A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL QUALITATIVE STUDY OF HIGH

SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES RELATED TO CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE

TEACHING AND THE IMPACT IT PLAYS ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MINORITY

STUDENTS

by

Rosalind Bailey

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This transcendental phenomenological qualitative research study aimed to understand the lived experiences of high school teachers in relation to culturally responsive teaching and the role it plays in the achievement of minority students. The leading theory that guided this study was Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which emphasizes the importance of human development where teachers incorporate students' culture, beliefs, and social norms as essential aspects of instruction (Crotty, 1998). Additionally, Bandura's self-efficacy theory was incorporated as a perspective to assess the impact of teaching influence exerted by teachers based on their personal beliefs. The participants for this study included 13 high school educators between the ages of 25 and 50 with teaching experience of over three years. Data collection included a triangulation method of interviews, surveys, and a focus group to assess the phenomenon. The data were analyzed through digital software, and the findings were recorded, evaluated, and coded. The three main themes that were identified included: understanding the concept of culturally responsive teaching, misconceptions of culturally responsive teaching, and the significance of culturally responsive teaching. The teachers' perspectives and experiences also gave rise to sub-themes that included perceptions and beliefs as well as stereotypes and assumptions associated with culturally responsive teaching. Future research was discussed in addition to the implications of policies and practices for culturally responsive teaching implementation.

Keywords: transcendental, phenomenological, culturally responsive teaching, minority students, socio-cultural theory, self-efficacy theory, achievement.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, my creator, who watches over me and my family every day and every step.

To my parents, who gave everything they had to ensure that I was always happy, loved and successful.

To my Husband, who completes me and makes me a better person.

To the memory of my brother Alistair, who will always be a shining light in my life.

To my children, Breanna, Jasmine, Brayden, Justin, and Brooklyn may you always pursue your dreams and always know true happiness.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

American School Counselling Association (ASCA)

Culturally Responsive Education (CRE)

Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)

Every Students Succeed Act (ESSA)

National Policy Board of Education (NPBEA)

National Report Card (NAEP)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Science, Technology, and Math (STEM)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The consistently low achievement of minority students across schools has prompted scholars to review approaches to instruction (Delpit, 1995; Horsford & Grosland, 2013; Montero, 2019). Hence, culturally responsive teaching has been a topic of discussion in education since the 1990's (Minkos et al., 2017; Siwatu, 2011). Several researchers have called for culturally responsive teaching implementation (Ashbrook, 2021; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Milner, 2006) due to its connection to positive engagement and achievement from research-based data. Chapter One will discuss the historical, social, and theoretical context of culturally responsive teaching. The problem statement calls to identify the root causes or gaps affecting educators with implementation of culturally responsive teaching while the purpose statement explains the methodology, including participants and settings for the study. Chapter One will also discuss several reasons for the importance and significance of culturally responsive teaching, including its relation to raising the achievement of minority students and making learning more inclusive.

Background

The current school population has become more diverse, and educators are faced with the challenge of how best to support the academic needs of the students (Minkos et al., 2017). The historical, social, and theoretical context was included using a culturally responsive lens to understand minority students' needs. The evolution of this concept over time was examined in the historical section to understand its growth or lack. The social section investigated the influence of culturally responsive teaching on its environment and factors influencing or limiting it. The theoretical concept discussed findings in research concerning the theories that have

developed towards or from culturally responsive teaching and its relation to the achievement of minority students.

Historical Context

The discussion of culturally relevant education is a topic that has been in education from the time of school desegregation in the 1960s to the present time yet changes in implementation have not been enforced (B. Brown et al., 2019). In 1954, the Brown v. Brown case related to education policy was a landmark decision passed by the U.S. Supreme Court to end segregation within schools. This decision-initiated change within the school makeup but failed to require or stipulate culturally responsive pedagogy to meet the learning needs of new students (Steinberg, 2004). The American public school system was not originally designed to serve minority students; the curriculum is still largely ethnocentric, with the majority group's perspective or contributions compared to influences from other cultural groups (Irizarry, 2017; Jenkins & Alfred, 2018; Mayer, 2002).

Although some changes have occurred, such as new laws and policies, the needs of minority students are still not being met on a large scale within the education system as challenges of teaching diverse students are also rising (Hughes et al., 2009; Lomeli, 2021; Martínez, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Sleeter, 2012). Minority students are still subject to educational conditions and factors that contradict their interests and culture (Kohli et al., 2017; Montero, 2019). For instance, several researchers concluded the wide gap in enrollment of minority students in gifted programs and the increasing rate of minority students in disciplinary actions across schools in America (A. Griffith et al., 2017; National Center of Education Statistics, 2018b; Skiba et al., 2011; Umaña-Taylor, 2016).

The theory of culturally relevant education is a merge between multicultural education

practices brought about by Geneva Gay and the culturally responsive teaching of Gloria Ladson-Billings (Gorski, 2016). These strands have now been cohesively connected to embody teacher practices and students' pedagogy as a theory of culturally responsive education (CRE) (Griffith & Lacina, 2020). Spanning from the 1990's to now, culturally responsive education strategies have been under different names, such as culturally congruent and culturally compatible, but they all elicit measures to instruct diverse students within the classroom (Brown & Crippen, 2016). The importance of cultural relevance in all subject matters is one of the most neglected areas of education research. There needs to be a stronger push to provide evidence-based research to convince the opposers (B. Brown et al., 2019; Lomeli, 2021).

America is composed of a variety of different racial, religious, and cultural groups: a factor that has increased with time within the schools; and yet, the curriculum taught falls short in representing contributions to the importance of other cultures (Banks, 2012; Denson, 2009 Gorski, 2016; Hughes et al., 2009: Valencia, 2019). Despite awareness of the lack of representation of other cultures within the curriculum, opponents of multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching believe it would divide students further along racial lines (Neri et al., 2019; Sobol, 1991). Research-based evidence indicates ethnic disparities as one of the critical reasons for minority students consistently underperforming at a higher level than their counterparts (Minkos et al., 2017; Vincent et al., 2011). Students are now more aware of social injustices, prejudices, and lack of representation within society, including in the school curriculum (Minkos et al., 2017). When students are positively exposed to diverse cultures, they are more empathetic in addressing issues and problems and develop essential life skills in appreciation and respect for all humans (Markowitz & Puchner, 2014; Mar, 2018).

Although some districts are implementing programs that promote cultural competency,

the rate and proponents for the implementation are significantly low (Cook et al., 2015; Kinloch, 2017; Koppelmann & Goodhart, 2011; Skelley et al., 2022). To close the achievement gap between the students and promote equitable learning for all, culturally responsive teaching is a necessity (Clayton, 2011; Najarro, 2022). In addition, a more productive and cohesive society can be developed if students learn and know the importance of other cultures and the social contributions developed from those cultures.

Social Context

A vast majority of research-based data has already provided evidence that implementing culturally responsive classrooms will raise the student achievement of minority students (Clark, 2021; Clayton, 2011; Dee & Penner, 2017; Mar, 2018). Research-based evidence indicates diverse classrooms offer new challenges that heighten academic motivation and achievement as they are highly influenced by the students' experiences within the school (Byrd, 2015; Lomeli, 2021). When student cultures are excluded from the learning process, this also excludes the students as individuals from connecting to the learning (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Thus, diverse students may experience a level of disengagement which may inadvertently raise anxiety or increase negative behaviors which affects student achievement (Hatt, 2011; Henderson et al., 2019).

Equitable education is defined as education with adequate representation of all students, which includes various instructions with diverse people and their contributions (Shade et al., 2004). As students with learning differences and second language learners have enrolled, different training has been required for educators, but little of this training mandates culturally responsive pedagogy (Barrett-Zahn, 2021). Effective teaching requires teachers to not only know and understand their students' gifts or deficiencies but also their challenges, connections to the

community, and cultural history and values (Clark, 2021).

Most studies have concluded that the impact of culturally responsive teaching remains primarily misunderstood, neglected or under-prioritized, yet the population is steadily increasing in diversity (Skelley et al., 2022; Wairia, 2017). This research will study factors from the teachers' perspectives that influence culturally responsive teaching today and propose future studies that can overcome barriers or aid strategies for implementation.

Theoretical Context

As mentioned previously, numerous studies have been conducted on the importance of culturally responsive teaching (Ashbrook, 2021; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Milner, 2006), but research on integrating the knowledge and skills into curriculum practice is minimal (Pang et al., 2021). Several studies have been conducted based on teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and lack of culturally relevant knowledge of minority students (Agirdag & Houte, 2016; Alemán, & Gaytan, 2017; Glock et al., 2019). Aronson and Laughter's (2016) research on implementing culturally responsive education in STEM (Science, Technology, and Math) highlighted positive application in elementary students. It also established the lack of teachers' knowledge in translating culturally responsive education into practice. The methods by which researchers perceive cultures and implement cultural literacy provide gaps that must be researched (Gillispie, 2021; Hu et al., 2018).

The increased diversity within schools has rebirthed other theories, such as the critical race theory, as the need to change strategies in America becomes more evident. Scholars and activists are in the process of discussing the critical race theory on a broader political platform (Dee & Penner, 2017). The critical race theory is a movement that aims to examine the inequalities faced by students in education, specifically the implications of race and racial justice

within American schools (Tichavakunda, 2019). Although the term may seem new to most of us, the critical race theory framework began in the late 1970s by legal scholars such as Derrick Bell and Richard Delgado, just to mention a few (Delgado et al., 2017; Cabrera, 2018). Most people are unsure of what critical race theory represents because critics propose that it brings about oppressor groups and divides people, yet proponents cite it as the foundation for diversity and equality in all aspects of society (Gillborn et al., 2018).

The theory that guided this study was based on the Vygotsky (1978) social-cultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of human development in which teachers must incorporate students' culture, beliefs, and social norms as essential aspects of instruction. This is similar to the Vygotsky social constructivism theory which promotes students' learning based on connections, experiences, and representations that students build as they acquire new knowledge (Vygotsky, 1987). Social-cultural theory involves relationships and interactions, and social constructivism focuses on building on prior knowledge from those experience (Haefner & Friedman, 2008; Mcleod, 2014). Both parts of the theory can work independently or dependently with each other depending on the concept under study.

Teachers are encouraged to have a variety of learning practices within the classroom to promote a constructivist pedagogy for students to thrive (Voon et al., 2020). Vygotsky's (1978) social-cultural theory stipulates that knowledge construction of the mind is influenced physically and psychologically by social interactions; thus, learning is a mediated process guided by interactions with others and their surroundings. This theory encourages relationships between teachers and students to be formed for learning to be effective; thus, teachers need to acknowledge the culture presented within the classroom in instruction (Parkin & Harper, 2020; Penalva, 2019).

Another theory of note is Bandura's self-efficacy theory which was relevant to this study. The self-efficacy theory is defined as the belief educators have in their own personal ability to impact a positive effective learning environment (Bandura, 2000). As stipulated by phenomenological studies, the participants perspectives and experiences are considered the foundation part of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018); Thus, their personal judgment in their capabilities to implement culturally responsive teaching is a relevant influential factor. Hye-Seung et al., (2019) stipulate that teachers with high self-efficacy believe in students influencing their own success and devote more time to working with lower performing students thus increasing achievement overall. Consequently, teachers with low self-efficacy affect students' performance negatively by blaming students or other factors for the failures without any conscious effort to find a solution (Zee & Koomen, 2016).

Curriculum content is also relevant to how teachers promote learning and student achievement (Gay, 2000); thus, in addition to relationships, the content instruction also influences learning. Wang et al., (2011) discussed various aspects of social constructivism theory as a developmental tool for student support and curricular development. This research is unique and significant in that it examined common factors among participants to categorize the limitations that are preventing teachers from implementing culturally responsive teaching: Thus, factors that are needed to make learning more inclusive, diverse, and equitable for all the students can be determined.

Problem Statement

The problem was the poor achievement of minority students, possibly resulting from the lack of implementation of culturally responsive teaching within the high school, despite research-based data that indicates that it works (Pang et al., 2021). Research indicates an

achievement disparity exists between minority students and their counterparts (Mar, 2018; Minkos et al., 2017). More specifically, data obtained from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2019) indicates that across American schools, exists higher counts of low achievement data from minority students, despite all students receiving the same instruction. It is important to note that other aspects have also been researched as factors influencing the achievement of minority students.

To better understand how culturally responsive teaching can positively influence these factors, it is important to first understand the data. Evidential data indicates that minority students are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs but have a higher chance of enrollment when served by teachers from diverse backgrounds (Grissom et al., 2017). This may be because of the relationships formed between students and teachers, hence this study. The National Report Card (NAEP) indicates gaps in achievement on 12th graders mathematics performance from 2005-2019; The comparison in performance between majority group was 51% as compared to minority students' performance, with the Hispanic student's group at 25 % as the next closest percentage.

In addition to this, the disciplinary rate of minority students is relatively higher than those of their counterparts (Welsh & Little, 2018). The United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC 2018) indicates disparities in student advanced courses enrollment, discipline, and school gifted and talented programs between minority students and their counterparts (United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2018). Data released indicates consistent lower performance and achievement for minority students in comparison to the majority group. Could this be a result of miscommunication between culture and other policies? Teacher diversity has increased over the years, yet about 80% of staff in most

American schools identify as white and thus may lack awareness or fail to perceive the significance of culturally responsive teaching (Sobol, 1991; Loewus, 2017). This could also be another influential factor affecting the implementation of culturally responsive teaching.

Furthermore, the American School Counselling Association (ASCA) identified cultural sensitivity and responsiveness as an integral part of education (Studer, 2015). Consequently, Every Students Succeed Act (ESSA) was created to encourage school districts in America to establish culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy to honor the individuality of students in an effort to raise achievement within all schools due to the diversity increase among students (Schettino et al., 2019). The issues illustrated above such as poor student achievement, and lower enrollment in higher courses collected from agencies such as the United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, and The American School Counseling Association, are but a few disparities that have been researched as factors impacting schools in relation to minority students. By narrowing the achievement gap, decreasing disciplinary issues, providing equitable representations, and establishing a love of learning, culturally responsive teaching addresses the needs of minority students and validates their importance and acceptance (Gay, 2010; Grissom et al., 2017; Welsh & Little, 2018).

The most important researched variable that may have the most considerable impact is also the most neglected one: culturally responsive teaching (Ashbrook, 2021; Barrett-Zahn 2021; Gay, 2010; Griffith & Lacina, 2020; Grissom et al., 2017; Lomeli, 2021). This study focused on culturally responsive teaching implementation to close the achievement gap. The population sample of participants included current educators, their experiences, and perspectives, all in relation to culturally responsive teaching and its impact on minority students' achievement. Culture is part of an individual way of life, therefore how culture is viewed within the school will

also affect the cultural perspective within the society (Musante, 2019). Educators should implement culturally responsive teaching to steer the view of all cultures in a positive manner by building instruction based on the student's experiences, which will in turn promote academic achievement and relevance (Pang et al., 2021).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of teachers that impact culturally responsive teaching on minority students through high school teachers' perspectives in the North Pacific region. At this stage in the research, implementing culturally responsive teaching was generally defined as incorporating strategies that support acknowledgment of diverse cultures while sustaining rigor to ensure students have equitable learning opportunities (Gay, 2000). Lomeli (2021) asserts that cultural differences are neither inherently positive nor negative, nor should they be viewed as beneficial or crippling but need to be acknowledged and respected. Teachers' perceptions, lack of training, and knowledge have all been studied as possible obstacles (Wairia, 2017).

