does the way students relate to teachers as real people affect their level of respect for teachers? CRQ

2. Describe an example of a student's personal life who may be too dysfunctional to learn. SQ3

3. How do you respond when you make mistakes with students? SQ2

4. How does encouraging students to express their personal beliefs and feelings affect student achievement? SQ1

5. What role do you think teachers should play in providing emotional support to students in school? Explain. SQ3

6. If students are not doing well, to what extent do you believe they need to go back to the basics and do more drill and skill development? CRQ

7. To maximize learning, how important is it to help students feel comfortable in discussing their feelings and beliefs? SQ1

8. How do you work with students who refuse to learn? CRQ

9. To what extent do you believe that addressing students' social, emotional, and physical needs is just as important to learning as meeting their intellectual needs? CRQ

10. Describe your belief about the following statement, "even with feedback, some students just can't figure out their mistakes." CRQ

11. How important is taking time to create caring relationships with my students? SQ1

    a. Is building relationships with students most essential element for student achievement? Explain.

12. Describe your feelings of confidence when dealing with difficult students? SQ2

13. Describe your belief about the following statement, "If I don't prompt and provide direction for student questions, they won't get the right answer." SQ2

14. Describe your belief about the following statement, "It's just too late to help some students." SQ2

15. How important of a contribution to student learning is your subject matter compared to other skills or knowledge? SQ1

16. How can you help students who are uninterested in learning to get in touch with their natural motivation to learn? SQ2

17. How important is knowledge of the subject for being an effective teacher compared to the type of learning activities? SQ2

18. Describe students' motivation to learn if teachers get to know them at a personal level? SQ1

19. Describe your belief about the following statement, "when teachers are relaxed and comfortable with themselves, they have access to a natural wisdom for dealing with even the most difficult classroom situations." SQ2

20. Should teachers be expected to work with students who consistently cause problems in class? Explain. SQ2

21. How closely does the following statement align to your personal belief, "being willing to share who I am as a person with my students facilitates learning more than being an authority figure." CRQ

22. Describe your belief about the following statement, "I know best what students need to know and what's important; students should take my word that something will be relevant to them." CRQ

23. How does your acceptance of yourself as a person influence your classroom effectiveness compared to the comprehensiveness of your teaching skills? SQ1

24. For effective learning to occur, describe how much you need to be in control of the direction of learning. SQ2

25. Does accepting students where they are – no matter what their behavior and academic performance – makes them more receptive to learning? Explain. SQ3

26. What is your belief regarding your how much you are responsible for what students learn

and how they learn? SQ2

27. How essential is seeing things from the students' point of view to their good performance in
    school? SQ1

28. Describe your belief about the following statement, "I believe that just listening to students
    in a caring way helps them solve their own problems." SQ1

Questionnaire Data Analysis Plan

I organized the data from questionnaires, then categorized them to synthesize and identify a pattern utilizing memoing (Yin, 2014). Memoing involves jotting down reflective thoughts about what I have learned as I gather the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data collected from the questionnaire was also coded, and an inductive approach was utilized.

I read each participant's response twice. The first read-through aided in my familiarity with the raw data. Throughout the second read, I identified quotes and statements that were significant to the research questions (Thomas, 2003). I then organized this data in Microsoft Excel, grouped and coded them based on the similarity of the statements or participant experiences. After coding, through identifying themes, I was able to identify how teachers described their beliefs about teaching the whole child and their confidence in using student-centered approaches in the classroom. The statements and codes from the questionnaire were synthesized with those from the interviews and letters.

Data Synthesis

Case studies' "data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence to draw empirically based conclusions" (Yin, 2009, p. 126). First, I developed a protocol for organizing and analyzing the data collected in this study. I used coding to organize data for analysis in the study (Hatch, 2002). The type of coding that I utilized

is thematic coding to describe themes that emerged from analyzing the data. After creating the codes, I identified common themes by finding patterns in the words of participants from interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Identifying the frequent common themes and concepts from interviews was essential in analyzing the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). After the initial coding, I used focused coding to further the themes and concepts identified in interviews and observations. I used Atlas.ti to analyze the data. The constant comparison method uncovered patterns from multiple participant voices (Glaser, 2002). Utilizing this method, the categories were then coded and organized into tables. Finally, I incorporated and refined the coded categories until finalized themes emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As patterns emerged from secondary teachers from traditional and alternative preparation programs, I compared them using cross-case analysis. I then interpreted the emerging data and presented the findings.

Trustworthiness

Validation was essential to ensure that my findings are accurate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I utilized several strategies to address validation, such as triangulation, interviewee reflection, debriefing, memoing, member checking, and clarifying my bias. The credibility of this study was strengthened by using various data collection methods. The combination of interviews, letter-writing, and questionnaires ensured the triangulation of data. Triangulation was essential to validation because it decreased the bias of participants and increased the reliability of the findings (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, this study was reviewed by experts to enhance the validation of this study further.

Credibility

Credibility is essential for a study and ensures the data collected is truthful and viable (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used triangulation to ensure the credibility of the data collected in this

study. Triangulation can be described as using multiple data collection methods will be used to ensure the richness of the information gathered (Merriam, 1998). Also, I used member checks to increase credibility. Member checks are a process where the participants provide reflection or feedback on their responses to confirm the validity of the recorded responses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This process increased the reliability of the study because it ensured that I presented an accurate portrayal of participant voices and provided participants with the opportunity to confirm or deny the accuracy of the interpretations of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transferability

Transferability is achieved when the findings of a study can be applied or transferred to other settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It was essential for this study because the findings may be useful to other secondary schools in urban environments in the United States. I ensured that I had in-depth descriptions of the participants and results of this study. This ensured that I increased the transferability of the findings so that readers and other researchers can analyze the transferability of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guda, 1985). These descriptions will enable readers to identify similar characteristics and transfer the information gained in this study to other similar settings based on the outlook of the reader.

Dependability

Dependability will show that my findings are consistent and could be obtained through another researcher's replication of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I created an audit trail to increase the dependability of the study. An audit trail is a qualitative data collection strategy that involves detailed descriptions of working with participants, coding, and rationale. The audit trail began with participation selection to data analysis procedures. Using multiple methods created the space for more reliable and diverse ideologies related to the topic, which increased the

dependability of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My research committee and the qualitative research director reviewed the findings of the research to ensure dependability as well.

Confirmability

Confirmability will guarantee the accuracy of the data and reduce the bias of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). Confirmability occurs when the finding of the research study is from the participants and not my personal or professional biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail also provided a method to ensure the conformability of the findings. I also kept all data confidential and used pseudonyms for participants. Triangulation was also achieved in this study which will assist with confirmability. I collected data using interviews, letter-writing, and questionnaires. Reflexivity also assisted in ensuring the confirmability of this study. Reflexivity involves acknowledging my role as the researcher, including examining my bias and beliefs throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Considerations

Pseudonyms were used for participants and the sites to prevent potential negative impacts on the school/researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Also, it is important that participants had sufficient information to participate in this study to obtain informed consent from all participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Informed consent also provided participants with information on how to withdraw themselves from the study by emailing the researcher. Participants could have withdrawn from the study at any time by notifying the researcher. I sought IRB approval before conducting any data collection or soliciting any participants. All research materials, including data collection and participant information, were stored on a hard drive, and locked in a locked file cabinet. Data will be kept safe for at least three years post-study and then destroyed. As the researcher, I will be the only individual with access to the file cabinet. These ethical

considerations were important in this qualitative case study to prevent participants from experiencing harm because of this study (Yin, 2014).

Summary

This qualitative case study aimed to describe the experiences of secondary education teachers in teaching the whole child education. A central research question and four sub-questions will guide this research study. In Chapter three, I explained the procedures for setting selection, participant sampling, data collection, and analysis. I conducted a qualitative collective case study. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants of the study from two schools in Washington, DC. I use triangulation to address the trustworthiness of the data collected in this study with interviews, letter writing, and surveys. My role as the researcher was to the primary human instrument in collecting data and data analysis. Lastly, I discussed the procedures I utilized for data analysis and the methods I employed to increase the validity and credibility of this study. I used a variety of procedures to ensure validity and credibility such as transcribing interviews, memoing, and thematic coding.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the experiences that secondary educators face when using whole child practices to teach minority students in Washington, DC, urban schools. The research questions focused on secondary teachers' experiences with student-centered practices, including the benefits, barriers, and teacher self-efficacy in implementing whole child practices. This chapter provides a description of the participants, salient narrative themes from the data with charts, and responses to the research questions. Data from individual interviews, participant surveys, and short letters were analyzed.