The benefits of culturally responsive teaching have been demonstrated time and time again, yet necessary moves to integrate these strategies are lacking (Ashbrook, 2021; Hu et al., 2018; Patrón-Vargas, 2021; Tichavakunda, 2019; Vincent et al., 2011; F. Wang, 2016; Weiler & Caton, 2021). This study focused on understanding those factors affecting culturally responsive teaching to identify specific patterns based on the teachers' experiences that are affecting the achievement data of minority students.

Significance of the Study

This study was critical because the National Policy Board of Education mandates educators to enable all students to reach their fullest potential (NPBEA, 2015). It is important to

emphasize that multiple sources document consistent low achievement of minority students across the country (Juvonen et al., 2018; Kawabata & Crick, 2015; Mar, 2018; Vavrus, 2010). Numerous current researchers conclude that implementing cultural strategies will assist in bridging the gap in achievement for minority students and prepare all students as productive citizens by improving networking, respect for other races, and equitable opportunities (Ashbrook, 2021; Barett-Zahn 2021; Griffith & Lacina, 2020; Lomeli, 2021). Thus, the significance of this study is of great benefit to all.

This study's theoretical significance was to provide more evidence on teachers' perceptions in relation to a social constructivism approach. This theory focused on learning and social environment as influential tools that contribute to students' knowledge (Parkin & Harper, 2020); hence, this study was grounded on the impact of classroom instruction as an environment for learning. To support the increasingly diverse student population and representation in higher training programs for all, culturally relevant strategies affirm students' identities and encourage learning (O'Leary et al., 2020).

From an empirical standpoint, majority of the outcomes in culturally relevant pedagogy studies have gained positive results towards the increase of achievement in minority students, but it is also important to note that most of the studies were quantitative (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Other studies indicate that further research on culturally responsive teaching is needed. Glock et al., (2019) study of 109 preservice inexperienced teachers and 159 in-service teachers indicated teachers differing judgments based on the effort required in working in a more diverse school. Preservice teachers held more negative implicit attitudes compared to in-service teachers working in diverse schools. Tobisch & Dresel (2017), conducted a study with 237 teachers on judgements and differing expectations of students; Results indicated that teachers had differing

expectations and rated minority students as lower performers as compared to their counterparts. This study was a transcendental phenomenological qualitative study that focused on the shared commonality among teachers in a specific controlled environment with limited variables. It added to the literature by providing factors influencing implementation on one site, and focused on the phenomenon assessed, experienced, and influenced by the teachers in the same location.

For practical significance, it is important to note that most cultural implementation studies have been conducted outside America. An empirical research study conducted by Hu et al. (2018) across 51 countries on the influence of culture on the achievement of students in mathematics resulted in identifying that Confucian heritage culture played a pivotal role in raising math achievement performance scores with an increase of about 23.89 % overall. Another notable mixed methodology study was conducted by Van Middel Koop et al. (2017) in the Netherlands with 215 university teachers in all courses; this research studied teachers' attitudes towards a diverse student population and the implementation of cultural practices in instruction. Findings indicated that 40% of the teacher's repudiated diversity and did not include it in their teaching practices while 60% acknowledged diversity but based the achievement of students on shortcomings, societal influence and other perceived student problems. The study concluded that most teachers still lacked knowledge or understanding of the role culture plays in student achievement.

The location of this study was the North Pacific region, and it represented most American schools, in terms of minority students being the smallest percentage of students enrolled as compared to the majority. The school setting was strategically chosen to provide data and evidence for future studies or replication of the study in similar settings. Throughout the American education system, it seems more prevalent that culturally centered frameworks

implemented in the past still mask educational disparities and social injustices for minority students (Pang et al., 2021). The goal of this study was to understand factors that impact culturally responsive teaching on minority students. This will hopefully encourage further future research on how to overcome any factors that may be identified in the implementation of culturally responsive teaching at the classroom and teacher levels.

Research Questions

For transcendental phenomenological qualitative research to be valid and reliable, the research questions must include the phenomenon, site, and participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tomaszewski et al., 2020). This study examined culturally responsive teaching and learning as experienced by teachers and its impact on the achievement of minority students. The phenomenon is the personal and professional sociocultural experiences of the teachers interacting with students within a high school setting, and the participants are current high school teachers. The questions relate to the theories as teachers evaluated their self-efficacy and sociocultural preparedness based on their experiences with culturally responsive teaching.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of high school teachers when using culturally responsive teaching strategies to improve the achievement of minority students?

Sub-Question One

What are the personal experiences of high school teachers when implementing culturally responsive teaching for minority students?

Sub-Question Two

What are the professional development experiences of high school teachers with culturally responsive teaching relating to the achievement of minority students?

Sub-Question Three

What are the culturally responsive teaching strategies that teachers are using to raise achievement of minority students?

Definitions

1. *Acculturation* – the assimilation of values and practices of a new culture different from your own by interacting with the other culture frequently over time (Kizgin et al., 2019).

2. *Culturally Responsive Education* – the ability of teachers to have culturally responsive classrooms by being actively aware and deliberate in implementing a multicultural education in their teaching practices, activities, and lessons within the schools for all subjects (Abiola et al., 2019).

3. *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* – redefines teachers' perspectives and mindsets from learning what to do in a classroom to thinking and reflecting on what they are observing (Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2017).

4. *Culturally Responsive Teaching* – an education reform that strives to infuse culture into the curriculum to make meaningful connections, increase engagement and motivate higher academic achievement of diverse student groups (Vavrus, 2010).

5. *Critical Race Theory* – a movement that aims to examine the inequalities faced by students in education, specifically the implications of race and racial justice within American schools (Tichavakunda, 2019).

6. *Enculturation*- the process of an individual learning values, beliefs and practices of his/her own native culture (Kizgin et al., 2019).

7. *Equitable Education* – education with adequate representation of all students, which includes various instructions with diverse people and their contributions (Shade et al., 2004).

8. *Minority Students* – any students belonging to a racial or ethnic group other than that which represents the majority group and needing support due to cultural differences. Mostly includes African American students, American Indian students, Hispanic students, or Pacific islander students, just to mention a few (Maker, 1996).

9. *Multiculturalism* – a philosophical paradigm that mandates cultural diversity be reflected in institutions to provide a pluralistic society; it fosters positive interracial interactions, engagement and decreases discrimination (Plaut et al., 2018).

10. *Multicultural Education* – the restructuring of curriculum and educational practices to include all aspects such as histories, beliefs, and values of diverse cultural backgrounds into instruction (Agirdag et al., 2016).

11. *Self-Efficacy* – belief educators have in their own personal ability to impact a positive effective learning environment (Bandura, 2000).

12. *Sociocultural Theory* – emphasizes the importance of human development where teachers must incorporate students' culture, beliefs, and social norms as important aspects of instruction (Parkin & Harper, 2020).

Summary

Chapter One discussed the historical, theoretical, and social context of culturally responsive teaching as examined from research-based evidence. Reviewing data from 1960 to today has proved that although much research has been conducted, gaps exist in the literature on implementing culturally responsive teaching within schools (B. Brown et al., 2019). Schools all

over America are increasing in diversity (Minkos et al., 2017); thus, the need to implement these strategies has become even more evident. The significance of implementing culturally responsive teaching will not only close the achievement gap among minority students, but it will impact all other students by acquiring knowledge for a more pluralistic society (Abacioglu et al., 2019).

     The significance of culturally responsive teaching was discussed. The school's culture is reflected in the workforce and society; hence, the culture of individuals in the school needs to be acknowledged, respected, and their contributions studied for a more cohesive community. Various aspects of significance, as discussed, such as empirical significance, practical significance, and theoretical significance, are all directed to the provision of equitable learning space and equitable opportunities for all. The research questions were directly aligned with the problem and purpose of this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature review will discuss and examine related factors that pertain to culturally responsive teaching and the impact these factors have on the achievement of minority students. The relevant theories will include the Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural theoretical framework and Bandura (1977) self-efficacy theory. To understand the purpose and significance of this study, related evidence-based literature that has already been established pertaining to achievement of minority students will also be discussed. Culturally responsive teaching is not a new concept yet factors and strategies of how to implement it seem foreign to most educators that have been in education for a long time (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Other sections will examine the application of comparative studies globally and locally. Culturally responsive teaching is considered a subsection of culturally responsive education (Forrest et al., 2016) and it is also connected to critical race theory, multicultural education, and ethnic studies. These concepts have also been included to provide a broader understanding of aspects affecting culturally responsive teaching. Additional factors pertaining to teachers' experiences that are worth noting for this study will also be examined.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework enables the relevant concepts in this study to be understood. Two profound approaches that complement each other in this study include Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1962) and Bandura's (1977) concept of self-efficacy (a tenet of his social cognitive theory). The sociocultural theory adds to connect the cognitive development of the individual to their cultural values through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Bandura's self-

efficacy concept is based on the belief that individuals' behaviors and task performance rely on their personal confidence in their capabilities to complete the task (Bandura 1977).

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky (1962) was a prominent researcher who introduced the social constructivism theory and later (Vygotsky, 1978) introduced his related sociocultural theory. The Vygotsky sociocultural theory focuses on factors that play a role in how humans think, construct meanings and gain understanding, based on their cultural aspects and interactions (Vygotsky, 1978); thus, the relationships and connection of minority students to the content is emphasized in this theory. Vygotsky (1978) stated, "learning is necessary and a universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function" (p.90). He believed that the process of students' intellectual development and knowledge was influenced by how culture shaped their thoughts and perceptions (McLeod, 2014) and that community played a central role in children's development (Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2017).

The Vygotsky sociocultural theory deals with individuals' subjective meanings of things in their environment based on their social, cultural, and historical experiences (Mcleod, 2014). Through sociocultural theory, a student's specified culture can be linked through instruction as the theory asserts individuals learning and development within the role they play in the community (Vygotsky,1978). The nature of sociocultural theory also describes learning as an active, engaging process where a learner's perception of new information is constructed from social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). The relationships and interactions of the teacher with minority students plays a role in achievement. The Vygotsky (1962) sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of human development where teachers must incorporate students'

culture, beliefs, and social norms as important aspects of instruction (Parkin & Harper, 2020; Vygotsky, 1969).

Another important aspect of the sociocultural theory is the zone of proximal development which defines the learner's performance based on what can be accomplished individually, with assistance or in collaboration with others (Mcleod, 2014). From an educational standpoint, the notion of zone development stems from the learner's performance, evaluated from assessments, based on the curriculum, instruction and activities. Thus, minority students would be highly motivated individually, or collaborative to impart their cultural contributions if the curriculum, instruction and activities are culturally responsive (Pang et al, 2021). Effective learning is one where the teacher guides the lessons but allows the students to discover through interactions and collaborations thus, culturally responsive teaching imparts inquiry-based approaches and students centered learning which are key strategies in effective teaching and learning (Lin et al., 2022; Penalva, 2019).

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory relies on the notion that an individual's beliefs in his capabilities affect behavior, motivation, and overall outcome of a task, with cognitive and social learning occurring through those beliefs (Bandura et al., 1999). It is important to note that self-efficacy varies depending on the task or context and can depend on the environment; humans are shaped by the environment, but humans can also shape the environment (Lightsey, 1999). There are four sources contributing to self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1977, 2000) and Maine et al. (2017), the first is enactive attainment, also known as mastery, based on information acquired from prior performances that may strengthen or weaken the current implementation. The second source is the vicarious experience which involves observing others

perform similar tasks in context. This may include the experiences that the educators have encountered and witnessed through school, social media, and community as examples. Verbal or social persuasion is the third source of self-efficacy, it is described as one's performance that is affected by encouragement and belief from others. The fourth source is psychological feedback whereby individuals rely on their psychological state to determine their ability to perform the task (Bandura, 2000).

How educators view their competence towards implementing culturally responsive teaching and how their perceptions and knowledge of cultures affect their application of culturally responsive teaching is connected to this theory. Self-efficacy has been attributed to academic achievement, problem-solving, cognitive development, and teacher education (Lauermann & Berger, 2021). Teacher self-efficacy encourages motivation, commitment and raises students' cognitive levels (Bourne et al., 2021).

Self-efficacy affects lesson management and adaptation of instructions that caters to the students represented in the school (Veronika et al., 2018). Teachers' personal judgment of their abilities not only determines the quality of instruction in a classroom but encourages the relationships and achievement of students (Zee & Koomen, 2016). The lens through which they view their students is also formed by their beliefs, attitudes, and experiential background, all of which they bring into their classrooms (Maine et al., 2017; Lauermann & Berger, 2021). Their perceptions of their ability and their perceptions of their students set the tone to level the extent the students expect to succeed (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Confidence, as portrayed through the four tenets of self-efficacy, does influence a teacher's application in implementing a culturally responsive classroom.

In conclusion, self-efficacy will enable the teacher view how their personal beliefs may shape their character and profession (Maine et al., 2017) while Vygotsky socio-cultural theory will enable the teacher to understand the extent to which their character, behavior or beliefs impacts students from a different background (McLeod, 2014). Through all this, the goal of the study is to understand and identify any common themes and patterns from the teachers experiences with culturally responsive teaching that overall may be impacting the achievement of minority students both negatively and positively.

Related Literature

The literature reviewed in this section will discuss several studies, emerging theories, and strategies that have been conducted to share evidence of the benefits of culturally responsive teaching and how this impacts minority students. The section will examine the literature related to the importance of culturally responsive teaching, other additional factors affecting achievement, strategies based on research-based evidence, implementation, and application concerning the outcomes of comparative studies. A brief historical perspective, and multicultural education is also included. It is important to understand that culturally responsive teaching is not the only factor that influences the achievement of minority students (B. Brown & Calderón, 2016).

It should be noted that this research will not focus on where educators have fallen short but on the discovery of the missing pieces that seem to be eluding educators in culturally responsive teaching. Teachers are crucial members of our society who form the backbone of our nation (Stembridge, 2019). It is for that reason that they are also the best resource when it comes to ensuring that future generations are culturally congruent in the ever-growing diverse population. This section, therefore, serves as the foundational setting, based on the related

literature, to examine the literature that addresses the pertinent factors that are affecting teachers'

implementation and how these factors are affecting the achievement of minority students. This

section also serves to connect existing knowledge and provide significance to this study.

Achievement Comparison

It is important to examine evidence-based data to fully comprehend the significance of

this study. Achievement is not only indicated by the performance in class but can also include

graduation rates, school dropout rates, and enrollment in higher rigorous school courses as well

as higher institution acceptance (U.S. Department, 2020). Indicators of the national achievement

of minority students can be assessed by organizations such as the National Center for

Educational Statistics, Every Student Succeeds dashboard and the U.S Department of Education.

School data and district data are always available within the specified school or district. The

number of minority students that do not graduate is relatively lower than the national average of

graduating students (Parkay et al., 2014; Stetser & Stillwell, 2014); thus, the need to address the

achievement disparities. Three distinct figures will be included below to compare both positive

and negative results.