Participants

Participants in this collective case study were selected using purposeful sampling after completing a screening questionnaire that was emailed to teachers in their district. There were a total of 15 participants who were secondary education teachers from two districts in Washington, DC, which have student populations with 50% or more minority students. Since this was a collective case study, each participant was considered a bounded case from which data were collected and analyzed. Pseudonyms were used for the two districts and each participant in the study to protect the confidentiality of participants and their work locations.

Table 1

Teacher Participants

Teacher participant	District	Grade level	Years taught	Content area
Barbara	Ideal	7th	2 - 5 years	Math
Derek	Ideal	7th	6 - 10 years	English/Social Studies

Alex	Ideal	7th	2 - 5 years	Math/Science
Pearl	Ideal	7th	10+ years	English
Wanda	Ideal	8th	10+ years	Math
Pinky	Ideal	7th	2 - 5 years	Math
Janet	CC	8th	2 - 5 years	Humanities (English/Social Studies)
Darnell	CC	6th	6 - 10 years	Math
Kate	CC	7th/8th	2 - 5 years	Humanities (English/Social Studies)
Stan	CC	7th/8th	2 - 5 years	ESL (English/Social Studies)
Drea	CC	7th/8th	10+ years	Humanities (English/Social Studies)
McDaniel	CC	6th	2 - 5 years	Special Education (Math)
Sansa	Ideal	7th/8th	6 - 10 years	Social Studies
Thea	CC	6th	10+ years	English
Christy	CC	6th	10+ years	English

Table 1 contains a list of participants and their demographic information collected from the screening survey. Pseudonyms were used for both the names of the participants and the name of the school they teach in. There was a total of nine female participants, five male participants, and one non-binary/gender non-conforming participant. The participants represent the four core content areas/subjects, special education, and humanities. Most teachers taught for a minimum of three years, except two participants who have been in the classroom for two years. The participants were diverse in race and ethnicity with representations from Black, White, Hispanic, and Asian demographics.

Barbara

Barbara is a White American female and is 20-30 years old. She has been teaching for three years, one of which was her student teaching experience. All three years of teaching experience have been in Washington, DC, and teaching mathematics.

Derek

Derek is a Black American male and is 40-50 years old. He has been teaching for 10 years. Teaching is his second career after transitioning from banking. He currently teaches sixth-grade humanities but has taught English language arts and social studies separately. All 10 years of teaching experience have been in Washington, DC.

Alex

Alex is a Latino-American male and is 20-30 years old. He has been teaching for four years. He taught in Washington, DC, for two of those years. He is currently teaching seventh-grade math and science.

Pearl

Pearl is a Black African female and is 40-50 years old. She has been teaching for 25 years and five of those years have been in Washington, DC. She is currently teaching seventh-grade English language arts.

Wanda

Wanda is a Black American female and is 30-40 years old. She has been teaching for 15 years, all of which have been in Washington, DC. She is currently teaching eighth-grade math.

Pinky

Pinky is a Black African female and is 20-30 years old. She has been teaching for five years. All five years of her teaching experiences occurred in Washington, DC. She is currently teaching seventh-grade math.

Janet

Janet is a White American female and is 20-30 years old. She has been teaching for two years. The 2022-2023 school year is her second year of teaching. She is currently teaching sixth-grade humanities.

Darnell

Darnell is a Black American male and is 20-30 years old. He has been teaching for six years. All six years of his teaching experience have been in Washington, DC. He is currently teaching sixth-grade math but previously taught fourth and fifth-grade math. He also spent a year as a math special education teacher. Darnell has held a leadership position as a department chair.

Kate

Kate is a White American female and is 20-30 years old. She has been teaching for three years. All three years of her teaching experience have been in Washington, DC. She is currently teaching seventh and eighth-grade humanities. These are the only grade levels and content areas she has taught.

Stan

Stan is a White American who identifies as gender non-binary and is 20-30 years old. Stan has been teaching for five years as an ESL teacher who supports humanities. Stan has been teaching seventh and eighth grade for all five years of their teaching experience. Stan has only taught in Washington, DC.

Drea

Drea is of Caribbean descent but identifies as a Black female. She is 40-50 years old. She has taught in elementary schools in New York and Florida. She has 18 years of teaching experience. However, she transitioned to teaching middle school humanities for the past seven years. She is currently teaching seventh and eighth-grade humanities. Drea has held positions outside of the classroom as a team lead and department lead.

McDaniel

McDaniel is a Black American male and is 20-30 years old. He has five years of teaching experience, two of which have been in middle school. He has taught mathematics but also taught two years special education in mathematics. All five years of his teaching experience have been in Washington, DC. He is currently teaching sixth-grade mathematics.

Sansa

Sansa is a White American female who is 30-40 years old. She has nine years of teaching experience, all of which have been in Washington, DC. She is currently teaching seventh and eighth-grade social studies. She is also the instructional coach for the social studies team and has held other leadership experiences in the past as a department lead.

Thea

Thea is a Black American female who is 30-40 years old. She has 15 years of teaching experience, all of which have been in Washington, DC. She is currently teaching sixth-grade English.

Christy

Christy is a Black American female who is 50-60 years old. She has taught in Maryland and Washington, DC. She has 23 years of teaching experience, 16 of which have been in

Washington, DC. She is currently teaching sixth-grade English. She is also a teacher leader, coaching the middle school English teaching team.

Results

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the experiences that secondary educators face when using whole child practices to teach minority students in Washington, DC, urban schools. The case study design enabled an in-depth investigation of each secondary educator's experiences with whole child practices in the study. Data were collected from individual interviews using Microsoft Teams, questionnaires, and participant letter writing. Data were then transcribed, organized, manually coded to find preliminary codes, coded using Atlas.ti, and analyzed for emerging themes. In this section, major themes and subthemes produced from data analysis and their alignment with the research questions are included. The table below shows the main themes, sub-themes, and the keywords or codes identified.

Table 2

Themes

Main themes	Sub-themes	Codes
School environment	School culture	schoolwide implementation, mascot, school spirt, enjoy coming every day, PBIS, student activities, extracurricular activities, shared values, restorative practices, present and engaged, parent involvement, attendance
	The classroom	systems, procedures, routines, student-driven, positive behavior, student engagement, classroom management, student expectations, class size, student voice, safe environment, joy in the classroom
Professional controls	Curricula constraints	differentiation, pedagogical moves, scripted curriculum, flexibility in curriculum, culturally responsive, edit lesson plan,

		lesson planning, change lessons, innovative teaching, whole group instruction, small group instruction, assessments, tests, testing schedules, pacing guidance, engaging activity, difficult subjects, not a math person, modify
	Professional supports	school based professional development, district professional development, individual professional development, professional learning community, PLC, teacher preparation program, teach for America, urban teachers, coaching, administration support
	Staffing	collaboration, co-planning, long term sub, hiring, adult work culture, support role, planning time, schedule, more time to teach, pacing, co-teacher, teacher to student ratio
Meaningful relationships	Teacher-student relationships	whole class instruction, classroom management, student engagement, building relationships, building report, one-on-one, teacher they listen to, teacher they trust, support, disciplinary, no-nonsense, restorative, punitive, student conferences, student voice, student choice, feedback, celebrative student success
	Teacher-leadership relationships	student needs, teacher flexibility, teacher leadership, trust in teachers, teacher voice, teacher evaluation, observation, administration expectation
Outlier theme: Learner profile	Student home life	parents/guardians, parent support, parent conferences, family members, single family homes, language spoken at home, student responsibilities at home, student as a parent, student needs, homelessness, poverty, parent mindset, homework, teacher-parent relationships, community resources, community engagement

School Environment

Secondary teachers had varied experiences with teaching the whole child or student-led teaching based on their school environment, including school culture and the classroom. All teachers emphasized that the structure of the school, the culture within the school, and the organization of the classroom significantly influenced their experiences with student-centered instruction. Although all teachers identified the school environment as influential, not all teachers had positive school environments. When asked to describe their school environment, Sansa shared that her school structure supports student-centered instruction and is an essential practice expected of educators in her school building. Sansa also stated, "The expectation is very explicit for us teachers regarding student-centered instruction like project-based learning (PBL), restorative practice, and PBIS because it a schoolwide approach." The remaining teachers, 14 out of 15, shared negative experiences related to the school environment and believed that this influenced their experiences with student-led instruction. Several teachers, eight out of 15, shared experiences with school culture and its relationship with student-led instruction. Most teachers described school culture as an overarching feeling of belonging and known expectations of all staff and students. All 15 teachers described their experiences in the classroom. Most descriptions of experiences in the classroom included the teachers' creation of the classroom environment, the student's response to the classroom environment, and class structures that are out of the teachers' and students' control.

School Culture

All the participants described school culture as an essential aspect of their experiences teaching the whole child and using student-led instruction. Participants discussed the significance of developing and sustaining a positive school culture of whole child development to provide

systems of support to all students. Although several of the participants, eight out of 15, described an overall negative school culture, all participants described schoolwide implementation as impactful for teachers and students when establishing a school culture. Stan said that the entire school participates in schoolwide PBIS, and since all teachers participated with fidelity, the students were also invested in the behavior systems. Kate said,

> The entire school must participate in this economy system for the students, and then they are able to participate in activities based on their earnings. It really works well because the teachers believe in the system and give the students points or takes them away.

Most participants, 11 out of 15, mentioned the importance of consistency and buy-in from teachers when mentioning school-wide implementation of whole child practices. Drea said, "We actually have had three different schoolwide PBIS over the past three years, and none of them are effective because teachers do not use it."

Most participants described school culture as how the students experience school. McDaniel mentioned, "When students know their school mascot and identify with it, along with the school creed, they feel like they belong there." Three other participants also described this essential feeling of belonging. Christy said, "You know these kids have been here since pre-k, and they enjoy coming here every day." Another participant, Thea, mentioned that it is easier for her to implement whole child practices because students have high school spirit because of school-wide engagement activities, including spirit week, school dances, and school community meetings. Many participants also mention experiences with attendance, and some find it difficult to implement whole child practices if students do not come to school or do not enjoy coming every day. Pinky said, "I rarely have my entire class in attendance. Sometimes, I only have half of my class for the day. It is hard to cater to the needs of every student when the student isn't

there. Also, when there are so many students that return, how can I make sure they all get what they need?"

The school culture allows students to feel like they belong, but the structure of the school and the activities available enable the school to build a culture. According to Janet, "This school only offers sports after school, and the teams do not perform well anyway. Kids are just not excited to do things here." Having extracurricular opportunities and consistent joyful activities is essential for building strong school culture to support teaching the whole child. However, simply having a list of activities is not enough. Thirteen participants mentioned the importance of getting students invested in the school culture to participate. Darnell said, "We have all these activities prepared, but the students do not enjoy them. They do not look forward to coming to them, so they are a waste of time to plan them." Participants experience students' lack of engagement in schoolwide implementation when the teachers and students do not buy in to it.

The Classroom

Similar to school culture, all participants acknowledged the classroom environment as essential for whole child practices or student-led instruction. Drea said, "I think that I am able to meet student needs because my classroom is organized in a way for the specific students in my classroom." Many participants, 12 out of 15, mentioned the physical space of their classroom being organized and designed with the student in mind. Barbara mentioned, "My students know where their resources are in my room, library, reflection station, and cool-down corner." Participants who describe experiences with class culture, five out of 15, describe their class as joyful, safe, and having visuals on the wall.

Additionally, all participants mentioned the importance of systems, procedures, and routines. However, only seven participants believe that they consistently use systems,

procedures, or routines. Janet said, "It is important for scholars to know what to expect in the classroom. The predictability of having routines help them focus better and engage meaningfully." Darnell also described systems, procedures, and routines as essential ways to help students feel like they belong. Several participants mentioned that students feeling like they belong in a class environment helps them feel like they belong in the broader school community. Drea mentioned, "My kiddos feel safe in my classroom, and they feel the same in the other middle school classrooms. It really helps the middle school team to move students academically when they can easily maneuver in all their classes."

Professional Controls

All participants emphasized that working with minority students requires educators to evaluate what is within their ability to change or challenge. Wanda stressed the significance of "acknowledging your strengths, weaknesses, bias, and circumstances as an educator but being unwilling to succumb to them. There must be a willingness to evolve and grow for the benefit of students." According to Pinky, there are many facets of teaching that affect her capacity to teach the whole child, including professional development or support and how the staff is treated at her school. All participants acknowledged the need to utilize culturally relevant teaching practices but some, five out of 15, felt that there were circumstances beyond their control that prevented them from being able to do so. Janet said, "I know that minority students really need culturally relevant instruction, but I feel like there isn't much I can do to make my lessons more culturally relevant."

Curricula Constraints

Participants discussed the importance of the curriculum in teaching the whole child with minority students. Barbara stated that "my district uses a scripted curriculum, and there really is

not much I can do to change it so that it is more culturally relevant for my students." Some participants, five out of 15, were willing to challenge their curriculum to ensure that it was culturally relevant for students. Alex stated, "The curriculum is scripted, but I annotate it weekly to make sure that it is differentiated for my students, meet all their needs, and is culturally relevant." Furthermore, some participants were willing to advocate for change in the curriculum. Darnell stated, "My district switched to a different curriculum this year that was more student-centered because we banded together and fought for it."

Aside from whether the curriculum was scripted or not, some participants, 13 out of 15, expressed that making the curriculum culturally relevant should not only be the responsibility of the teacher but also the responsibility of the curriculum developers. Kate stated, "Curriculum should already be culturally relevant before it lands in my classroom, but it isn't, so it becomes such a major job for me to make sure my kids can relate to the lessons." These participants explained that they should make changes to lessons because they "need to adapt the lessons to meet the needs of all students in the classrooms." However, several participants, six out of 15, felt that the extent to which they must differentiate the curriculum or make it culturally relevant is extensive. Kate stated, "The books they choose for our students can be easily changed to make it more relevant to the student, but that is beyond our control. I can only try to supplement with additional texts that are culturally relevant." Derek states:

> I know that I need to make sure all my students can access the curriculum and I spend time getting to know my students so that I use their interests in warmups and other parts of my lessons, but the curriculum writers need to do more to make this curriculum relevant for my scholars.

Furthermore, all participants described that teaching the whole or student-centered learning required them to modify not only what they teach but how they teach it. Seven participants expressed that their curriculum will specifically state what pedagogical moves are required for their lessons. Their districts might not allow them to adjust the way a lesson is taught, or the pedagogical moves utilized in the lesson. According to Stan, "My district will not allow me to change whether something is taught, whole group or small group. I just have to make it work." However, there are participants that adjust the instructional approaches based on the interest of the students. Furthermore, nine participants mentioned the importance of using students' interests to drive their instructional approach. Darnell mentioned, "I use Flocabulary to help my students learn math concepts and vocabulary through rap. It really helps them get engaged, and they remember it better because they love it." According to Christy, "I realize that the way I use to teach 20 years ago will not work now. I must try to be more fun to get my students engaged."

In addition to the instructional moves, all participants mentioned assessments, pacing, and schedules in their experiences teaching the whole child with minority students. Pearl stated, "I cannot imagine how I can meet the needs of all students when I am never on pace. I am usually weeks behind, and administration is always telling me that I need to just move on." Several participants, six out of 15, mentioned experiencing difficulties with staying on pace with the curriculum. Four participants stated that they find it extremely difficult to stay on pace with the curriculum due to the testing schedules. According to Janet, "I feel like testing is more frequent in this school that is predominantly minority students compared to schools that I have taught in that were majority White." Stan reiterated that "the testing schedule is brutal. There is no way to stay on schedule when there is a major test for the kids every three weeks."

Eight participants described their experiences teaching the whole child as a content specific experience. According to several participants, some content areas may have curriculum that are more culturally responsive. All math content teachers expressed the belief that it is difficult to modify math curriculum to be culturally relevant. They all also stressed that their math curriculum is not culturally relevant. Several participants described their experiences as easier to teach the whole child because they teach humanities. According to Thea, "It is easy to find ways to adjust the curriculum to be more culturally relevant because it is easy to relate reading and writing to pop culture. I cannot imagine doing that with math."

Professional Supports

The need for professional supports was expressed by all participants. According to Sansa, "school-based professional development has been more effective for me to learn how to teach the whole child. The district PDs do not help us based on the specific circumstances we face at our school." Many participants, 13 out of 15, mentioned wanting more professional development regarding whole child education or student-centered education. According to Janet, "I just wish that they would give us more ongoing PD about how we can specifically address the needs of the whole child in our classrooms. We just get these broad overarching ideas that are not always translatable."