Figure 1

Status Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity Comparison Graph

Percent

Race/ethnicity

☑ 2010 ☑ 2020
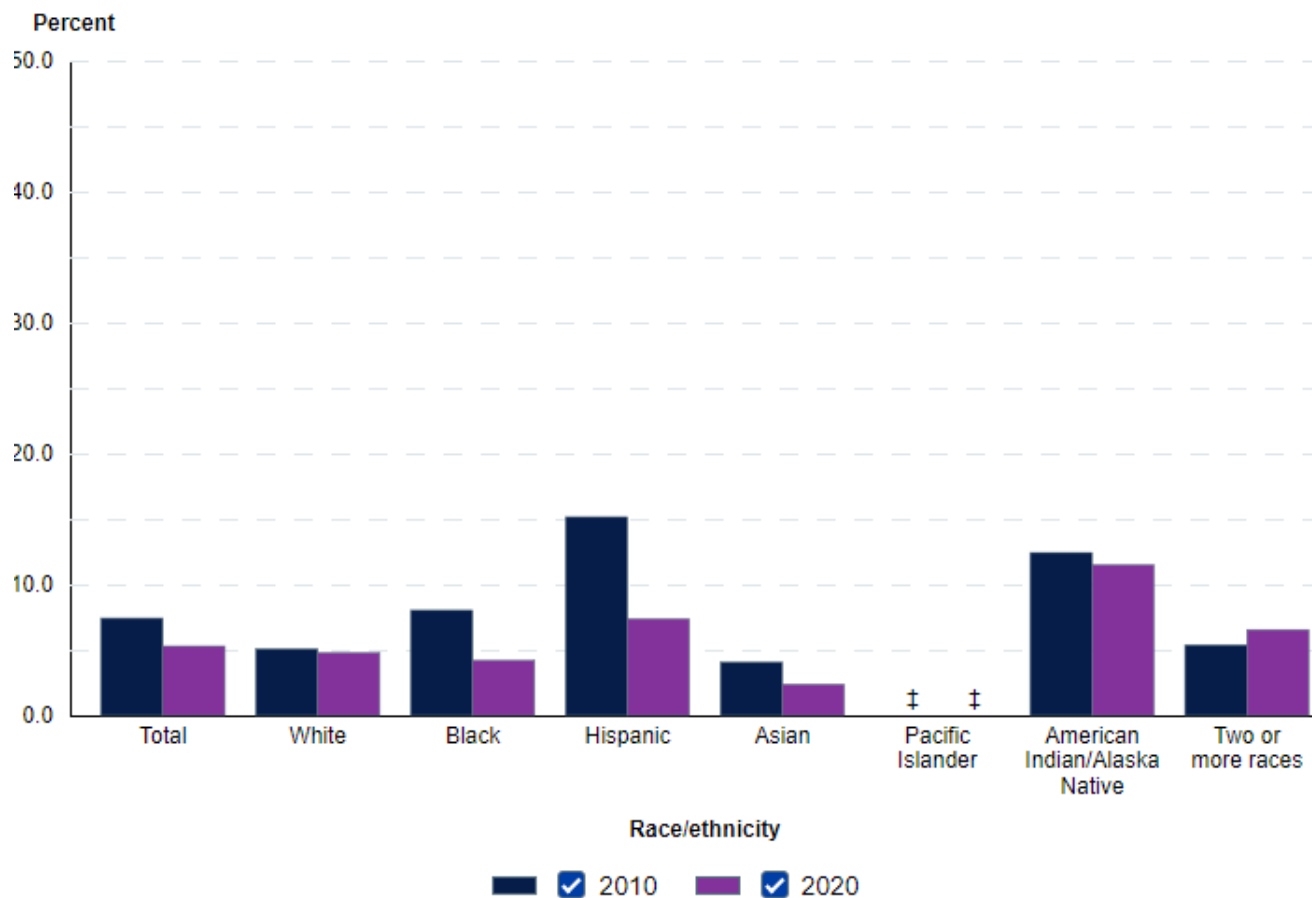
 Note: The status dropout rate is the percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in high school and who lack a high school credential. The data source of this figure is the U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October 2010, 2020, and *Digest of Education Statistics, 2021)*.The figure was obtained from the public domain of the U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2010, 2021).

Figure 1 compares dropout rates in 2010 and 2020 of students of ages 16-24 including those not enrolled in high school and who lack a high school credential. Two bars represent each data group with the first bar indicating results collected from 2010 and the second indicating results collected from 2020. The beginning bars show the national average performance for all

students under the total tab. Based on this data, the patterns indicate a positive shift toward more students remaining enrolled in school during 2020 as compared to 2010. On the negative side, it indicates higher levels of dropouts among minority students in both years, with the American Indian/Alaska Native group having the largest increase.

Figure 2 shows the adjusted cohort graduation rate of public high school students by race/ethnicity for 2018-19. The first bar indicates the U.S. national average of 86%. This indicates that any number below this performed lower than the national average and thus did not meet the required expectation for that year. The Asian/Pacific Islanders student group performed above with 93% but the remaining minority groups, which is a considerable number performed below the national average. In comparison, the White student group (the majority group) were also above the national average with 89%. This data indicates that minority groups have the lowest graduation rate as compared to their counterparts within the same schools nationally. Lower graduation rates may correlate to lower achievement and performance. The evidence from the graphs indicates overall strategies are needed to increase the achievement of minority groups to increase graduation rates across the board.

Figure 2

Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (AGCR) Graph for Public High School Students
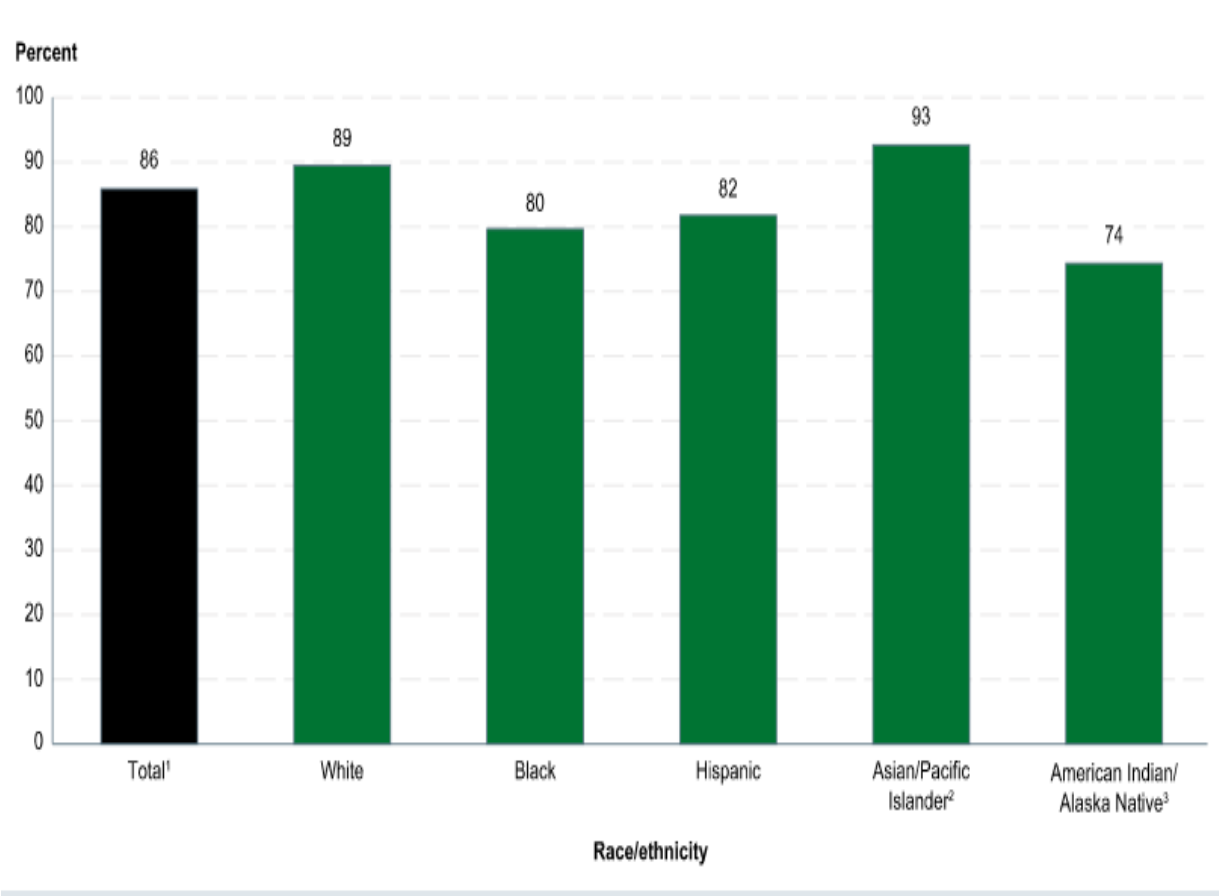
NOTE: The ACGR is the percentage of public high school freshmen who graduate with a regular diploma within 4 years of starting 9th grade. The total ACGR is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Consolidated State Performance Report, 2018–19; and National Center for Education Statistics, ED*Facts* file 150, Data Group 695, and ED*Facts* file 151, Data Group 696, 2018–19. The figure was obtained from the public domain of the U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics).

Figure 3

Average National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Science Scale Scores of 4th, 8th, 12th Grade Students for 2009, 2011, 2015 and 2019

Scale score   **Grade 4**

Scale score   **Grade 8**

Scale score   **Grade 12**

Legend: ■ 2009   □ 2011   ■ 2015   ▨ 2019
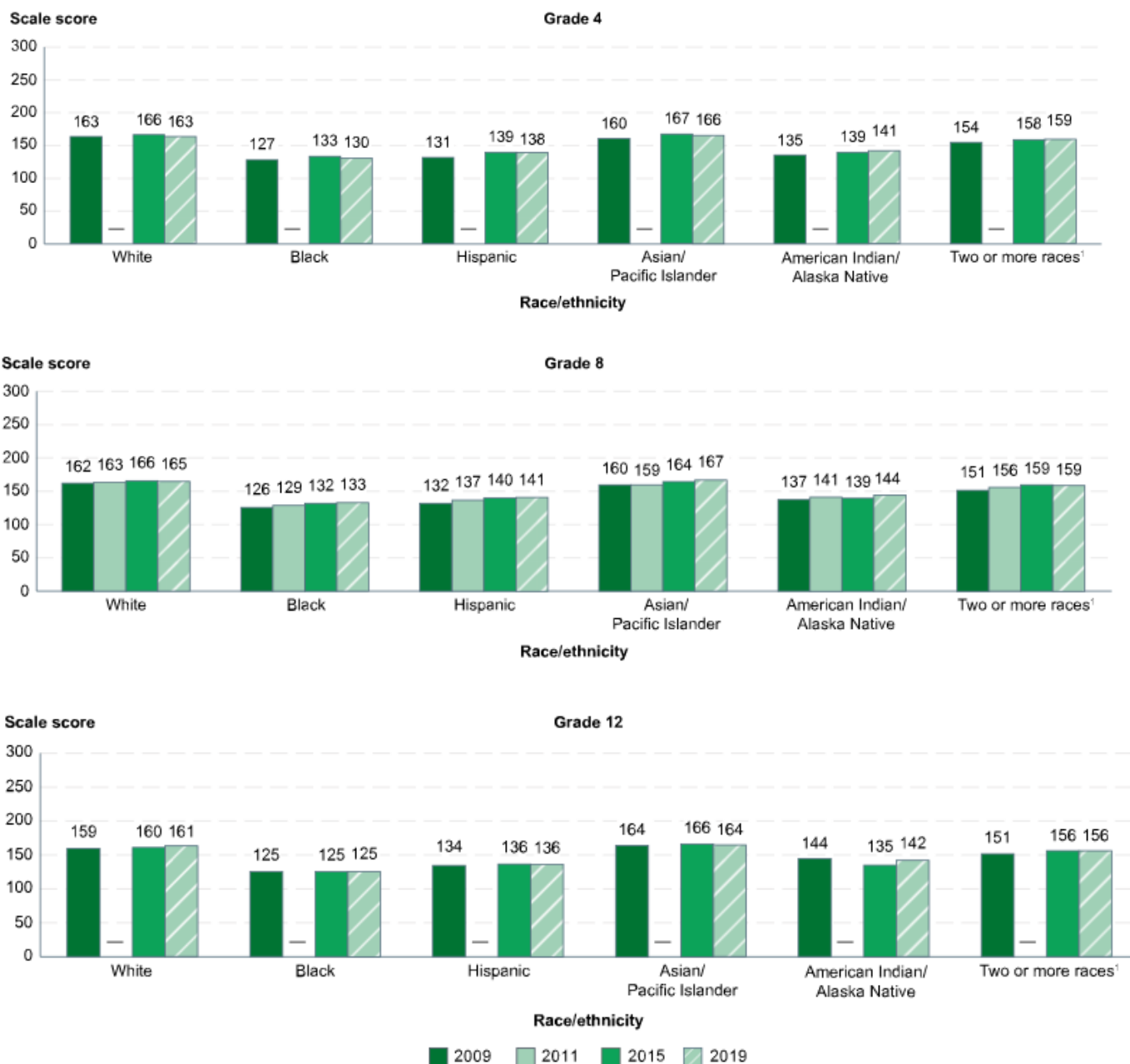
NOTE: Includes public and private schools. Scale ranges from 0 to 300 for all grades, but scores cannot be compared across grades. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2009, 2011, 2015, and 2019, Science Assessment, NAEP Data Explorer. The figure was obtained from

the public domain of the U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2019).

Figure 3 compares science achievement scores from 4th, 8th and 12th grades spanning from 2009, 2011, 2015, and 2019. The pattern of achievement across the board for all the minority groups indicates slight improvement over the years. It is important to note that the achievement gap seems evident across all grades, in all the years. Although one minority group which is the Asian /pacific islander student groups have higher achievement results, many of the other minority groups are consistently performing at a relatively lower rate across the board in all grade levels. A closer look at the data indicates that there is still a need to raise the achievement of the remaining groups. The National achievement for minority groups in three levels of elementary, middle and high school are lower despite the years. Strategies needed to solve this issue must be strategies that can be implemented across all school levels as the data suggests lower achievement of minority groups is an ongoing consistent issue in education.

Factors that Impact Achievement of Minority Students

Several evidence-based factors that have been shown to influence students' achievement include socioeconomic status, teacher instructions, school facilities, parental involvement, and chronic absenteeism, just to mention a few (Kawabata & Crick, 2015). In addition to this, the majority of the factors that affect the achievement of minority students are connected to their perceptions, representations, and sense of belonging, which are directly or indirectly linked to their culture, beliefs, and values (Su & He, 2020). It is important to note that this section will focus on factors within the teacher's control that greatly affect minority students; curriculum aspects and students' perceptions based on the school's culture and environment.

International surveys from literacy educators have noted the benefits of connecting culture and learning; hence, culturally responsive curriculum and instruction are ranked as one of the top five issues in education (Griffith & Lacina, 2020). Many interactions in a student's life often arise from their school environment as this is where most of their time is spent; these interactions greatly influence their personal characteristics, social skills, performance, and learning (Burden & Byrd, 2019). To further understand the significance of this study, research-based factors connected to culture within the school that impact or influence the achievement of minority students both positively and negatively will be examined.