Six participants received training in their teacher preparation program, Teach For America, and mentioned that teaching the whole child was a major aspect of their preparation. However, they all mentioned that these initial professional development sessions were not enough. McDaniel said, "It would be nice if we can get training on this outside of what I initially learned when I first started teaching." There were four participants who credit Urban Teachers for providing various professional development opportunities to learn how to implement student-

centered instruction. Kate said, "Urban Teachers really helped me learn how to meet the needs of all learners. I do not think that I do it perfectly, but I have seen growth in my students because of their professional coaching."

Staffing

Several participants described staffing needs, changes, constraints, and opportunities related to their experiences teaching the whole child. According to Pearl, "I cannot really do all I need to do for kids when I am being pulled to substitute other classes during my planning period." Several participants, nine out of 15, expressed that staffing challenges contribute to their struggles in their experiences teaching the whole child, and the pandemic served to exacerbate those staffing challenges. Pinky said, "There are so many classes with long-term subs. It really affects student engagement, and there is a lot that I must do to calm the kids down when they get to my class."

In addition to staffing needs, staffing structures and assignments was a subtheme that emerged from professional controls. Several participants mentioned collaboration and co-teaching when teaching the whole child or student-centered instruction. Drea said, "I often co-plan with a team of teachers, and this helps with the lift of coming up with innovative teaching strategies, differentiating, and mundane tasks." According to Barbara,

> Teaching the whole child is so much easier if you have more than one teacher in a classroom. I must teach 31 students by myself without an aid, and it is a pain trying to instruct small groups or one-on-one.

Twelve participants expressed that teaching the whole child is easier if there is a co-teaching model in the classroom. Although participants did not mention the structure of co-teaching

model, these participants defined co-teaching as, "having more than one adult in the classroom the entire class period."

Several participants also expressed using planning time to ensure they effectively teach the whole child. According to Thea, "I have to protect my planning time because I need it to plan best for all my student's needs." Six participants mentioned lack of planning as a challenge to their experiences teaching the whole child. According to Sansa, "it is hard to plan for every scholar in the classroom when leadership always takes your planning for meetings." Christy mentioned, "I have to use time at home to really plan for the needs of my students because there is never enough planning time when I am in the building." Furthermore, Darnell said, "I feel like I am working 60-hour weeks just to plan really engaging lessons. If I really want to do what is best for students, I must work more than my scheduled hours."

Meaningful Interactions

Another major theme that emerged from the data is meaningful interactions. Teachers experienced varied interactions while teaching the whole child, including teacher-student and teacher-leadership interactions. All teachers highlighted the significance of teacher-student relationships. Despite acknowledging the significance of teacher-student relationships and these meaningful interactions, a few teachers who expressed not being successful in establishing or maintaining meaningful relationships with students. When asked to describe the philosophy of classroom management, Sansa shared that building relationships with students and maintaining them is the key component and beginning of strong classroom management. Most of the teachers, 12 out of 15, credit their ability to form strong relationships with students to their classroom management techniques.

Teacher-student Relationship

Teachers reported teacher-student interactions to build relationships occurred addressing the whole class, working in small groups, one-on-one conferences with students, answering student questions, recess duty, lunch duty, arrival, dismissal, and during hallway transitions. McDaniel had immense success with creating and sustaining meaningful interactions with students because he primarily conducted small group instruction or worked with students one-on-one to complete assignments. McDaniel said, "There is a level of trust and bond that can be created when a teacher completes assignments or activities alongside the student…it gives me more opportunities to get to know the students, respond to their specific needs, and allows them to be more open and vulnerable with me." McDaniel attributes his role as a special education teacher to his capacity to have more one-on-one time with students.

Some of the interactions between students and teachers influenced the experiences that students had with each other. Alex mentioned, "Since I spend a lot of time building relationships with students and building a community in my classroom, students mirror my relationships with them to other students." Nine teachers mentioned the significance of building an authentic community in the classroom, and creating a culture of learning requires building relationships with students. According to Stan, "Restorative practices, goal setting, and consistent feedback are some of the ways I build a strong culture of learning in my classroom."

Despite most participants experiencing positive relationships with students, four participants struggled to sustain or create relationships with students. According to Pearl, "I do not have time to 'baby' students. They just do not show up to learn anymore." Similarly, Kate mentioned, "Scholars come to school expecting teachers to be their friends. That is simply not my job. I cannot be their parent, friend, social worker, and teacher." Although all teachers

acknowledge teacher-student interactions as being essential to their experiences teaching the whole child, a few participants have an aversion to building close bonds with students.

Teacher-leadership Relationships

The interactions between teachers and leadership were a second subtheme that emerged. All teachers expressed that their belief in their ability to teach the whole child with minority students in their classrooms depended on the leadership they had. According to Darnell:

> My administration sets the tone for what is expected, and if they tell me that I cannot make modifications, if they do not respond to negative student behavior, then I cannot teach the whole child because I need to keep my job.

Additionally, several participants, seven out of 15, mentioned having negative relationships with their administration and credited this to the challenges they faced when teaching the whole child. Alex mentioned, "My schedule doesn't make sense, and I don't get any coaching support from leadership." According to Drea, "I make do with what I have, but leadership is never present in my classroom and rarely present in the building. I know I could do more for my students if I had leadership support."

Despite these challenges among participants, there have been some who were successful in employing student-centered instruction despite having negative relationships or interactions with leadership. Christy stated, "In my classroom, I am the author of my fate. I make the necessary adjustments needed to ensure my students have access to the curriculum. I have had more changes in principals than colleagues over these past decades, so they cannot stop me from doing what I need to do for students." Wanda mentioned, "The only time that I interact with leadership is during teacher evaluation and observations. I know that when it comes to teaching the whole child, I must figure it out on my own."

Outlier Data and Findings

This section lists one unexpected theme. All the teachers with two through five years of experience mentioned parent or family involvement in their letter responses. The findings show that parent or family involvement is a concern for novice teachers. However, one of the teachers with more than10 years of teaching experience also referenced the effects of a student's home life on the educator's experiences using student-centered instruction or whole child practices. During a letter response, one teacher shared how building relationships with parents helped her become successful with classroom management, assignment completion, and building relationships with students. Stan stated, "I would call parents and make sure that I gave them a positive report about their students as my first interaction with them…keeping in contact with parents helped me form bonds with my students."

Student Home Life

One teacher mentioned that it is important to think about how student's home life because it might affect how they respond to the classroom environment. Drea said, "I make a point to do home visits as much as possible to better understand my students' home lives because that knowledge helps me create dynamic experiences for my students." Several participants mentioned that they utilized student-centered instruction by creating learning experiences that involved parental support, community resources, and community engagement. According to Darnell, "Project-based learning helped me increase student outcomes because I was able to help students translate their learning in their communities and through authentic experiences." Furthermore, three participants mentioned that they considered their students' family structures when teaching the whole child. Stan mentioned,

My students may have single parents, two parents, stepparents, live with other family members, or have queer parents…I need to make sure that all these students feel like they belong in my classroom. When I create writing prompts, I try to show different family structures in them.

Research Question Responses

This section provides responses to the research questions in this study. The responses to these questions were generated directly from the triangulated data collection methods. Therefore, the data codes and themes were used to assist in answering the research questions. The responses to the central questions and three sub-questions address this study's purpose.

Central Research Question

How do secondary education teachers who teach minority students describe teaching the whole child? All participants referenced teaching the whole child as addressing the student's academic and non-academic needs. According to Drea, "Teaching the whole child requires building strong relationships with students." Based on the participant responses, building relationships with students is key to student-centered instruction. All participants shared that teaching the whole child or student-centered instruction required strong classroom management. However, less than half of the participants, five out of 15, shared that they believed they have strong classroom management. According to Darnell, "The more time that I spend with students, the better my relationship with them became. I was able to see more student engagement because of this."

Similarly, most participants, 14 out of 15, shared that teaching the whole child affects the level of student engagement that they experience in the classroom. According to Pinky, "I know that I am not consistent with small groups or strong behavior management systems, and it really

shows in how off tasked my students are sometimes." However, Christy stated, "I spend a lot of time using my students' interest to modify my lessons and make them more engagement…. building strong relationships with students help them stay engaged and meet the daily objectives." Furthermore, Drea added that "When my students are highly engaged, they are more willing to share their struggles and I am better able to address these struggles."

In addition to building relationships with students, participants expressed curricular modifications when teaching the whole child. Nine participants mentioned making changes to their lessons to include student identity, language, differentiations for learning loss, and reading levels. Wanda mentioned, "I often add Spanish vocabulary to my word problems for vocabulary and include more pictures to help my students better understand it." Several participants who teach English or humanities mentioned adding supplemental texts or short excerpts that are more relevant to students. Drea stated that she added a novel that provided Indigenous People's perspective for a literature unit.

Few participants had explicit experiences using restorative practices, although all participants were able to share experiences learning about them. Two participants have whole school expectations on restorative practices. Sansa stated, "Every teacher uses restorative practices as a way to respond to student behaviors and build classroom communities." In addition, Barbara shared, "My school expects that we are not punitive and restorative practices helps us build trust with students to ultimately change mindsets/behaviors." The two participants with whole school restorative practices stated that they found behaviors to be easily addressed, resolved, and found that students tend to develop a growth mindset. The participants who shared that they struggle with classroom management also shared that they do not use restorative practices.

Sub Question One

How do secondary teachers describe the benefits of student-centered learning? All participants shared that they believe student-centered learning is beneficial for students. Most of the participants, 11 out of 15, shared that student-centered learning creates a positive school and class culture. According to McDaniel, "Student-centered learning puts students at the center of their experience…so it's based off the students' needs and interests…students tend to be more engaged." Several participants reiterated that student-centered learning increased student engagement. Christy stated, "I noticed that my students are more engaged when I plan lessons based off their needs and interests." According to Darnell, "If you make the lessons more fun and applicable to the students in the room, they find it more joyful and want to participate."

Furthermore, many participants, nine out of 15, shared that student-centered learning positively impacts classroom management. Kate shared, "My classroom management became so much better once I started planning with my students in mind and building relationships with them." In addition to increasing classroom management, participants shared that student-centered learning increases student outcomes. Thea stated, "When I provide timely feedback to students, plan engaging lessons, and provide Tier 2 and three instructions, I see an increase in student achievement." Furthermore, Sansa stated, "My students have increased their scores by over 30% when my lessons are more engaging."

Three participants mentioned that improved student-to-student relationships were a benefit or byproduct of student-centered learning. According to Barbara, "Students work better in groups, assume roles, and hold each other accountable." Another participant, Sansa, mentioned that student behaviors with each other improved after the past two years of consistently using restorative practices at her school. Furthermore, Drea shared, "Using PBIS

schoolwide really changed how to students react to each and hold each other accountable so that they can earn points for their homerooms." Therefore, student-centered learning improves student relationships and community building within the classroom and across the greater student body.

Sub Question Two

How do secondary teachers describe their understanding and confidence in utilizing student-centered learning with minority students? Eleven participants shared that they were confident in their understanding and confidence in utilizing student-centered learning with minority students. Christy shared, "I spent a lot of time learning about student-centered learning because I have been an interventionist. I know that meeting the needs of all learners requires modifying lessons, creating systems, and building relationships with students."

Despite many participants sharing their confidence in using student-centered learning approaches, fewer participants shared their successes with implementing or utilizing student-centered learning. Seven participants shared experiences with PBIS, and four participants shared experiences with restorative practices. According to Pinky, "We just don't do PBIS consistently enough at my school for me to say that I 100% know how to do it correctly."

All the White participants mentioned struggles with using student-centered approaches. Barbara stated,

> I do not want to come off as some White savior, so I am sometimes self-conscious about what changes I should make…. I try not to do things with rap because I do not want to seem like I am appropriating or am corny.

Furthermore, some participants shared that they are not sure they know all or many of the student-centered learning approaches. Darnell mentioned, "Restorative practices is something that I know about in theory, but I can't really say much about it in practice."

Sub Question Three

What barriers do secondary teachers experience when using student-centered learning with minority students? All participants mentioned that the structure of their school environment may be a barrier to student-centered learning. Some teachers mentioned that even if their school has a schoolwide implementation of student-centered learning approaches, it may not be used with fidelity, or administrators may not hold teachers accountable. Darnell said, "My principal is rarely in the building, and sometimes we just roll out PBIS or other schoolwide things with little notice, training, or follow-up."

Another barrier that participants, seven out of 15, mentioned is that classroom management is a barrier to effectively using student-centered learning. According to Pinky, "It's hard to do small group instruction when student behaviors are so bad." Additionally, some of these seven participants expressed difficulty to implement more engaging activities like hands-on activities or experiential learning due to struggles with classroom management. Wanda said, "I do not want to take students out of the classroom because I don't trust that they will be on their best behaviors."

Another barrier that emerged was professional needs to implement student-centered learning. Several, six out of 15 participants, mentioned that they have barriers with their curriculum. Kate said, "Since my curriculum is scripted, there really is not much that I can do to make it more relevant for students." Many of these participants found it difficult to modify lessons or differentiate the curriculum to make it culturally relevant because they are scripted or

due to a lack of flexibility from leadership to make changes. Also, several participants mentioned a lack of time to plan for student-centered learning. McDaniel said, "I simply do not have the time because I lose so much of my planning time. There just is not enough time in the day." Furthermore, all participants mentioned wanting more professional supports and increased staffing to effectively implement student-centered learning.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

This chapter provided a description of each study participant and outlined the results generated from the study. Data were collected through individual interviews, questionnaires, and letter writing. Teachers had varied experiences when teaching the whole child or using student-centered learning. The school environment, professional controls, and meaningful relationships were major themes that emerged. All participants expressed that relationships between students and teachers are essential to their experiences with student-centered learning. Four participants shared that they were unsuccessful in building strong relationships with students and did not feel confident in their classroom management. Although all participants shared that they are knowledgeable about student-centered learning, they were not sure to what extent they were knowledgeable. Additionally, all participants shared a desire for more professional development regarding student-centered learning strategies, specifically school-based and ongoing professional development.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this collective case study is to describe the experiences that secondary educators face when using whole child practices to teach minority students in Washington, DC, urban schools. Chapter five provides a discussion of the findings of this research and the implications for policy and practice. This chapter also describes the theoretical and empirical implications, limitations, and delimitations of the study. This chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and summarizes the most essential findings.

Discussion

This study described the experiences of 15 secondary teachers in grades six through eight while teaching the whole child with minority students. Teaching the whole child was defined as using student-centered learning or instructional approaches. Data were collected through individual interviews, questionnaires, and letter writings to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences with student-centered learning. There were three major themes that emerged from the data analysis: (a) the school environment, (b) professional controls, and (c) meaningful interactions. An outlier theme also emerged, the student's home life. These themes served as the foundation for describing secondary educators' experiences teaching the whole child.

Interpretation of Findings

This section includes a summary of emerging themes and subthemes discussed in Chapter Four. Once the data were collected, coded, and analyzed, three major themes emerged which included the school environment, professional controls, meaningful interactions, and the student's home life as an outlier theme. The subthemes for the school environment include

school culture and the classroom. The subthemes for professional controls include curricula constraints, professional supports, and staffing. Additionally, the subthemes for meaningful interactions include teacher-student relationships and teacher-leadership relationships. The subtheme for the outlier them is student home life. The following is an interpretation of the findings of this research. Interpretations were developed based on the empirical findings and the theoretical framework of this study. The theory guiding this study is the sociocultural theory.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Fifteen teachers of varying subject areas across two districts shared their experiences through structured interviews. The data were collected through virtual interviews on Microsoft Teams, questionnaires using a virtual form, and letter writing. These three methods were used to triangulate the data. Three major themes and one outlier theme emerged from the analysis of the data: the school environment, professional control, meaningful interactions, and the student's home life. This aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which suggests the learning process for students is a social process, and social interactions are the foundation of cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). For the participants in this study, their experiences with student-centered instruction required in-depth analysis of the social environment of their students. Additionally, the more confidence participants had in their knowledge of student-centered instruction and their ability to implement them, the more positive experiences they described with student-centered instruction.

Difficulties Building Student Relationships. Student-centered instructional approaches require teachers to understand the experiences and backgrounds of their students to design relevant learning experiences (Serrano et al., 2019; Sharif Matthews & López, 2019). The study revealed that secondary teachers value building and sustaining relationships with students.

Throughout the individual interviews and letter writing activities, participants expressed feeling that relationships with students, parents, co-teachers, and school leaders are fundamental to successfully implementing student-centered learning.