Curriculum and Disengagement in Learning

The curriculum has been defined as the collection of various sources of educational material used to enable learners to achieve goals; others define curriculum as objectives obtained from learned theories and results from learning experiences provided by the teacher (Parkay et al., 2014). Overall, the curriculum is the core part of education that determines what the students are expected to learn and master at specific ages, depending on the subject (B. Brown & Crippen, 2016). As mentioned previously, the curriculum taught today falls short of representing the important contributions of other cultures which contribute to the disengagement of learning of minority students (Banks, 2012; Gorski, 2016; Hughes et al., 2009: Valencia, 2019).

Several researchers have concluded that minority students are disengaged due to the curriculum's rigor or representation of culture within the curriculum (Cartledge et al., 2015; Whitfield, 2012; Parkay et al., 2017). Curriculum disengagement from learning has also been attributed to other factors, such as the teacher's traditional teaching method that must adapt to the student's new learning styles today (Musante, 2019). A trend escalated as teachers had to adjust to online digital instruction due to the Covid pandemic in 2020 (Dumont et al., 2021).

Adewumi and Mitton (2022) identified societal curriculum as knowledge and impressions about ethnic groups portrayed in mass media such as social media, magazines, movies, and so on. We live in the digital age where both students and teachers alike form ideologies about minority groups based on how they are portrayed, and most of the knowledge is prejudicial and inaccurate as mass media essentially represents minority cultures as less significant (Campbell, 1995; Cortes, 1991; Johnson et al., 2020). This influences perceptions, performance, and expectations in teaching because they are clouded by bias and inaccurate information or viewed to have less potential. In addition to negative perceptions portrayed through mass media, Costa et al. (2021) conducted a cross-section review of 19 studies on teachers from different schools and countries to examine teachers' perspectives based on societal perceptions. The overall results indicated that teachers who held negative implicit attitudes towards minority students affected the relationships and disengagement of the students and teachers alike.

The disconnect to learning has also been indicated by research to factors such as curriculum-based teaching strategies. Some educators employ wrong ideologies in their effort to foster equality in their classroom while others inadvertently assume Eurocentric frameworks should be assimilated for all with one size fits all, thus failing to recognize the significance of culturally responsive implementation (Abiacioglu et al., 2019; Griffith & Lacina, 2020; Lanson-billings, 2014; Minkos et al., 2017; Pang et al., 2021). Lastly, research has also found that the most expert teachers teach the most demanding courses to the most advantaged students, while lower-track students receive lower-quality teaching and less demanding material, with lower track students comprising mainly of minority students (Kervick et al., 2019).

The education system should have an inclusive curriculum that encourages diverse students to honor their cultural beliefs: this can be accomplished when teachers are socio-

politically aware of the inequalities that exist within our society and our schools (Burden &

Byrd, 2019). The predominant culture highlighted within the curriculum, school, and staff is not

inclusive of other cultures; history books seldom mention in detail the accomplishments made by

diverse cultures and tend to base the history from an ethnocentric perspective (Gorski, 2016).

This view then extends to the workforce, and thus it has become more evident now than ever

why culturally responsive education is necessary for the betterment of our society (Burden &

Byrd, 2019).

School Environment Implications

Students' motivation, self-esteem, and self-perceptions increase whenever teachers

connect with students through positive relationships (Parkhouse et al., 2019), which promotes

social inclusion, respect for others, positive behavior, and increased performance. Schools are

diverse in population but not in staff (Glock et al., 2019). Educators must realize that failure of

cultural representation within the school in curriculum, building, or staff also plays a role in

minority students' performance and perceptions (Tobish & Dressel, 2017). The lack of

representation within the school staff may be resolved with representation within the curriculum

to increase the performance and motivation of minority students (Parkhouse et al., 2019).

The school building also represents the school environment. A simple thing like cultural

representation within the school sets the tone and culture represented by the school. Educators

must ensure that their teaching is not only content but also includes tangible representation of

other cultures (Glock et al., 2019) within the classroom and school environment. To explain this

further, minority students are more invested when the learning and instruction incorporate a

culture that they can identify with (Alemán & Gaytan, 2017). Enculturation is the process by

which students learn their own culture and values and acculturation is one where students learn

about a culture besides their own and assimilate to the norms (Kizgin et al., 2019). Minority students are more resistant if all that is expected and explained within the classroom includes a process of acculturation (Darder &Torres, 2014).

Language Barriers

Another factor to consider as an influence on the achievement of minority students is the language barriers that is experienced by a fairly large number of diverse students who are learning English for the first time. Barriers such as communication gaps, lack of proper instructional multicultural materials, miscommunication and poor transitioning for families moving into the American society all play a role (Darder &Torres, 2014). About 15 years ago Arizona, California and Massachusetts banned bilingual education, but in the past three years, California and Massachusetts have repealed anti-bilingual laws (*Education weekly, 2019*). In 2017, Arizona had one of the nation's lowest graduation rates for English learners, 25% below the national average (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Education activists are currently working with law makers in an attempt ban 'English Only' laws that are still in place.

Although strategies are in place to help the students transition, learning content in an entirely new language, is a challenge for most minority students who are non-native English speakers (Tobisch & Dresel, 2017). Just recently, Washington State Legislature , passed a House Bill 1153 for public schools' language access, to increase access to language interpreters, language policies and language liaisons to reduce education gaps within schools. Humans are social in nature, with perspectives that can be easily altered, influenced, or changed, based on social exposure or interactions (Cross, 2010). Culture is a part of a student's identity, and the student benefits most when teachers understand the diversity represented in their classrooms and respond to it (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Critical Race Theory

The most current emerging theory which is now gaining attention despite its evolution over the years is the critical race theory and its relation to culturally relevant education and culturally responsive teaching (Pang et al., 2021). The critical race theory is a framework that describes race as a social construct embedded in legal, political, and education systems (Tichavakunda, 2019). Critical race theory was initially formulated as a social justice framework to challenge oppression practices (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2012). This theory has evolved to enable scholars and activists to identify and rectify roles plagued by racial structures in institutions (Crenshaw, 2011; Tate, 1997). One of the theory's main goals is to provide equitable education by eradicating measures of racism and dominant ideologies in education (Tichavakunda, 2019).

Over the years, critical race theory proponents have postulated for equitable representations of people of color and diversity, while opponents believe it creates discrimination practices against white people (Tichavakunda, 2019). What is evident is that although the critical race theory framework began in the late 1970s, today's theorists and policymakers are unable to determine to what extent race should be applied or implicated in education policies (Cabrera, 2018). Most people are unsure of what critical race theory represents because critics propose that it brings about oppressor groups and divides people, yet proponents cite it as the foundation for diversity and equality in all aspects of society (Gillborn et al., 2018). According to Alemán and Gaytan (2017), discussions of race and racism continue to shape inequality within the classroom by bringing up different ideologies and attitudes from minority students as compared to majority students represented in the school.

Fast forward to today, and more representatives and scholars are in the process of discussing critical race theory from a political standpoint, despite numerous state legislatures'

disagreement on its significance within the classroom (Kennedy, 2021). On the opposers' side, according to *Education Weekly* (*2021*) four states, Idaho, Iowa, Oklahoma, and Tennessee, have currently passed legislation that bans teachers from discussing issues of race, social injustices, and other controversial issues: A similar law passed in Arkansas but was implemented for state agencies and not public schools. Opponents from States that ban discussions of controversial issues and injustices, stipulate that critical race theory will stifle discussions of social injustices that have shaped the country's history and are still evident today, citing fines and legal actions that will be imposed on teachers that do not follow the law of not discussing social injustices within the classroom. The critical race theory is attempting to change a paradigm and thus is faced with resistance from critics, politics, and other entities that are evident in American society today (Delgado et al., 2017). Nevertheless, it has sparked conversations and awareness that will help the progress of a better future for all students and society.

Critical race theory is related to culturally responsive teaching in that it helps students identify, challenge, and critique sources of social inequalities in society (Dee & Penner, 2017). The belief of teaching all students the same way with the exact style has long been proven to be inequitable (Goldring et al., 2013), and differentiation in education serves as a means of responding to student diversity (Eikeland & Ohna, 2022). Thus, culturally responsive teaching eliminates generalizations, stereotyping, and misrepresentations of students' abilities by including the importance, and contributions and of their culture (Cabrera, 2018), a component embedded within the critical race theory. In addition, culturally responsive teaching proponents advocate for changes concerning classroom inequalities, including ethnic course introduction, diverse curriculum, and selective admissions to prestigious schools for all, as proposed within the critical race theory (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson 2018).

Multicultural Education

Educators now more than ever need to be prepared to work with the growing diversity of students within the school (Chahar Mahali & Sevigny, 2021). Multicultural education works as a set of strategies to enable teachers to cope with the changing demographics of students (Agirdag et al., 2016), but what defines multicultural education? Multicultural education is restructuring curriculum to ensure multiple cultures are celebrated and included in instructional practices to include all aspects such as histories, beliefs, and values of diverse cultural backgrounds into instruction (Agirdag et al., 2016). Multicultural education aims at equity for all students to promote their success by enabling educators to incorporate awareness of cultural identities, behaviors, and heritage into teaching practices (Kazanjian, 2019; Lawrence et al., 2020). Therefore, to accommodate the rising number of diverse students in the classroom, the curriculum methods and content must adapt to adequately educate all students (Crenshaw, 2011; Mensah, 2021).

The vast racial, ethnic, linguistics, and religious diversity offer a great challenge not only to the teachers but to the curriculum leaders to keep up and ensure that all cultures are adequately represented within the curriculum, and school policies (Mensah, 2021; Chung & Harrison, 2015). Multicultural education is not about changing the education system but adapting and including broader cultural aspects and accomplishments to the existing curriculum (Kazanjian, 2019). To expound this further, a teacher's cultural awareness is raised through multicultural education, which enables scrutiny of curriculum design to ensure that it is inclusive (Agirdag et al., 2016). Students that feel misrepresented or underrepresented often perform lower and are less motivated to work within the school (Kelly et al., 2021). According to Koppelmann (2016), adding

diversity to the curriculum has some benefits but can also result in unexpected, unwarranted consequences such as miscommunication and barriers when implemented incorrectly.

Although some school districts agree with the need for multicultural education, the argument lies in what is considered a fair or justified application or distribution of multiple cultural accomplishments and practices as indicated in the Education Reform (Cherng & Davis, 2019). How much and how far should teachers adjust to accommodate the varying cultures to ensure that it is equitable? In addition to this, the difference in a student's home cultural beliefs and norms may sometimes conflict with the western classroom culture and could result in miscommunication from both teacher and student (Perso, 2012). For example, a student from a different culture than the teacher may prefer direct open expression versus quietly following instructions. Thus, the teacher may inadvertently view this student as defiant and fail to communicate effectively with them, affecting the student's relationship and achievement in that classroom. A meta-ethnographic literature conducted over 40 studies of multicultural education proved that equitable classrooms that arise from multi-cultural education show higher academic achievement, motivation, and self-efficacy (Parkhouse et al., 2019). One crucial aspect noted from this study, and others similar, is that specific requirements and instructions are necessary to connect multicultural concepts to the curriculum (B. Brown & Crippen, 2016; Denson, 2009). Teachers must be flexible and improve their knowledge and approaches of multicultural issues, gain student trust through intercultural interactions and discussions, recognize and celebrate individuality and cultural holidays and finally attend frequent workshops on how to incorporate culture into practice (Perso, 2012).

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a byproduct of multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching; it fosters positive interracial interactions, engagement, and decreases discrimination (Plaut et al., 2018). Multicultural education is considered one of the key components identified as a structural entity for culturally responsive teaching (Gorski, 2016). Keeping this in mind, all terms related to culture under this section also fall under culturally responsive teaching, which is a framework with multiple aspects pertaining to students' cultural identities and the fight against social biases (Kelly et al., 2021).

A study conducted with 143 teachers on multicultural attitudes and perspectives resulted in the teachers adjusting their practices to promote a more equitable classroom and provide a more positive, engaging environment for students (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). It is important to understand that some researchers view a distinction between multicultural and culturally responsive pedagogy. Burden and Byrd (2019) distinguished multicultural as a classroom for students with similar cultures and cultural pedagogy as content representing various cultures within the classroom. Culturally responsive teaching is a merge of principles from the two concepts as it pertains to connecting students' backgrounds and cultures represented within the classroom through a model of lessons (Forrest et al., 2016).

Culturally Responsive Education

Culturally responsive education is a systematic educational framework that promotes pedagogy through the infusion of culture within the school to encourage equity and social justice for all (Morrison et al., 2021). Other standard educational practices such as culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally sustaining pedagogy all fall under culturally responsive education (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Culturally responsive education approaches promote social justice through four main principles which include valuing student

cultures, using rigorous relevant curriculum, fostering strong positive relationships, and supporting critical thinking and social transformation towards acceptance (Stembridge, 2019; R. Taylor et al., 2014).

Ladson-Billing (1995) established culturally relevant pedagogy to empower students socially and intellectually by using cultural components to impact knowledge. Emerging theories from this pedagogy include culturally relevant education, critical race theory, and culturally responsive schooling, which all serve as a merge of multicultural education practices brought about by Gay and culturally responsive teaching of Ladson-Billings (Gorski, 2016). These strands have now been cohesively connected to embody teacher practices and students' learning as a framework of culturally responsive education (CRE) which is the practice of culturally responsive teaching (Griffith & Lacina, 2020).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is an extension of culturally responsive education that focuses on the teacher's classroom practices, activities, lessons, grouping, and any aspects related to student learning (Powell et al., 2016). The practice of preparing teachers to embrace and utilize culturally responsive pedagogies is a facet of culturally responsive education (Abiola et al., 2019). Teachers that practice culturally responsive teaching include content integration of cultural aspects without changing the rigor to lower ethnic disparities in achievement, as indicated by the National Center of Educational Statistics, 2018b.

Culturally responsive teaching deals with social justice and social change for diverse students within the school (Civitillo et al., 2019). Although proponents of culturally responsive teaching use the cultural experience as a strategy for effective teaching, critics also posit students' home culture as insufficient to validate and implement it (B. Brown et al., 2019). Gay

(2010), a prominent author and researcher in culturally responsive teaching, states that it is important to note that culturally responsive teaching cannot solve all challenges facing minority students but serves as an effective beginning.

Significance of Culturally Responsive Teaching. Research must always be conducted to understand the importance or effectiveness of any theory or concept and the results evaluated. Although numerous studies have been undertaken on the importance of culturally responsive teaching and education, the research on integrating knowledge and skills into curriculum practice is minimal (Pang et al., 2021). Cultural relevant teaching allows students to affirm their culture and utilize their cultural knowledge to identify their frames of reference in identity (Gay, 2010), motivating and resulting in higher student achievement (Dee & Penner, 2017; Seungho, 2017). The latter of these researchers conducted a quantitative cultural relevance study on the academic implications of at-risk students after implementing a multicultural curriculum through an ethnic studies course. The outcome of this research-based study included an increase of 0.39 points in GPA, an attendance increases of 56%, and a rise in high student credit recovery of 6.3 points. The study was pioneered in one district on the West Coast before ten districts adopted it. Soon after, multiple legislative bills signed by the 2015 Governor of California included the state's implementation of an ethnic curriculum course for all schools in that state (Tucker, 2014; F. Wang, 2016). Implementing ethnic studies mandated culturally responsive teaching instruction and activities (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

The number of minority students that do not graduate is almost twice that of their counterparts (Parkay et al., 2014; Stetser & Stillwell, 2014); thus, the need to address the achievement disparities. This is not a new concept, and recent studies still indicate a significant difference in achievement among minority students and their counterparts (Johnson et al., 2021;

Reardon, 2011). More significant state policies, reforms such as No Child Left Behind, tapped resources, and training have enhanced performance but still massively fail to address prominent diversity issues (Banks, 2012; Dee & Penner, 2017). Research, on a smaller scale such as at the district or classroom level, found resistance and disengagement from teacher training as causes of a lack of culturally responsive teaching (Parkhouse et al., 2019); which may also impact the achievement of minority students.

It is important to note that other qualitative studies (Horvat & Lewis, 2003; O'Connor, 1997) attribute low achievement scores of minority students to other factors such as education opposition behaviors and thus dispute cultural implementation effects. Franciosi (2009) conducted a study in Arizona on Hispanic minority students' performance by comparing prior and post results of students to an ethnic studies curriculum: He concluded no evidence on student performance. Cabrera (2018) conducted a more extensive scale investigation of 8400 students based on a voluntary Mexican American studies course. Although variable limitations were noted in this study, the evidence collected on causal effect was insufficient to warrant a valid result towards positive cultural implementation. Thus, more research and studies are necessary for this field.

Benefits of Culturally Responsive Teaching. B. Brown et al., 2019 argues that effective education results from teachers who practice cultural consciousness and cultural competence, making learning more relevant and relatable for students. Culturally responsive teaching practices promote cultural pluralism, which sustains the growth of multiple languages, a variety of ways of problem-solving strategies, teamwork, and democracy within the school system (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Most of the outcomes in culturally responsive teaching studies

have gained positive results, but it is also important to note that many of the studies were

quantitative, which left room for error in student outcomes (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

The methods by which researchers perceive cultures and implement cultural literacy

provide gaps that must be researched (Hu et al., 2018). Culturally responsive teaching has been

linked to students' achievement throughout history, but it should be more about authentic and

relevant learning rather than test scores. Thus, researchers mainly focus on its impact on test

scores and have difficulty assessing other benefits that arise from it (Kelly et al., 2021).

Additional research in culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy posits that students learn best

when the information presented makes them feel validated by reflecting their cultural beliefs

(Gay, 2010; Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2007). In addition, it improves relationships and opens

up the dialogue between the teacher and the students, either to add or inquire about other cultures

positively.

An additional meta-analysis that examined the effects of racial attitudes of students from

prekindergarten to twelfth grade conducted by Okoye-Johnson (2011) revealed that the cultural

curriculum intervention and multicultural dimensions resulted in positive results of reducing

racial attitudes. This study concluded that implementing culturally responsive teaching would

benefit and change individuals into better citizens overall.

Implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching. Most studies confirm the need for

teacher training programs to learn practical and structural implementation of culturally

responsive pedagogy (Dee & Penner 2017; Pang et al., 2021; Stembridge, 2019). Culturally

responsive teaching redefines teachers' perspectives from knowing what to do in a classroom to

thinking and reflecting on what they observe (Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2017). As an educator, the

school learning expectation portrayed in teacher programs drastically differs from the reality

experienced as a teacher. It is practical to expect more realistic teaching scenarios to be implemented into teacher programs, but old practices are still in use (Dee & Penner, 2017). Today culturally responsive teaching encourages individuals to be culturally aware and value the impact of diverse students, especially marginalized students (B. Brown et al., 2019).

Understanding culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy is not having a perfect lesson plan but a daily exchange that includes students' heritages and culture in lessons and activities (Abacioglu et al., 2019). Now that there is a broader perspective of culturally responsive teaching and aspects related to culturally responsive pedagogy, it is important to delve further into viewing the connection of culturally responsive teaching to the achievement of students. Studies suggest that ethnic-minority teachers incorporate multicultural education more than native-white teachers (Agirdag et al., 2016). Some studies suggest minority students have a better perception of minority teachers which can translate into higher interest, motivation, and achievement (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; La Salle et al., 2020). Most school staff tend to be non-ethnic teachers that may inadvertently fail to understand the need to diversify the curriculum: a practicum also lacking in teaching programs (L. Johnson & Pak, 2019). A randomized controlled study of 390 teachers on evaluations of mathematically solutions revealed biases against minority students' evaluation abilities as compared to white students (Ceasar, 2022). One result showed that no biases were observed when correcting solutions, but through assessment of student math abilities, the largest biases were towards Black and Hispanic girls as compared to white boys and girl students.

Failure to understand the significance unintentionally influences the individual teacher towards implementing culturally based instruction (Agirdag et al., 2016). A meta-ethnographic literature review conducted over 40 studies of cultural education proved that equitable

classrooms that arise from culturally responsive teaching show higher academic achievements, motivation, and self-efficacy (Parkhouse et al., 2019). One important thing noted from this study is that specific requirements such as teacher training and culturally centered instruction are necessary to connect cultural aspects to the curriculum (Brown & Crippen, 2016).

Application of Culturally Responsive Teaching. It seems more prevalent that culture-centered frameworks implemented in the past still mask educational disparities and social injustices for minority students (Pang et al., 2021). Equity efforts acknowledge, address, and foster practical programs unique to each school or state: This can be accomplished by ensuring redistributing access and opportunity for all students regardless of zoning boundaries (Gorski, 2016). Several studies with considerably positive outcomes have been conducted in this field over the last 20 years (Cabrera, 2018).

According to Siwatu 2011, the benefits of implementing a community program with theory and practice such as culture walks and field experiences, can aid teachers in learning about the culture in the community they are teaching. This is a step forward in the right direction for culturally relevant instruction. A mixed methodology study conducted by Brown and Crippen (2016) provided evidence to show increasing classroom participation and performance of culturally responsive practices in science and mathematical subjects. Researchers like Stembridge (2020) have developed a culturally responsive education mental model with six themes and five strategical questions that can be employed in culturally responsive classrooms and teaching. The six themes include engagement, cultural identity, vulnerability, relationships, assets, and rigor. The questions under each theme guide teachers towards implementing a culturally responsive classroom. As an example, through engagement, teachers must ask how the assessment engages students to have ownership or relations to the instruction. These teachings

encourage educators to reimage the equity lens and realize that all students receive what they need versus students receiving the same.

Interdisciplinary Application. Numerous studies on culturally responsive education and teaching have been applied to multiple aspects of education in varying fields due to their benefits (B. Brown et al., 2019). In addition to this, researchers performed a grounded theory research-based practices to be implemented in academic library instruction for library literature and instruction. This application's purpose was to provide more cultural frames of reference in the stories and books available in the library to promote student retention, progression, and overall success. The role of culture in mathematics has also been explored through strategies that reduce the achievement disparities by exploring the nature and level of engagement (Scammacca et al., 2019). Through ethnomathematics, teachers can add cultural experiences to the roles, such as using relevant scenarios that students can relate math concepts versus scenarios that are uncommon to them to link culture to learning (Kisker et al., 2012).

A vast list of published books on all subject matters that include culturally responsive teaching is also readily available. Hollie and Allen's (2018) book on culturally linguistically responsive teaching and learning has a multitude of strategies that educators can employ in implementing culturally responsive classrooms. This book has chapters on classroom skillsets, classroom management, academic literacy, vocabulary instruction, and environment, all of which are geared toward culturally responsive teaching. Mark et al. (2019), authored a book on culturally responsive strategies reform in STEM for higher education which includes higher recruitment of girls and minority students. Other publications include reading instructions for literacy in diverse classrooms, which includes steps on fostering culture through reading programs and anticipation (Gillispie, 2021; McIntyre et al., 2011).

All school subjects require logic, social interactions, critical thinking skills, and connections for mastery in learning; thus, culturally responsive teaching serves as a beneficial tool when implemented within schools' curricula and instruction. Culturally responsive teaching for marginalized students was created by Ladson billings on a three-fold construct. Student learning which prioritizes intellectual growth, cultural competence that creates a positive cultural environment of acceptance and fluency, and critical consciousness to identify and solve social inequalities against marginalized people. The constructs allow students to receive the same context and perceptions as mainstream students, expression of cultural competencies in instruction and feedback, and opportunities to investigate and remove social injustices and bias (Gay, 2000; Ladson and Billings, 1995).

Local Application. Education is constantly changing, in terms of instruction, strategies, and technology application (Stembridge, 2020), just to mention a few. Overall, education determines society's direction and can be used to solve the challenges faced within the community. Hence, educators play a role that affects the future of generations to come. Furthermore, the American School Counselling Association (ASCA) identified cultural sensitivity and responsiveness as an integral part of education (Studer, 2015). Consequently, Every Students Succeed Act (ESSA) was created to encourage school districts in America to establish culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy to honor the individuality of students in an effort to raise achievement within all schools due to the diversity increase among students (Schettino et al., 2019).

Every year, schools evaluate achievement data, and minority students are often not performing to their highest potential (Delgado et al., 2017). Although largely diverse, most schools' organization and structure in America also differ in community values, state, and school

policies, educational opportunities, and funding (Lewis-McCoy, 2020). This has been attributed to the difference of culturally responsive teaching locally. An important and crucial change that has occurred, other than the abundance of diversity within the school, has been the rise of technology (Griffith & Lacina, 2020; Pang et al., 2021). This provides access to cultural aspects that can be utilized within the classroom, thus more educators can now implement cultural practices and strategies.

Locally, various strategies and methodologies are available for educators from multiple avenues, including implementing teacher training programs that develop cultural multidimensional mindsets and methods (Carter Andrews, 2021). Teachers view core subjects such as math and science as incompatible with culture, and these are the core subjects that will inadvertently lack representation of minority students due to low performance (Reardon, 2011). Therefore, the lack of achievement inadvertently affects representation and future career opportunities for minority students.

Global Application. On a global scale, research on implementing culturally responsive teaching is more prevalent in other countries than in America (Hu et al., 2018). A study on the influence of culture on students' mathematics achievement was conducted across 51 countries. This research was established to emphasize how culture played a pivotal role in shaping math achievement scores; findings included an increase of about 23.89 % difference in math performance. Research-based data proved that culturally responsive teaching is beneficial. Van Middel Koop (2017) conducted another notable study in the Netherlands with 25 teacher teams. This research studied teachers' attitudes, which indicates their perceived significance in implementing culturally responsive teaching within the classroom. About 40 % considered the

influence of diversity on students' achievement but most of the teachers did not translate this into their teaching practices.

Higher education, such as medical education, is among the pioneer disciplines in the global transformation of culturally responsive teaching practices to promote equitable learning and success for underrepresented and international communities (Weiler & Caton, 2021). The cultural framework offered viable, evidence-based course design for delivery, and evaluation strategies. Some of the course design includes representing content with diverse people, rechecking assignments to ensure they are not stereotypical and allowing varying delivery methods from students. Despite this influx of reasons mentioned above to have culturally responsive teaching within the school, the tools and practices of implementation are still minimal.

Barriers to Implementation

Unfortunately, a vast collection of barriers that may affect the implementation of culturally responsive teaching exists. This section will focus on factors in the classroom that hinder the performance of minority students. Previous studies (Tobisch & Dresel, 2017) and more recent studies (Glock et al., 2019) indicate teachers' judgments and differing lower expectations when presented with students of different ethnic and social backgrounds. Teachers inadvertently attribute minority student's performance to h academic inability versus assuming learning disability for a white student with similar performance. These judgements contribute to the lack of foresight in the benefits of culturally responsive teaching. Diversity increase in America is higher than before with a large number of student families coming in due to various reasons, including immigration, relocation, and job opportunities (Griner & Stewart, 2013). Thus, there is a higher need for teacher and student connections of minority students to bridge

the cultural divide. This divide is one of the most significant variables in the lack of implementation of culturally responsive teaching but also serves as a critical reason to implement culturally responsive teaching.

Other factors that make it hard for teachers include their lack of firsthand experiences with students of diverse cultures, their cultural backgrounds, and lack of cultural training in teacher preservice training programs (Arsal, 2019; Worku et al., 2019). To address and enact changes within the school system, changes must be acknowledged within the state and local community to influence a more culturally diverse education system (Bal et al., 2018). Another variable that complicates culturally responsive instruction is the fact that no two classrooms are the same. For example, socioeconomic status and language barriers are different for each teacher in each classroom (Brown and Crippen, 2016).

Diversifying curriculum culturally includes more than race; it also includes religion, language, and socioeconomic backgrounds, but insufficient training seems to be persistent in most studies (Tabatadze, 2017). This also includes relying on information about cultures without fostering stereotypes; understanding culturally responsive teaching requires further practice than mere recognition of or awareness and respect of cultures (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017). Different minority groups vary in communication styles, body language, gestures, patterns of task management, and organizing ideas (Gay, 2002). Implementing programs to train educators will require funds that the schools' districts may not have or may choose to invest in other avenues (Griner & Stewart, 2013). Culturally responsive teaching is not a top priority within the education system.

Culturally responsive teaching positively influences underrepresented students to draw cultural competencies which increase academic success: cultural affirmation promotes a sense of

belonging and importance within the school (Banks, 2012; Camarota & Romero, 2009; Sleeter, 2011). It is important to note that other factors within the classroom, such as collaboration, positive relationships, engagement, and classroom environment, work hand in hand or against the outcome of culturally responsive teaching (Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Sleeter, 2011). Many scholars and researchers agree with the benefits mentioned previously, but the question under study is why such a lag in implementation?

Educators and certification programs for education require individuals to understand the content and pedagogy skills of the course. Most teaching programs agree on the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness as skills needed by teachers but fail in providing training for those skills (Griner & Stewart, 2013). Hence, extensive research will need to be conducted on best cultural practices to employ, which will consequently cause further delays in implementation (Arsal, 2019).

Ethnic Studies

Over 50 years ago, students of color went on strike at the then San Francisco State University, paving the way for an inclusive curriculum and the establishment of an ethnic studies department on campus. Prior to this, the study of the history of other cultural groups and their contributions was unheard of (George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2022). Ethnic studies focus on the interdisciplinary approaches to issues such as economic, social, political, and historical perspectives of ethnic minority groups (Cammarota & Romero, 2009). It encompasses culturally responsive education and teaching through the emphasis on cultural identities and relevance to social and political issues (Banks, 2012; Camarato & Romero, 2009; Sleeter, 2012).

Despite its emergence over 50 years ago, ethnic studies programs have spread over universities but are still relatively low within high schools (Sleeter, 2011). Despite this change, the curriculum is still largely ethnocentric, with cultural representations mainly added to emphasize the western perspective as a narrative (Hughes, 2009; Sleeter, 2016). However, some states have moved forward with policies to accommodate diverse students. California passed legislation that required all schools k-12 to offer ethnic studies curriculum in March 2021, New Jersey passed a law that requires public schools to offer courses on diversity and inclusion in April 2021, and other states which include Connecticut, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Texas, and Vermont are currently under negotiations to draft standards for ethnic studies (George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2022). It is important to note that ethnic studies is an academic curriculum and teachers are still required to be trained to be culturally responsive to effectively implement.

Research from ethnic studies suggests positive benefits that will bridge the achievement gap of minority students' achievement (Au et al., 2016). Critics of ethnic studies implementation propose that the programs are divisive, non-academic, and replace academic skills with ethnic pride (Sleeter, 2014). In Tuscan, Arizona, the Mexican American studies was found in violation of teaching courses that promote the overthrow of the government, promote resentment towards a race and advocate for ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals; the course was consequently eliminated by the school pending trial in lieu of losing school funding (Dee & Penner, 2017; Patrón-Vargas, 2021).