Eleven participants shared experiences where they thoughtfully created relationships with students and the efforts spent to sustain those relationships. Participants would spend time in and out of the classroom getting to know their students' backgrounds, language at home, and learning styles. Three participants also mentioned reaching out to their students' former teachers to learn more about how they respond to the learning environment and ascertain their learning needs. Considering the impact of the teacher-student relationship on student academic outcomes, it is important for teachers to know how to successfully build relationships with students and how to manage conflicts in those relationships (Lee et al., 2019). Teachers need to build trust with their students, and this is gained once teachers build positive relationships with their students. However, when that trust is broken by either disruptive behavior or a student feeling as if their voice is not heard, teachers must know how to restore that trust (Kieler, 2018; Riekie et al., 2017).

All White participants shared that they have a hyperawareness that their identity is different from their students. These participants shared that they feel an urgency to try to relate to their students. They try to create authentic relationships with students to bridge the gap between their similarities and differences. However, two participants shared that they felt unsuccessful building these positive relationships with students despite their efforts. In diverse classrooms, or classrooms that are predominantly minority students, teachers should adjust how they attempt to build relationships with students based on language, social, cultural, and emotional backgrounds of their students (Lee et al., 2019). The teachers that were most successful in building,

sustaining, and leveraging positive relationships with students started out by giving students beginning-of-the-year surveys, using positive reinforcements, engaging in non-academic conversations with students, building investments in daily lessons by stressing real-world application, and giving students opportunities to understand their authenticity.

Additionally, the eight participants that shared successful experiences building positive relationships with students also expressed their constant self-reflection of their identity, approaches, and impact (Ransom, 2020). This process of self-reflection aids teachers in building trust with their students, thus building positive relationships. Positive relationships between teachers and students improve classroom management, strong class culture, and positive school climate (Poulou, 2017; Poulou et al., 2019). Two participants who described substantial experiences with student-centered learning also used restorative practices with fidelity to build and repair trust in their classrooms between teacher and students. Several participants shared experiences where their students felt like they belong and have a role in the classroom. These experiences were designed through student-centered learning that used students' interests and backgrounds to create a positive learning environment. Therefore, having a positive learning environment with a class culture of learning is essential for student cognitive development (Byrd, 2019; Vygotsky, 1978). These teachers also described experiences with high student engagement.

Other relationships are also key for the successful implementation of student-centered learning. Since the student's environment, culture, language, and background are fundamental to their development, teachers must build relationships with families, guardians, and parents (Serin, 2018; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Many participants shared that building relationships with families aided their efforts to build relationships with students. This helped teachers create

classroom culture and a sense of continuity between home and school (Daily et al., 2020, Hoover et al., 2018). Additionally, teachers leveraged their relationships with families and communities to create student-centered learning activities. Some participants shared their experiences with families volunteering for activities in the classroom, field trips, project presentations, and parent involvement with homework. Researchers reported that parent involvement has a considerable influence on student engagement and, thus, student outcomes (Barger et al., 2019; Kallio & Halverson, 2020; Kearney et al., 2019). There were three participants who shared that they had difficulties building relationships with a few families, and this took a toll on their ability to build or maintain relationships with students. However, five participants shared experiences of being able to build relationships with students despite failing to build relationships with families. Several participants felt emotionally taxed with managing these various relationships due to their significance to their professional success. Overall, there was a sense of feeling overwhelmed by the need to build relationships with all these stakeholders.

Lack of Knowledge is Related to Low Self-Efficacy. Teachers were more likely to share experiences with student-centered instruction if they felt confident in their knowledge and abilities to implement them. This aligns with Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy which suggests that strong teacher self-efficacy has a causal relationship with high academic achievement and strong classroom management (Miller et al., 2017; Write et al., 2019). Three participants described having robust school-based professional development experiences that improved their understanding and confidence in implementing student-centered instructional approaches.

Participants shared experiences with professional learning communities and district-level professional development opportunities as well. Most of the professional development

opportunities addressed the need for culturally relevant experiences. However, few professional developments on strategies to modify lessons were described. Participants shared an overall intense sense of self-efficacy with culturally responsive teaching. They also acknowledged the need to modify the curriculum to meet the student at the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). However, many teachers shared they had difficulty implementing those changes. Several participants had scripted curricula, but their districts or schools needed guidance on how to modify the scripted curriculum to best address the needs of learners in their classrooms. A few participants shared that they desired curriculum specific professional development to increase their confidence in delivering instruction relevant to their students.

Four participants shared they felt new to the profession and still needed professional development for basic professional requirements. Participants believe strong classroom management is essential to implement student-centered learning and teach the whole child successfully. Research suggests that classroom management is correlated to successfully implementing student-centered activities (Tanase & Lastrapes, 2018; Wright, et al., 2019). Since teacher self-efficacy is related to effective classroom management, having ineffective classroom management can influence how confident teachers feel about implementing student-centered instruction (Suprayogi et al., 2017). Although classroom management was a major barrier to professional self-efficacy with student-centered learning, participants shared that lack of knowledge was tantamount to low self-efficacy.

Leadership Creates the School Environment. School climate is essential in implementing student-centered learning, increasing academic outcome, and leading to high student engagement (Daily et al., 2020; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Participants perceived student engagement, a product of strong classroom management and positive school climate, as essential

for student-centered learning activities. All participants expressed that strong and transformational leadership is needed to facilitate building a positive school climate for student-centered learning. Several participants shared absentee leadership or leadership with conflicting priorities to student-centered learning. Leadership that is present and improves teacher self-efficacy is a shared need among participants. Many participants shared the role their leadership plays in the barrier to implementing student-centered learning or success.

Two participants shared that their leadership creates systems, structures, hiring practices, and staffing that supports student-centered learning. Another three participants shared experiences where leadership provides ongoing professional development for restorative practices. These leadership roles shape the experiences that secondary teachers have with teaching the whole child and implementing student-centered learning activities. Research suggests that PBIS increases students' sense of belonging and can influence positive classroom management for teachers (Daily et al., 2020; Op den Kelder et al., 2018; Roofe, 2018;). Despite all participants shared experiences with PBIS, several participants shared unsuccessful implementation of PBIS due to leadership needs. Several participants shared that leaders did not hold teachers accountable for using PBIS practices with fidelity, and some leaders did not have efficient systems to sustain PBIS. These leadership pitfalls impact school climate and culture (Paulo et al., 2019; Siwatu, 2011; Siwatu et al., 2017). Additionally, some leaders are equipped to provide professional development on student-centered learning themselves or do not prioritize budgets toward ongoing professional development. These factors also negatively impacted teachers' experiences teaching the whole child.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings from this collective case study may have several implications for school districts, urban schools, schools that are predominately minority students, school leaders, secondary educators, and parents. Educational policymakers, curriculum developers, and education non-profits may also benefit from reviewing the findings of this study. The following sections address the implications for policy and practice.

Implications for Policy

The findings of this study have implications that could benefit teacher preparation programs that are responsible for training future teachers. The data collected from individual interviews, questionnaires, and letter writing indicate that participants are aware of the significance of student-centered learning for minority students. However, they indicate an overwhelming feeling of being unprepared to successfully implement student-centered instruction. This lack of knowledge has caused low self-efficacy among secondary educators to teach the whole child or implement student-centered instructions. Research indicates that teacher preparation programs must evolve to better prepare secondary educators to implement student-centered instruction. (Adams et al., 2020; Kallio & Halverson, 2020; Kearney et al., 2019). Furthermore, these previous studies also indicate that there is a significant need for ongoing professional development in school district for whole child education. This study supports this need to improve professional development and teacher preparation programs.

School districts can also use the results of this study to create policies or guidelines around student-centered learning. Teachers need a curriculum that supports culturally responsive teaching and policies for modifying curricula based on their students' needs. School districts could create guidelines for content areas to select or design curricula that provide resources for

student-centered learning and flexibility to modify for students' needs. School districts with scripted curricula could create policies that leaders can implement around modifying curriculum. Having a culturally relevant curriculum and adjusting the curriculum to meet the needs of all students is supported by previous research (Barger et al., 2019; Byrd, 2020; Malo-Juvera et al., 2018).

Implications for Practice

For district and school-level leaders, the finding of this study may provide insight into additional professional development that could help secondary educators feel more prepared to teach whole child or implement student-centered instruction. A few participants revealed that they received explicit training for some student-centered approaches, increasing their self-efficacy to implement them. Providing ongoing effective professional development for all teachers relevant to their self-efficacy level could help teachers feel better equipped to implement student-centered instruction. This could lead to increased implementation of student-centered instruction, improving student outcomes (Adams et al., 2019; Hoover et al., 2018; Kearney et al., 2019).

This study's findings indicate that providing students with many opportunities with more than one educator in the room is beneficial. While most teachers shared a collaborative planning approach at their schools, participants with co-teachers shared a higher self-efficacy to implement student-centered instruction. Additionally, pairing novice teachers with veteran teachers for collaboration and mentoring could improve teacher self-efficacy to implement student-centered instruction. With a school climate of collaboration, in addition to building positive school culture, teachers can better build and sustain relationships with students that they can then leverage to implement student-centered instruction successfully.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This study utilized Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory as a framework to describe secondary educators' experiences teaching the whole child with minority students. The premise of Vygotsky's (1978) theory posits learning as a social process that relies on social interaction for cognitive development. Furthermore, this theory asserts that the ability to further development is limited to the ZPD. This "zone" is where the student has gained knowledge that needs to be built on by a teacher through differentiation or scaffolding. This study has theoretical implications in that it expounds upon and supports Vygotsky's theory of ZPD. Participants in this study suggest that they identify the student's capabilities and build upon their ZPD by modifying lessons and differentiating instruction. Furthermore, participants build relationships with students and create relevant student-centered learning experiences to develop student understanding. This research further validates Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly the ZPD.

Although this study was guided by Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy was validated through the findings of this study. The social environment of a learner is foundational for cognitive development, and teachers need to validate a student's background to build upon their prior learned knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Further analysis of the data showed that teachers used a variety of student-centered learning experiences that drew on the background of their students. However, many participants felt ill-equipped to establish positive school or class environments that foster effective student-centered learning experiences. Many participants shared a lack of confidence in implementing student-centered instruction, which caused them to be apprehensive. According to Bandura's theory, there are four major factors that influence self-efficacy: vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, performance

accomplishments, and physiological states. In this study, the psychological states and personal accomplishments of teachers impacted their feelings of self-efficacy. Therefore, this research affirms Bandura's theory of self-efficacy.

This study adds to the current literature about secondary education teachers' experiences with student-centered learning and teaching the whole child. The findings of this research highlight the non-academic factors that influence student performance. Previous studies show that teaching the whole child instead of just facilitating a dump of knowledge improves educational outcomes for minority students (Dailey et al., 2020; However et al., 2018; Lopez, 2016). This study had similar findings regarding the significance of teacher-student relationships' strong impact on student engagement. Teachers in this study who experienced strong relationships with students also experienced high student education. Furthermore, these teachers reported better student outcomes when students trust their teachers.

This study revealed a deficit in knowledge of the distinct types of student-centered instructional approaches. The body of research on teaching the whole child has extensive findings with elementary or early childhood educators as participants. However, few studies on secondary educators teaching the whole child exist. The findings of this study add to this body of research but illuminates a need for professional development of secondary educators to utilize student-centered learning (Hayes et al., 2019; Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018; Wassel et al., 2015). Additionally, this current study had similar findings that teachers were more effective when they had a strong belief in their ability to implement a task (Morrison et al., 2021; Pörn & Hansell, 2020; Willgerodt et al., 2021). The findings show that teachers must feel confident in their classroom management to feel confident to implement student-centered activities.

Limitations and Delimitations

One limitation of this study was my familiarity with the school districts and some participants in this study. One participant was from a school that I taught in, and this participant is a former colleague. I also currently work in the district that several participants work in. Even though I no longer teach at this school, I ensured that I removed my personal bias throughout the data collection process. I had to prevent myself from inserting my own beliefs or using prior experiences to interpret the data. To further promote the trustworthiness of the findings, I gave participants ample opportunities to check the accuracy of their responses from the interviews, questionnaires, and letters that they wrote. I ensured that participants knew and understood that responses would be confidential and that I would not share any information with their schools or co-workers as well.

Another limitation of this study is that it was conducted before spring break and testing, so teachers' preparation for high-stakes testing could have impacted their availability and psychological state of mind. Some teachers took an extended time to complete all three data collection methods, which may have impacted their responses to interview questions. Additionally, student behavioral needs fluctuate during this time of year which could have affected teachers' perceptions of their classroom management when responding to questionnaire questions.

There were delimitations of this study as well. There were three delimitations placed on this study. First, participants had to have at least one full year of teaching experience in Washington, DC. Second, participants had to have classes with 50% or more of minority students. Finally, participants had to teach grades six through eight. These delimitations also caused some limitations to this study. Since purposeful sampling was used, the findings cannot

be generalized. Also, representation across race, age groups, and gender identity was not achieved. Conducting the study with teachers in Washington, DC, limited the professional development experiences that teachers could describe as well. The participants were only recruited from two districts in Washington, DC which is another limitation of the study because it limited the size of the sample. Also, this study was done the second year after returning to in-person learning after the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected the training and teaching experience of novice teachers in this study. Also, teachers' perceptions of student-centered instruction and classroom management could have been exacerbated by staffing issues in these schools after the pandemic.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study described experiences of secondary educators teaching the whole child, more research is needed to fully understand secondary teacher's experiences with student-centered learning and the factors that affect these experiences. Future studies should include a larger sample size of secondary education teachers. This study specifically recruited teachers in grades six through eight. Further research is needed to explore the experiences of secondary teachers in middle schools and high schools as well. Additionally, a countrywide study of teachers from various urban schools could result in a sample size with more diverse races, ethnicities, and gender. Additionally, a school system study could analyze the varied experiences of secondary teachers in a specific system of education for practical impact.

Additionally, a mixed methods study exploring teachers' knowledge of student-centered learning, implementation, and student outcomes could help if there is a correlation between the two. Furthermore, studies show that increased knowledge and preparedness of teachers increase their self-efficacy (Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018; Kearney et al., 2019). A mixed methods

study exploring the relationships between student-centered learning professional development and teacher effectiveness could help understand if a causal relationship truly exists. Additional research evaluating the role of leadership in student-centered learning and teaching the whole child will be helpful to understand what role leaders play in the effective implementation of whole child education.

Conclusion

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the experiences that secondary educators face when using whole child practices to teach minority students in Washington, DC, urban schools. This study used purposeful sampling method to recruit 15 secondary teachers with at least one year of teaching experience in Washington, DC. These participants teach grades six through eight and have classes with more than 50% minority students. Data were collected via individual interviews, questionnaires, and letter writing. Three themes and one outlier theme emerged from the data: the school environment, professional controls, meaningful interactions, and the student's home life.

There were three major interpretations derived from the findings of this study. Overall, teachers expressed that relationships between teachers and students are essential to student-centered learning. Participants also found that strong positive relationships between teachers and families assist teachers in building positive relationships with students. Second, professional self-efficacy drove the teachers' experiences with student-centered instruction. Teachers felt ill-equipped to utilize some student-centered instructional approaches and some felt a lack of knowledge. Finally, leadership is a major stakeholder in the teachers' experiences with student-centered instruction to teach the whole child. Further teacher preparation and on-going

professional development can increase secondary educator's positive experiences with student-centered instruction.

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Appendix A
IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 1, 2023

Rhonda Idris
Ellen Ziegler

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-751 SECONDARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THEIR ROLE IN WHOLE CHILD EDUCATION: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

Dear Rhonda Idris, Ellen Ziegler,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information

electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B
Letter Requesting Site Permission

Thank you so much! I really appreciate it!

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: ████████████████████████████████████
Sent: Tuesday, February 7, 2023 5:11:30 PM
To: Idris, Rhonda (DCPS) <████████████████>; ████████████████
<████████████>
Subject: Re: Request to Recruit Teachers for a Study

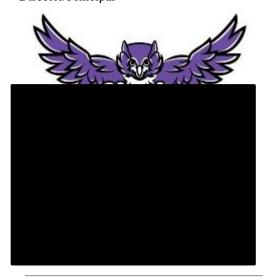Good evening Rhonda,

Yes, you have my consent to reach out to my middle school teachers.

Best of luck on your research.

████████████

Sinceramente/Sincerely,

████████████████████

Director/Principal

From: Idris, Rhonda (DCPS) <████████████████████>
Sent: Tuesday, February 7, 2023 3:06 PM
To: ████████████████ <████████████████>
Subject: Request to Recruit Teachers for a Study

Good afternoon,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements to complete my Ed.D in Educational Leadership. The title of my research project is Secondary Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Their Role in Whole Child Education: A Collective Case Study. The purpose of this collective case study is to describe the experiences that secondary educators face when using whole child practices to teach minority students in Washington, DC, urban schools.