Ethnic studies are not only designed for minority students but for all students to understand about cultures and struggles of people different than themselves (Dee & Penny,

2017). It encourages student engagement by affirming their identities, through relevant and meaningful learning that they can relate to (M. Ainley & Ainley, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017).

Summary

Several researchers have examined the benefits, significance and importance of culturally responsive teaching (Abacioglu et al., 2019; Aronson, 2020; Griffith & Lacina, 2020; Juvonen et al., 2018; Ladson- billings 2014; O'Leary et al., 2020) and its effect on the achievement of minority students (B. Brown et al., 2019; Minkos et al., 2017). The lack of adequate representation within the curriculum (Whitfield, 2012; Parkay et al., 2014), teacher perception based on societal curriculum (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022), and student perceptions and sense of belonging (Kelly et al., 2021) all influence the performance of minority students. Disengagement from minority students has also been attributed to instructors' teaching methods (Musante, 2019), Covid pandemic issues (Dumont et al., 2021), language and miscommunication barriers (Darder &Torres, 2014). Indicators examined to relate to the achievement of minority students include the average lower number of minority students in higher courses (Kervick et al., 2019), and lower graduation rates of minority students (Parkay et al., 2014; Stetser & Stillwell, 2014).

Multicultural education enables educators to become culturally aware (Mensah, 2021; Chung & Harrison, 2015) incorporate cultural identities (Kazanjian, 2019), promote student motivation (Parkhouse et al., 2019) and can be utilized as a framework for equitable education (Agirdag et al., 2016). Ethnic studies have been utilized as a cultural response to the growing diversity (Crenshaw, 2011; Mensah, 2021). In 2021, states such as California, and New Jersey established policies that mandate ethnic studies for all schools k-12 (George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2022), while other states such as Idaho, Iowa, and Oklahoma ban teachers from discussing issues of race and social injustices (Educational weekly, 2021). The critical race

theory framework formulated to challenge oppression practices (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2012)

provides methodologies for equitable education (Tichavakunda, 2019) despite resistance faced

from critics and politics (Delgado et al., 2017).

Teachers who lack culturally responsive mechanisms fail to adequately train the student's

cognition level (Alemán & Gaytan, 2017). The application of a culturally responsive education is

a broad topic. Although this literature discusses barriers such as lack of teacher training (Arsal,

2019; Tabadtze, 2017; Worku et al., 2019) and fostering stereotypes (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017)

that highlight possible reasons that impede implementation, interdisciplinary, global and local

application strategies are also examined. Implementing culturally responsive classrooms will

require effort, thought, and extensive training.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine and investigate high school teachers' experiences with culturally responsive teaching and its impact on the achievement of minority students. To conduct this study, a transcendental phenomenological qualitative design was applied using the socio-cultural theory of human development and Bandura's self-efficacy theory. As typical of qualitative studies, the data collection included a triangulation strategy of three research methods: interviews, survey questionnaires, and focus groups which will also be discussed within this section. This study aimed to investigate the related experiences of participants (educators) in a high school setting; hence, this section will explain how the data was investigated and collected through the research design rationale, and the significance of the methodologies that were utilized.

Research Design

As stated above, a transcendental phenomenology qualitative study was utilized for this research. To further understand the rationale of this methodology, it is essential to understand what constitutes qualitative research. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is used when the investigation involves problems that explore an individual's meanings and perspectives on a human problem in a natural setting. It is defined as research that attempts to access thoughts, feelings, or perceptions based on participants' experiences or circumstances to comprehend a behavior or event. This method of analysis allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding based on evidence of the participants' relationships and the study's context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Although several types of qualitative research exist, the phenomenology approach is a

human based inquiry design as perceived and experienced by the individuals under study (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative phenomenology is a philosophical approach inspired by the work of Edward Husserl (Yu & Lau, 2012); it seeks to uncover themes by allowing the true identities of the lived phenomenon to emerge within human experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative designs can be transcendental, whereby the researchers' feelings, perceptions, insights, or biases are bracketed and excluded in the data collection (Moustakas, 1994). A hermeneutical phenomenology derived from the work of Van Manen (1990) describes data collection inclusive of the researchers' perspective, opinions, and bias to construct the meaning of the phenomenon. The transcendental phenomenology approach seemed appropriate as the participants were educators from the same school with similar teaching experience in the same subject matter among high school students. Hence, the study included examining a shared lived experience that the participants have had in common, and the researchers' perspectives were not included in this study.

In addition to sharing lived experiences, transcendental phenomenological research includes understanding the conditions of this shared lived experience and creating a textual and structural description to relay the essence of the context under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This rationale further indicates why this approach is necessary. The phenomenon in question is the consistent low motivation and achievement scores of minority students. The aim is to understand the teacher's perspectives and experiences based on culturally responsive teaching, its relation to achievement data, and the lack of implementation within the school or classroom. Thus, the descriptions of the educator's experience, the structural conditions, and situations of the experience influence the methodology of this research.

Research Questions

To guide rigorous qualitative research, the research questions must solicit the participant's feelings, thoughts, or opinions based on an experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The questions generated below investigated the teachers' personal, professional, and general experiences pertaining to culturally responsive teaching. The goal was to determine the impact of culturally responsive teaching in relation to the achievement scores of minority students. Please note that teaching in this study encompasses not only instructions but assessments, lab activities, group work, discussions, and any strategy related to improving mastery of content within the classroom.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of high school teachers with culturally responsive teaching strategies to improve achievement of minority students?

Sub-Question One

What are the personal experiences of high school teachers with culturally responsive teaching relating to the achievement of minority students?

Sub-Question Two

What are the professional development experiences of high school teachers with culturally responsive teaching relating to the achievement of minority students?

Sub-Question Three

What are the culturally responsive teaching strategies that teachers are using to raise achievement of minority students?

Setting and Participants

An important aspect of qualitative research is the context in which the phenomenon is

experienced and studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Research context often includes the environment, setting, and selection of participants to enable the researcher to gather relevant details of the experienced phenomenon (Burchett et al., 2013). The research setting is the physical, social, and cultural location or environment in which the study occurs; it influences factors of the study such as the experimental methodology, data collection, and interpretation of results (Given, 2008). The criteria for the participants selected for this study determined the research design and the high school setting provided the context and background of their lived experience. Phenomenology research calls for understanding the essence of a particular group of people (Creswell & Poth, 2018); therefore, participants dictate the phenomenon and the method in qualitative research (Hycer, 1999). This was significant in selecting educators in a high school setting for this study; more on the rationale of the participants and setting are discussed in this section.

Setting

Husserl's (1978) transcendental phenomenology emphasizes intentionality as a factor, where intentionality refers to the consciousness of the internal experience and what individuals recognize as components of meaning to that consciousness (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yu & Lau, 2012). Background factors and surroundings affect that consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, the study settings directly and indirectly influenced the participants' memory and recall of information. To ensure that the true nature of the essence was captured and highlighted in this study, a high school setting in the northern region of the United States was utilized.

This region was selected based on the lack of diversity within the school staff and the low performing scores of the minority students. The lack of diversity represents many of the school settings within American schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics

(NCES), eight in ten U. S. public school teachers (79%) were identified as white in most states for the 2018-2019 school year. The high school studied currently had 104 classroom teachers, one principal, four assistant principals, 15 counselors, and numerous support staff; 95% of the school staff identifies as white. The site had several amenities, including gyms, auditorium, football field, and baseball field, and the technology ratio is 1:1 per student.

For this study's purpose, the school was called Brown High School. Brown High School currently had 1850 students enrolled with demographics for the 2020-21 year as White students (57%), Hispanic (16.9%), and African American (12.2%). The student-to-teacher ratio was 25:1. The study focused on the teachers and administrators of 9-12th grade common core courses; common core subjects for this study included math, science, and English courses. According to Great Schools Organization(2019), only 35.4% of students met the math test standards requirements, and 26.2% of students met the science test standard requirements for the 2018-19 school year. Due to the Covid pandemic and online learning, last year's data were not collected as students did not take the 2019-20 school year test. Data from science achievement indicated that only 13.0% of minority students met the science standard compared to 38.6 % of the majority demographic, which is white students. These data stipulate evidence of low achievement and poor representation of minority students within the school for the study.

In conclusion, the school structure, student and teacher demographics, achievement scores comparison, and school culture dynamic provided a realistic setting with similar conditions to most high schools within America. The validity of data obtained from this research could be replicated for future studies to advance education for all. Data will be collected through Microsoft team meetings including an audio collection component in the high school. Settings are important to enable familiarity and recollection of experiences from the teachers, as well as

to limit interruptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Participants

The phenomenological qualitative approach focused on accurately capturing the experiences of a phenomenon lived by participants (Giorgi, 1985). To adequately achieve a transcendental dimension in knowledge, the researcher must grasp participants' descriptions and identify the phenomenon's essence (Neubauer et al., 2019). Lived experiences in phenomenology research dictate that participants have common aspects within the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018); this influenced the decision to examine educators within the same school. The number of participants within the study ranged from 10 to 13 to achieve saturation. Qualitative saturation is a principal concept that is achieved through exhaustive data collection methodologies to establish that the maximum degree of analysis has been met in a study (Hennink & Kaiser,2019). Although data saturation is a difficult concept to define, many researchers agree that saturation is not about the numbers but about the depth of the data (Galvin, 2015). Saturation can be determined as the point where no new information necessarily adds insight to the overall study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Despite this, many researchers agree that saturation for interview-based studies is commonly achieved in sample sizes of ten (McNulty et al., 2015; Saunders et al., 2018; Vagle, 2018).

Sampling methods can be probability or non-probability: where probability allows every member in the population to have a chance to participate, unlike non-probability which selects through a nonrandom manner (Emmel, 2013). This research was voluntary, and it utilized a non-probability sampling technique. The technique utilized was a quota, where participants were selected based on a specific criterion. This criterion included teaching experience, subject taught, and years taught within the site under study. Research indicated that utilizing quota ensured a

higher level of reliability than random sampling and an elevated level of subjectivity (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012).

All the participants were teachers with at least three years' experience, teaching core subjects. In addition to this, majority of the participants identified as Caucasian descent which similar represented the staff demographic of the school under study and the staff demographic of most schools within America (Great Schools Organization, 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2021; Marrun et al., 2019; Samuels, 2011; Young, 2000). The study site for this research was a high school, so the sampling pool was teachers. Out of the 45 educators in this category, 13 educators were selected to attain saturation as required for qualitative studies (Galvin, 2015).

The educators had worked together for over three years; thus, the commonality of experience was higher (Vagale, 2018). Variables such as meetings regarding plans and evaluating factors to improve school standard achievement scores within the school are similar. Another rationale behind using the selected participants was in narrowing down the phenomenon to related lessons to ensure common themes and settings within the participants as required in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Researcher Positionality

Culturally responsive education deals with social justice and social change for diverse students within the school (Civitillo et al., 2019). Hence, culturally responsive education is the ability of teachers to have culturally responsive classrooms by being actively aware and deliberate in implementing multicultural education in their teaching practices, activities, and lessons within the schools for all subjects (Aronson & Laughter 2016). Several reasons influenced my decision to pursue a study on this topic. International surveys from literacy educators indicated that the benefits of connecting culture and learning in curriculum and

instruction have been ranked as one of the top five issues in education (Griffith & Lacina, 2020). A survey conducted across six US districts showed consistent benefits in performance, motivation, and support from students matched in classes where they could identify ethnic matches to teachers (Egalite & Kisida, 2018). A statistics report conducted through the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) 1987-2018 showed a rapid increase of white female teachers across elementary and secondary schools (Ingersoll et al., 2021).

Since the workforce is not changing as rapidly as the diversifying student body, adapting the curriculum lessons with culturally responsive teaching will promote the maximum potential for all students. The benefits of culturally responsive teaching are not new to education. Today's students are more cognizant of the lack of representation of diverse cultures within the school curriculum, instruction, and staff. Few schools have implemented multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching, so the number is relatively low (Civitillo et al., 2019). Cultural relevant teaching allows students to affirm their culture and learn critical methods that challenge social inequalities, motivating them, resulting in higher student achievement (Dee & Penner, 2017). Effective education results from teachers who practice cultural consciousness and cultural competence, making learning more relevant and relatable for students (B. Brown et al., 2019).

The majority of the staff in American schools is white and hence may not understand the impact of utilizing other cultures in learning (Glock et al., 2019). In addition, staff members aware of the importance of civilization seem to lack the training and resources to implement it (Mensah, 2021). Thus, my study was shaped into understanding how the lack of implementation of culturally responsive teaching affects the achievement and motivation of minority students in high school from a social constructivism paradigm. The importance of cultural relevance in all content is one of the most neglected areas of research in education: there needs to be a stronger

push to provide evidence-based research to convince stakeholders to push for its implementation. (B. Brown et al., 2019). To achieve my goal, a research paradigm of the social constructivism perspective with three main philosophical assumptions, ontological, epistemological, and axiological, was included.

Interpretive Framework

The Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of human development, where teachers must incorporate students' culture, beliefs, and social norms as important aspects of instruction (Parkin & Harper, 2020). In this study, the teachers were considered the participants, the students of the study. This interpretive framework can be defined in several ways but includes interactions and communications between learning and knowledge based on the individuals' perceptions and experiences with the world (Voon et al., 2020). The goal of utilizing this framework is to develop a pattern of meaning based on data collection. To adequately describe the context, the participants' personal, cultural, and historical views must be expressed in a constructivist worldview (Moustakas, 1994). The questions throughout the study will be open-ended to ensure the participants have a more comprehensive range of flexibility to paint a picture of their experiences.

Philosophical Assumptions

According to Creswell & Poth (2018), philosophical assumptions are the abstract ideas and beliefs that impact the study and develop during the research. These assumptions formulate the research problems and may be multiple; thus, examining how they affect the interpretive paradigm is crucial in qualitative research. It is essential to understand the philosophical assumptions as they determine the study's shape and direction. The three main philosophical assumptions that were utilized included ontological, which relates to the nature of reality;

epistemology which involves close connections to the participants; and axiological, which deals with the known values of the researcher within the study (Lincoln et al., 2011).

Ontological Assumption

The ontological assumption is defined as the "nature of existence and structure of reality" (Y.Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 83). It is important to remember that everyone's perception of reality is determined by their beliefs and experiences. My goal in applying this assumption was to listen and use the evidence presented by the participant to interpret the meaning without any preconceptions and subjectivity. This research was investigated from a transcendental phenomenological lens and not a hermeneutical lens, which includes the researcher's perceptions (Van Mann, 1990). Understanding ontological assumptions made it easier to bracket out my perceptions, beliefs, and values and focus on the data presented.

Epistemological Assumption

According to Creswell & Poth (2018), epistemological assumption addresses what is considered knowledge, how knowledge claims are justified, and the relationship between the study and the researcher. An array of individuals was studied to accomplish a rich justification of what is regarded as knowledge, and their knowledge was viewed from a subjective lens. Each individual was investigated as one entity to assess their perceptions, and the themes and patterns presented are analyzed. Based on the knowledge provided, this assumption aimed to understand what ideals give the perceived behavior and what factors influence the knowledge justification.

Axiological Assumption

The axiological assumption allows the reader to assess the values the researcher brings into the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My positionality, biases, and beliefs were articulated to ensure that they were excluded from this study's data collection and analysis. The axiology

assumptions highlighted what I considered valuable in this study. The topic under investigation had a personal connection as I am a teacher who experienced this as a student; thus, bracketing strategies were utilized to ensure that my views were not included in the research. All data collection and methodologies were checked to ensure all dialogs were under the social constructivism paradigm solely from the participants' views, opinions, and perspectives as required by phenomenological studies (Walker & Shore, 2015).

The social constructivism paradigm is a lens used to guide researchers to understand human experience and shape assumptions (Charmaz, 2017; Shapiro, 2002). To further understand the paradigm, it is crucial to understand its components. It begins with positivism which guides objectivity and deductive logic to enable the researcher to remove their biases for knowable empirical truth: It also includes social constructionism which seeks reality based on an individual's interactions and interpretations (Perez, 2019). The critical paradigm lens is based on how power and inequality affect social change while the postmodernism lens is based on the assumption that truth in any form may or may not be knowable (Charmaz, 2017).

Researcher's Role

The researcher's role was to align the research design to the methodologies to collect data which was collected through interviews, surveys, and focus groups in this study. Collecting data, interpreting, and analyzing data, writing reports, and presenting findings was also my responsibility. Throughout the process, to keep my biases in check, I focused on the data collected, was mindful of my facial expressions through a mask and refrained from agreeing or disagreeing with responses. This enabled me to be professional and identify trends within the data. In this study, I was strictly a tool of research with no personal connection to the participants. The participants were teachers within a school that neighbors the one where I teach.

I have no authority over any of the participants, nor do I influence anything in their lives. The research site is a similar school to mine, and the participants were teachers I have seen once or twice in district-wide meetings.

I interviewed teachers to understand their views on the importance of cultural diversity based on their personal experiences and professional experiences. I selected a transcendental phenomenology design as this study could bring up sensitive topics, feelings, and perceptions. To bracket out my views, all questions utilized for interviews allowed room for explanations and descriptions; I also practiced interview techniques prior to the study to ensure that my body language and voice tone, and facial expressions were not influencing the data. In addition to interviews, surveys were utilized for questions that seemed more personal or sensitive. All participants were volunteers and had the freedom to leave the study if they felt uncomfortable.

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Procedures

Qualitative procedure typically involves collecting and analyzing non numerical data from evidence such as video, audio or focus groups to understand concepts, themes, patterns, or experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The procedures used in this research were data collection

through interviews, surveys and focus groups. Procedures included IRB application, submission and approval, site approval, participants approval letters and confirmations which will all occur prior to the data collection procedures. The data collection procedures began with the interview section. Interviews were conducted through Microsoft teams within the school setting for each participant. 15 questions as listed in the interview section were asked and responses recorded. This took about 2 weeks to collect and transcribe the interviews.

After all interviews had been conducted, the second step included survey data collection. The Surveys sent were used for further in-depth guided questions pertaining to experiences on culturally responsive teaching. All surveys were confidential and were sent out during the third week after the interviews. Once completed, responses were recorded and coded.

A Likert scale which has a higher turnaround (Norman, 2010) was also utilized. The Likert scale survey was utilized to assess common themes among the participants to gain a deeper understanding of the patterns associated with the phenomenon of culturally responsive teaching within the school.

The last step included data collection through focus groups. Qualitative data included subjective information based on the participants experiences and through focus groups, participants usually may share more detailed information to expound their views (Creswell and Poth, 2018). This method had guided questions which altered slightly based on patterns of data collected from the interviews and surveys to gain a deeper understanding of the research questions.

For flexibility, as schools have other programs running, data collection, analysis and coding took about one- two months. Triangulation of results to construct themes (Carter et al., 2014) took some additional time. The goal based on the sample size, data collection, and the

study was concluded by two-four months.

Permissions

As required for most research, permission such as site permission, IRB approval letters, and participants approval consent was included. Before the research was conducted, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University approved the study. IRB is the committee established to ensure that research involving human subjects protects their welfare and rights (Liberty University, 2022). The district chosen for participation was asked to provide the site permission prior to asking the principal to approve the study. All informed consents accurate content and information was dispersed before the commencement of the study. Participants received informed consent through email detailing information about the research. Copies of the letters were included.

Recruitment Plan

After IRB and site approval was confirmed, teachers received a detailed email and a hard copy special invitation to recruit them as participants in the study: about 45 emails were sent out. The invitations explained the significance and benefits of the research, and how the participants played a significant role. Educators were given one week to respond. To encourage participation, participants were reminded of the benefits of the study and the role they played in improving achievement for minority students. In addition to this, the Equity teams within the schools are mandated to provide training and the teachers are required to demonstrate any strategies or personal involvement to show their adaptation to the growing diversity among the students. This study provided valuable data for future training and was included in the teachers' effort towards a more equitable classroom.

After the deadline of response passed, once the proposed number of 10-13 was reached,

the scheduling of interviews began. Although this was not the case, if more time had been needed, more recruitment letters would have been sent out and additional time given. The backup plan was to recruit from neighboring schools if fewer teachers within the school were selected to participate. Six other high schools are within the district with similar demographics; hence recruits could have also been selected from other schools. Once participants agreed to participate, a more detailed guided list of what they are required to do was given. This list included interview, survey, and focus group proposed dates. The participants' responsibilities were stated, which included selecting a date and time that worked for them. The process began with the selected teachers and continued in phases to accommodate more teachers. This simply meant that once five teachers began participating in one school, they would have been considered the first phase as more teachers were being recruited from another school. Fortunately, all teachers selected were from the same school.

Data Collection Plan

Despite new and emerging ways to collect data, interviews, focus groups documents, and audiovisual materials are considered more effective ways for qualitative data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The collection of data using a variety of sources or multiple methods to establish a thorough understanding of the phenomenon is known as triangulation (Carter et al., 2014), and it was utilized in this study. Data was collected through interviews, surveys and focus groups. An interview is considered a social interaction based on a conversation that allows the researcher to explore perceptions, behaviors, and opinions of a phenomenon (Warren & Xavia Karner, 2015). Knowledge is constructed between the interviewer and the individual being interviewed (Brown & Crippen, 2016). Challenging topics, such as the one under study, required specific approaches that correlated and supplemented each other to have adequate data.

This enables the researcher to triangulate the aspects of the data (Norlyk & Harder, 2010). Through different strategies employed in focus groups, the variety of data collected to study the phenomenon is more valid and can supplement data from the interviews. One can observe the physical setting, classroom environment, and participants (both teacher and students), interactions, conversations, and behavior (Warren & Xavia Karner, 2015). Through both interviews and focus groups, specific protocols and measures detailed below were observed as expected by qualitative studies.

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

Individual interviews enable the researcher to identify several dimensions and themes that may be hidden (Creswell& Poth, 2018). Through this data collection method, new concepts can manifest from body language and flexibility based on open-ended questions (Warren & Xavia Karner, 2015). The participants in this research included educators, their perspectives, and experiences with the effects or lack of culturally responsive teaching, including its connection to the achievement of minority students. To adequately study the shared phenomenon between the educators and to answer the research questions, significant data based on lived experiences was obtained from interviews (Brown & Crippen, 2016). Since the topic under study was viewed as sensitive, individual interviews seemed more appropriate (Moustakas, 1994).

Of the 13 participants, each participated in a one face-to-face interview, pertaining to the questions under study. Asking the same question to multiple participants enhances data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015), which means that participants only needed to be interviewed once. Data saturation ensures rich quality in data is collected and examined (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). Only open-ended questions were utilized, and this strategy provided a wider range for participants to describe their experiences and opinions with the phenomenon encountered

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). A semi-structured interview guided by open-ended questions was applied. All interviews were reordered and transcribed to ensure accurate information was collected and analyzed (Moustakas, 1994).

I conducted all interviews at the school in a private confidential area face to face for about 30 minutes, after school. The room setting and time enables the researcher to set the appropriate tone, direction and confidentiality needed for the interview (Craver, 2014). Thus, the setting was at school in a private but familiar setting for the participant.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background and career in your current position. CRQ

2. Based on your professional experience, which student demographic consistently has low achievement and why? CRQ

3. Please describe your knowledge and understanding regarding culturally responsive teaching and your definition of minority students. CRQ

4. Please describe any personal strategies including activities or lessons you have incorporated regarding culturally responsive teaching. Explain the outcome (if applicable). SQ1

5. Describe any personal challenges, experiences, or feelings you have faced regarding implementing culturally responsive teaching. SQ1

6. Describe any personal challenges, experiences, or feelings you have faced regarding raising the achievement of minority students within your classes. SQ1

7. Describe any professional development experiences or training you had that prepared you to work with minority students? SQ2

8. Describe any professional development experiences you had that prepared you to implement, understand or learn about culturally responsive teaching? SQ2

9. Describe any common challenges or experiences you believe teachers face when working with minority students based on your professional learning team's meetings about achievement. SQ2

10. Describe any professional meetings or strategies that the school/district has implemented to assist you with working minority students in your classes. SQ2

11. As an educator, what professional development experiences have you had that prepared you to work with lower-performing minority students? SQ2

12. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences pertaining to minority students that we have not discussed? SQ2

13. Describe your challenges or experiences in implementing culturally responsive teaching. SQ3

14. As an educator, explain why or why not you believe in the significance of culturally responsive teaching and its implementation to raise the achievement of minority students? SQ3

15. As an educator, what do you believe are the barriers preventing the implementation of culturally responsive teaching?

Although the questions were focused on the root of the problem; the experiences of teachers with culturally responsive teaching and how these impact the achievement scores of minority students, each question was specific to an experience or factors relating to the experience. To ensure that all interview questions were pertinent to the study, methodology experts for Liberty

University also assessed, evaluated, and refined the questions to ensure clarity and wording of the questions is permissible.

Question one provided a base to establish commonality among the selected participants while question two assessed their views based on that commonality to understand experiences and similarities within their perspectives on minority student achievement. Question three and four delved deeper to identify the extent of their encounter with culturally responsive teaching and any experience toward implementation that they may have encountered. Question five and six were in place to identify the participants views in what they regarded as challenges, their outlook on feelings and beliefs that they have faced with culturally responsive teaching, and it assessed the possibility of any new factors that may have been overlooked as challenges for the teachers. Question seven, eight and eleven assessed the teachers' perspectives on professional development experiences with the district and its influence on their personal experience with culturally responsive teaching.

Additional issues or accomplishments were further discussed with question nine which also evaluated the participants perspectives and opinions in education-based experiences. Questions eleven through fifteen were asked from a personal perspective, a professional perspective and general outlook on significance of culturally responsive teaching and its implications towards achievement of minority students. The questions were designed to have a general flow to elicit the teacher's perceptions and general experiences in working with the factors under study.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Individual interview data collection is considered a credible source of data for qualitative interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and hence numerous forms of data analysis programs exist. To ensure that the phenomenological research methodology is rigorous, the data collection and

data analysis must be unified under the same theory of science for triangulation (Aguas, 2022).

First, I began with the interview and recordings. The recordings from each interview were conducted using a digital sound recorder, and they were transcribed. Transcripts are considered a form of data analysis that allows data to be examined in a more flexible manner. Digital sound recorders are more effective than tape recordings which take a longer time to transcribe. Similarly, most researchers promote tape recordings, emphasizing that tape recordings allow researchers to hear pauses and intonations, which keeps the data authentic. Thus, the digital recording tool to be utilized must be able to transcribe and capture pauses and intonations (Maher et al., 2018), such as Microsoft teams.

The data analysis of the interviews occurred through three basic steps. First, the interview transcripts were organized into categories based on the data. Second, the transcripts were grouped according to the question categories of personal, professional and implementation. and coded. Coding occurred through delve software where coding was derived solely from the data to reflect the perspectives of the participants (Keenan, 2001). Third, the results were classified into themes awaiting integration and triangulation from other data analysis findings. To convert codes into themes, multiple subthemes were generated after several rounds of coding. Clark (2021) asserts that valid themes have 4-5 codes from inductive studies such as this research. In addition to this, it is important to take chronological order of events, such as shift in body position, or facial expressions that occur during the interviews (Keenan, 2001). The researcher used a process code to capture nonverbal cues, situational backgrounds, contexts, and the general atmosphere of the interview. Process codes are used to convert action into words to examine the data qualitatively. Once the data was collected, a coding software program known as Delve was then applied to integrate the findings (Sage Ocean, 2020).

Inductive coding involves deriving codes based on the data as compared to deductive coding, which is based on existing research and theory (Tessier, 2012). Qualitative approaches were utilized to analyze the data from the interviews. The Delve system utilizes the CAQDAS software, which offers distinct types of coding such as descriptive, structural, and value coding to filter and streamline the data (Maher et al., 2018). The software created sub-codes within the program, which enabled the data to be separated into several categories and create themes. These themes were further organized into a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel, where they remained until the other two forms of data analysis were completed for triangulation purposes (Tessier, 2012).

Surveys/Questionnaires Data Collection Approach

Surveys utilized were based on a Likert scale to reveal the perceptions and opinions of the participants (Neubauer et al., 2019). Subjective questions that may be uncomfortable to ask during interviews can be studied through surveys and this can also include a wider array of individuals in the setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to gauge the school cultural environment. One survey was conducted through digital software from an online format using a Likert scale. The Likert scale which only gives 5-7 choices, allows researchers to gage participants, beliefs and perceptions based on answers on a scale that populates the most common choices (Norman, 2010; Sullivan et al., 2013). Surveys included confidential responses to uncover any other hidden phenomenon related to the study. More information on survey collection is based on the survey program included in the analysis.

Survey/Questionnaire Questions

A Culturally Responsive Teacher Preparedness Scale (CRTP) with 20 questions was utilized. Four competencies to be measured include curriculum and instruction, classroom management, student assessment, and cultural awareness of minority students (Siwatu, 2011).

The survey responses are confidential, so the questions may be more sensitive and direct, as pertaining to the teacher's self-efficacy and preparedness in culturally responsive teaching. The CRTP scale is a 5-point Likert scale rating from strongly disagree to strongly agree and can be used to measure perceptions, values, and attitudes of the teachers. This scale also measures frequencies, quality, and importance of culturally responsive teaching varying from the degrees of opinions (Tessier, 2012).

Questions: (5-point scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral/undecided, agree, strongly agree).