I am writing to request your permission to contact secondary education teachers in grades 6th-8th at your schools to invite them to participate in my research study. No student data, messages, grades, or student personal identifiable information will be collected.

Participants will be asked to complete the attached recruitment survey (***see link below in recruitment email***) then schedule an individual interview. Some participants will be asked to complete a letter prompt and all participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond to this email doing so. Below, you will find the email that I would send to teachers in grades 6-8.

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for an Ed.D. degree in educational leadership. The purpose of my research is to describe the experiences that secondary educators face when using whole-child practices to teach minority students in Washington, DC urban schools. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be current teachers in Washington, DC, for grades 6th-8th, teach classes composed of at least 50% minority students, and have more than one year of full-time teaching experience. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an individual interview, which should take approximately 30-45 minutes, and complete a questionnaire that will take approximately 30-45 minutes. Participants will also be given the option to complete a letter prompt, which should take approximately 20 minutes if they choose. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click **HERE** to complete the online screening survey.

Contact me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ if you have any questions.

A consent document will be sent to you before the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,
Rhonda Idris

Appendix C
Consent Form

Title of the Project: Secondary Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Their Role in Whole Child
Education: A Collective Case Study
Principal Investigator: Rhonda Idris, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be age, race/ethnicity, occupation, grades taught, years of full-time teaching experience, years of experience teaching minority students, and subjects taught. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this collective case study is to describe the experiences that secondary educators face when using whole child practices to teach minority students in Washington, DC, urban schools.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1. Contact me via email to schedule an individual interview that will be conducted via Zoom or Google Meets for 30 mins to 1 hour. Interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription and data analysis.
2. Submit an optional writing sample by answering three open-ended questions about your experience and self-efficacy to teach the whole child.
3. Complete a questionnaire via Google Forms that should take approximately 45 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants may receive ideas and tips to increase their self-efficacy to implement teach the whole child strategies. Benefits to society include increase minority access to quality education that is student-centered.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. Mandatory reporting requirements will be followed, this includes following procedures for child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.
- Participant responses will be kept confidential using pseudonyms/codes. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.

- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

None.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Rhonda Idris. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Ellen Ziegler, at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio and video record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix D
Questionnaire Questions

1.   How does the way students relate to teachers as real people affect their level of respect for teachers? CRQ

2.   Describe an example of a student's personal life who may be too dysfunctional to learn. SQ3

3.   How do you respond when you make mistakes with students? SQ2

4.   How does encouraging students to express their personal beliefs and feelings affect student achievement? SQ1

5.   What role do you think teachers should play in providing emotional support to students in school? Explain. SQ3

6.   If students are not doing well, to what extent do you believe they need to go back to the basics and do more drill and skill development? CRQ

7.   To maximize learning, how important is it to help students feel comfortable in discussing their feelings and beliefs? SQ1

8.   How do you work with students who refuse to learn? CRQ

9.   To what extent do you believe that addressing students' social, emotional, and physical needs is just as important to learning as meeting their intellectual needs? CRQ

10.   Describe your belief about the following statement, "even with feedback, some students just can't figure out their mistakes." CRQ

11.   How important is taking time to create caring relationships with my students? SQ1

a. Is building relationships with students most important element for student achievement? Explain.

12. Describe your feelings of confidence when dealing with difficult students? SQ2

13. Describe your belief about the following statement, "If I don't prompt and provide direction for student questions, they won't get the right answer." SQ2

14. Describe your belief about the following statement, "It's just too late to help some students." SQ2

15. How important of a contribution to student learning is your subject matter compared to other skills or knowledge? SQ1

16. How can you help students who are uninterested in learning to get in touch with their natural motivation to learn? SQ2

17. How important is knowledge of the subject for being an effective teacher compared to the type of learning activities? SQ2

18. Describe students' motivation to learn if teachers get to know them at a personal level? SQ1

19. Describe your belief about the following statement, "when teachers are relaxed and comfortable with themselves, they have access to a natural wisdom for dealing with even the most difficult classroom situations." SQ2

20. Should teachers be expected to work with students who consistently cause problems in class? Explain. SQ2

21. How closely does the following statement align to your personal belief, "being willing to share who I am as a person with my students facilitates learning more than being an authority figure." CRQ

22.   Describe your belief about the following statement, "I know best what students need to know and what's important; students should take my word that something will be relevant to them." CRQ

23.   How does your acceptance of yourself as a person influence your classroom effectiveness compared to the comprehensiveness of your teaching skills? SQ1

24.   For effective learning to occur, describe how much you need to be in control of the direction of learning. SQ2

25.   Does accepting students where they are – no matter what their behavior and academic performance – makes them more receptive to learning? Explain. SQ3

26.   What is your belief regarding your how much you are responsible for what students learn and how they learn? SQ2

27.   How essential is seeing things from the students' point of view to their good performance in school? SQ1

28.   Describe your belief about the following statement, "I believe that just listening to students in a caring way helps them solve their own problems." SQ1

Appendix E
Recruitment Email

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for an Ed.D. degree in educational leadership. The purpose of my research is to describe the experiences that secondary educators face when using whole-child practices to teach minority students in Washington, DC urban schools. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be current teachers in Washington, DC, for grades 6th-8th, teach classes composed of at least 50% minority students, and have more than one year of full-time teaching experience. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an individual interview, which should take approximately 30-45 minutes, and complete a questionnaire that will take approximately 30-45 minutes. Participants will also be given the option to complete a letter prompt, which should take approximately 20 minutes if they choose. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click [here] to complete the online screening survey.

Contact me at ██████████, or ████████████████ if you have any questions.

A consent document will be sent to you before the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Idris
██████████████
████████████████████

Appendix F
Screening Survey Questions

Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Are you currently teaching a grade level between 6th and 8th grades in Washington, DC?

Yes		No	

If so, which grade(s) do you teach?

6th	
7th	
8th	

How many years of teaching experience do you have in Washington, DC?

This is my first year	
1+ years	
2-5 years	
6-10 years	
10+ years	

Are you 18 years or older?

Yes		No	

List the subject(s) you teach or have taught in Washington, DC.

Select true or false. The majority of the students I taught in Washington, DC (at least 50%) are minority students.

True		False	

Appendix G
Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself with your name, the grade you teach, the content area, and your years of experience in teaching. CRQ

2. Describe your current teaching situation. CRQ

3. Tell me about your understanding of teaching the whole child practices. CRQ

4. Of the listed teach the whole child practices (CRT, restorative practices, PBIS, SEL), describe your experience with using these practices? SQ2

5. Describe your confidence in student-centered instructional theories? SQ2

6. In your professional experience, what factors influence student achievement? SQ1

7. Please describe a typical day for you during your teacher preparation program. CRQ

8. How do your teacher preparation program and school professional development teachers utilize CRT, restorative practices, PBIS, or SEL? SQ2

9. Describe your experience with whole child development professional development? SQ2

10. How does your school or district provide professional development on SEL? SQ2

11. How does your school or district provide professional development on Restorative Justice? SQ2

12. How does your school or district provide professional development on CRT? SQ2

13. How does your school or district provide professional development on PBIS? SQ2

14. What is your philosophy regarding classroom management? SQ1/SQ3

15. How do you build positive teacher-student relationships? SQ3

16. What classroom strategies do you use when students are exhibiting undesirable behaviors? SQ3

17. How do you handle classroom disruptions? SQ3

18. Describe a situation when you had to deal with a challenging student. How did you handle the situation? SQ3

19. How do you adapt your current curriculum to be culturally responsive? CRQ/SQ1

    a. Probes: During planning, instruction, homework

20. How do you address the learning needs of a student who speaks English as a second language? CRQ/SQ1

21. What characteristics do you think influence a teacher's self-efficacy? SQ2

22. How does self-efficacy affect your ability to use the four whole child practices (SEL, CRT, PBIS, Restorative Justice)? SQ2/SQ3

23. Thank you for your time and feedback. Is there anything else you think would be essential for me to know about your use of whole child strategies?

Appendix H
Letter Writing Prompt

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in this study. Please respond to this email with a letter in response to the following prompt.

"If you could advise yourself in the first year of your teaching career about what was to come in the future, 1) what experiences would you encourage yourself to celebrate when teaching students of color in urban schools, 2) how will you be prepared to teach the whole child, and 3) what experiences would you prepare yourself to have solutions for?"

Feel free to write 500 words or less. Looking forward to your response.

Best,
Rhonda Idris