1. Culturally responsive teaching is an important aspect that should be implemented in education. SQ3

2. The curriculum I currently use has culturally responsive lessons embedded within it.SQ1

3. The curriculum is relatable to all students and does not require a culturally responsive approach, the students need to work harder to raise their scores. SQ3

4. I design assessments that include culturally responsive strategies so that diverse students can relate.SQ1

5. Making the curriculum culturally responsive may deter the other students from being engaged and affect performance.SQ3

6. The lowest performing group within my class tends to be minority students.SQ3

7. Minority students are the main group that need motivation within the school.SQ3

8. Implementing culturally responsive teaching will improve achievement scores and motivation of minority students, SQ2

9. I can relate to the needs and experiences of minority students.SQ2

10. I often struggle to relate and build supportive relationships with minority students.SQ1

11. I have excellent classroom management and high achievement scores in all student

demographics.SQ1

12. I struggle with classroom management mainly from minority students.SQ1

13. Students acting up in my class misbehave due to lack of interest or motivation in what I am teaching.SQ2

14. I have knowledge and expertise of making lessons more relatable using culturally responsive strategies.SQ2

15. My classroom environment creates a safe supportive cultural environment for diverse students to feel welcomed.SQ3

16. I have tried to implement culturally responsive lessons and it did not have any effect.SQ3

17. I have limited understanding in culturally responsive teaching and implementation significance.SQ2

18. I am aware of the benefits of culturally responsive teaching but lack the opportunity and time to implement it.SQ2

19. Culturally responsive teaching should be added to electives and not core subjects of Math and Science.SQ2

20. Teachers need to get training or professional development in culturally responsive teaching.SQ2

Survey/Questionnaire Data Analysis Plan

Likert scales are primarily utilized for quantitative data but can also be utilized in qualitative data (Jamieson, 2004; Norman, 2010). The survey questions measured single traits and attitudes to enable response coding. Through this format, the frequency based on the data can be analyzed. Microsoft programs such as Chart Expo pro can also be utilized to input the

Likert scale and create charts showing the frequency of responses (Jamieson, 2004). Using these qualitative frequencies, the data can now be coded into the Delve program to assess themes (Sage Ocean, 2020). These themes were further used for triangulation which requires three forms of data synthesis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Themes for culturally responsive teaching in relation to classroom include engagement, cultural identity, relationships, vulnerability, assets and rigor (Stembridge, 2020). These themes were assessed based on the frequency of responses from the survey.

Focus Group Data Collection Approach

Focus groups are a common method of qualitative data collection which provide an opportunity for the participants to discuss with one another their perspectives, opinions and experiences related to the study on a deeper level. Focus groups attempt to capture the full complexity of the phenomenon in an active setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure that everyone in the focus group had an opportunity to response, I facilitated the focus group on a round table, with a screen prompting one question at a time. Each participant had a designated number that only the facilitator could view, and this was recorded per question to ensure that all individuals responded. Any numbers not highlighted were personally given an opportunity to respond before proceeding to the next question prompt. Individuals were given the opportunity to explain why they agree, disagree or state their response not to exceed a certain time limit with each question.

The main data collection method during focus group includes audio, note taking, focus group of verbal and non-verbal ques, and video recording (Kennedy, 2009). The focus group meeting duration depends on the number of participants, but we discussed it for slightly over an hour. This was a single focus group with more guided in-depth questions about the group's

general themes based on the data collected from the interviews and surveys. The focus group

questions had 8 questions, 4 from the interview and 4 from the survey that received the highest

frequencies both positively and negatively. No additional questions were included based on the

data's direction.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

Analyzing data from focus groups is similar to the interview data analysis methodology

in the process and tools that were utilized. Data collected from focus group includes notetaking,

video and audio recordings and transcripts, and any additional information (Tessier, 2012). For

analysis the focus group transcript was imported into MAXQDA, a focus group analysis

software that can be utilized to code and theme data. This software can also differentiate analysis

results by individual speaker and has tools such as quote matrix that aggregate analysis summary

and an analysis report to identify the themes (Consoli, 2021). This software format includes a

guided data sheet to systematically arrange and organize the pertinent data into related categories

for coding. Coding can examine theories from past research (Moustakas, 1994) and create

themes. Both inductive and deductive coding was applied (Sage Ocean, 2020) to capture the

essence required for triangulation.

Data Triangulation

It is important to test the validity of data collected through triangulation to ensure that the

data aligns with the study. Tessier (2012) categorized triangulation into four parts which include

method triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and data source

triangulation. As the title of each category suggests, theory includes using multiple theories to

determine the phenomenon, while method triangulation includes using multiple sources to gather

data to investigate the phenomenon. Data triangulation includes time, space and persons while

investigator encompasses different researchers (Denzin, 1973). To triangulate data, method

triangulation from interviews, surveys and the focus group conducted was utilized.

Through using multiple sources of data for triangulation, testing the consistency of

findings will strengthen the data collected and the phenomenon under study. It is also a useful

tool to ensure lack of bias is prevented from shaping the direction of the research. Bias in

research can come through measurement bias, sampling bias, or procedural bias, thus

triangulation allows different strengths to ensure enough data have been collected to complete

and stabilize the story (Kennedy, 2009). Although triangulation can be time-consuming, the

benefits outweigh the cost and thus many researchers use it for the validity of data. Triangulation

not only expands the data collected but reaffirms any phenomenon or themes from the

supplemental data (Kennedy, 2009). I will utilize an online evaluation matrix such as the KEQ

evaluation tool (Better evaluation, 2016).

Trustworthiness

For qualitative research to be considered valid and reliable, foundational aspects that

establish the trustworthiness of a study, specifically credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability must be present (Y. Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The nature of ensuring transparency

and quality in this research requires reflexivity that can be met by the four terms previously listed

(Korstjens & Moser, 2018). These terms also allow individuals examining this research to assess

the objectivity of the research. Four aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability all work together to produce a sound trustworthiness structure required in this

research. The four aspects are discussed in detail below as to how they were accomplished.

Credibility

Credibility is an important aspect that connects the researchers' findings with reality from the study's findings to ensure that the *truth* of the findings is accurately described (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interpretations of the data must present credible information drawn from the participant's perspective (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure that my research establishes credibility I utilized two important techniques.

Triangulation establishes validity by using multiple sources of collected data to develop a common phenomenon or theme of the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To achieve this, I collected data using different methodologies and techniques which include individual interviews, focus groups and surveys. Once data was collected, the participants received feedback to check for accuracy and correct any misinterpretations of the data in relation to their perceived experience (Birt et al., 2016).

Transferability

Transferability describes behaviors, experiences, and context to ensure that the findings are meaningful to the study (Y.Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This can be accomplished through thick descriptions of the participants and research focus groups to enable the reader to assess if the findings are transferable to their own settings (Korstjens & Moser 2018). This transferability judgment is based on the reader's perception and not the researchers, since the researcher can only create the conditions of transferability. To ensure transferability, I provided a detailed account of settings, interview process, focus groups, sample sizes and strategy, demographic information, experiences, and socio-economic status pertaining to this study. Any changes, experts or additional outcomes that occurred during the study, were also included.

Dependability

Dependability relies on the aspect of consistency to ensure that acceptable standards of the research design are met during the analysis process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Dependability allows other researchers to understand, examine, audit, and critique the study, which in this case was accomplished through an inquiry audit at Liberty University. To ensure dependability throughout the research process, data was recorded in detail, systemized in order, and analysis methods disclosed. All records, changes, steps, and accounts pertaining to the research were documented in a timely, consistent, and organized manner that was also supported by the literature.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the aspect of neutrality by the researcher ensuring that the findings are inter-subjective to the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This means the study's findings are based on the data collected and participants' viewpoints or experiences. Interpretations cannot be based on the researcher's preferences, biases or narrative (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The techniques used for confirmability included the audit conducted by the university and reflexivity.

To ensure validity and trustworthiness in qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to understand the role they play in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Any preconceived notions, judgments, and viewpoints that are part of the researcher must be excluded from the findings. To accomplish reflexivity, all interviews, focus groups, and analytical data were supplemented with reflective notes. Reflective notes were also included in subjective responses to the settings and relationships to the participants.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are factors that must be anticipated by the researcher as they could emerge at any time, especially during data collection. Ethical principles can be guided through three

forms which include respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Respect for people includes ensuring privacy and attaining consent. Only adults are included in this study, pseudonyms were utilized for participants and personal information was omitted from the study. Any recording and data collected was kept under lock and key with encrypted notes for protection. The concern for welfare ensures that participants are not exposed to unnecessary risks. Confidentialities, as described in the trustworthiness section, are maintained and the goal and aim of the study was explained in detail to all participants to enable them to assess any risks before enrolling.

Also, participants will be allowed to leave the study if they feel uncomfortable, with no penalty, and all their data will be erased and discarded. Justice in ethical consideration ensures that the benefits or burdens of the research are distributed consistently among the participants (Perera & Emmerich, 2018). All participants were treated with the same regard. To ensure this, other than participants, all research methodologies, questions, and collections of data were utilized in the same manner. Accommodation was provided on a need basis farther than a preference basis to ensure justice. Per Liberty University, data will be destroyed after three years, and the IRB process ensured that ethical considerations are adequately covered before beginning the research.

Summary

Educators play a crucial role that affects the future of generations to come. A critical change is the growth of the number of diverse students within the schools. Every year, when schools evaluate data, minority students are often not performing to their highest potential (Bal et al., 2018). Culturally responsive teaching has been discussed for years and still lacks implementation within most schools. Many factors impede the implementation of culturally

responsive classrooms, and this study attempts to understand those factors directly from the teachers in the school.

The research design that was utilized is a transcendental phenological qualitative approach to adequately study the phenomenon of the teachers' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research questions all pertained to the factors affecting culturally responsive teaching and teachers' experiences with culturally responsive teaching. The participants were selected through nonrandom sampling as they were expected to meet a particular criterion to validate the data. All participants were educators within the same school, a school that has a demographic similar to most schools in the states.

The chapter also discussed philosophical assumptions of oncology, axiology, and epistemology as required by all qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The procedure section explained in detail how the study was carried out and what methodologies were applied. It also provided a rationale for those methodologies. Data collection was carried out through three different techniques to ensure triangulation. Data was collected through individual interviews, focus groups, and surveys. All questions utilized in the interviews were open-ended to allow participants to express in detail their experiences and opinions regarding the subject matter (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data analysis section explained how this data was examined to correlate and triangulate themes from the results (Aguas, 2022). The last section of the chapter discussed trustworthiness which included credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, and ethical considerations. These aspects provide the framework to ensure validation and reliability of the research in addition to participants' safety during this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine and investigate high school teachers' experiences with culturally responsive teaching and its impact on the achievement of minority students. The study adopted a qualitative research methodology, gathering data directly from the teachers themselves through in-depth interviews, surveys, and a focus group. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted dimensions of culturally responsive teaching and its potential impact on the academic success of minority students. A comprehensive account based on the teachers' perceptions and experiences related to culturally responsive teaching has been examined to explore the teachers' understanding, attitudes, and practices towards culturally responsive teaching, as well as the challenges they encounter and the strategies they employ within their high school classroom.

Participants

The study aimed to study teachers within a high school located in the Northwest region. Thirty invitations were sent to potential participants, and 13 teachers agreed to be interviewed, 14 completed the survey, and 5 participated in the focus group. The desired sample size of 12-15 participants was met, and all participants were teachers within the same high school. Additionally, the range of teaching experience varied from 1 to 30 years, with a required range of 3 years of teaching together. This allowed for capturing insights from both veteran teachers and those relatively new to the profession who had worked together for a sufficient period.

The participants included 7 females and 6 males, Furthermore, as required for this study, all participants taught core subjects with 3 math teachers, 4 English teachers, and 6 science teachers. The participants were selected based on their teaching experience, which included time

in the school, core subjects and their willingness to participate. All interviews and focus groups were video-taped and audio recorded, ensuring accuracy in capturing participants' responses and expressions while the survey was collected through an online digital format.

Table 1

Teacher Participants

Teacher Participant	Years Taught	Highest Degree Earned	Content Area	Grade Level
Abigail	21	Masters	Math	9-12th
Bob	16	Masters	Science	9-12th
Caden	7	Bachelors	English	9-12th
Carol	12	Bachelors	English	9-12th
George	4	Masters	Science	9-12th
Janet	9	Bachelors	Science	9-12th
Lin	11	Masters	Math	9-12th
Mark	40	Bachelors	Science	9-12th
Peter	12	Bachelors	Science	9-12th
Sarah	18	Masters	English	9-12th
Shannon	23	Masters	English	9-12th
Rachel	6	Bachelors	Science	9-12th
Timothy	15	Bachelors	Science	9-12th

Results

The data obtained from interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim, while survey responses were collated for analysis. The analysis process followed a thematic approach, where patterns, recurring ideas, and common themes were identified. The coding process involved multiple rounds of review to ensure rigor and reliability. The three main themes that were identified included: Understanding the concept of culturally responsive teaching,

Misconceptions of culturally responsive teaching and Significance of culturally responsive

teaching. All themes also included subthemes coded as indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Subthemes	Excerpts/Key Points
Understanding the Concept of Culturally Responsive Teaching	Awareness of the Concept of Culturally Responsive Teaching.	" Culturally responsive means using knowledge of other students, backgrounds and cultures in the teaching and using that to teachers' advantage and understanding that they come from diverse backgrounds and have diverse needs."
	Challenges in the Application of Culturally Responsive Teaching	"I understand what it means and its impact, but I can't really tell you that it is something that I know how to do."
Misconceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching	Stereotypes and Assumptions	"I think with math, you either get it or you do not, it's really not about culture influences."
		" So, trying to get rid of your own lens and personal biases to allow everybody to access the science culturally seems too much in addition to all we have to do."
Significance of Culturally Responsive Teaching	Perceptions and Beliefs	" That's a challenge that we have is just thinking that all students are going to be the same or learn the same. And they're not at all. So, we just have to kind of like not have a blind eye and look at it through another lens. I think."
		"But I'm never going to like, truly understand their experience and what they go through right? And so, for them to really connect with me that, that's just that area that I'm not going to be able to get past like it helps for kids to see people that look like them. And that went through the things that they went through. And so, I'll never be able to like truly. Get there. I can try."

Understanding the Concept of Culturally Responsive Teaching

The first theme that emerged from the data was the teachers' understanding the concept of culturally responsive teaching. Rachel answered, "Culturally responsive means using knowledge of other students, backgrounds and cultures in the teaching and using that to teachers' advantage and understanding that they come from diverse backgrounds and have diverse needs." Mark exclaimed, "The culturally responsive thing, I think, is as some attempt to recognize that cultures might have effect on different values based on diversity." Although, most of the participants demonstrated a basic comprehension of the concept and seemed to recognize the importance of acknowledging students' cultural backgrounds and integrating diverse perspectives into their instruction, they also displayed a limited understanding of the integration or the association of culturally responsive teaching into curriculum. This gave rise to two sub themes in this category: awareness of the concept of culturally responsive teaching and challenges in application of culturally responsive teaching.

Awareness of the Concept of Culturally Responsive Teaching

The evidence gathered from the surveys, interviews, and the focus group indicated that most of the teachers' perceptions and understanding of culturally responsive teaching could be lacking due to a range of factors. During the interviews, most of the teachers expressed that they were familiar with the concept, but their responses indicated that there was a gap in their depth of comprehension regarding culturally responsive teaching implementation and its impacts on the achievement of minority students. Shannon response to culturally responsive teaching definition, "And so that means using knowledge of other students, backgrounds and cultures in the teaching and using that to teachers, advantage and understanding that they come from diverse backgrounds and have diverse needs." When asked about implementation strategies, she

responded, "So I personally try and avoid a lot of language that is culturally based. So, trying to avoid using like parents and trying to use like guardians and adults, using that kind of language as well as trying to educate myself on diverse cultures and such through media, through talking with students and incorporating those into my examples and stuff."

Mark exclaimed, "The culturally responsive thing, I think, is as some attempt to recognize that cultures might have effect on different values based on diversity." His response on implementation, "I assume it's going to be in direct conflict for what I was trained as a student when I was a kid. Treat everybody the same, regardless of race, religion and all this stuff from the civil rights legislation. I teach the content and treat everybody the same." Susan understood the meaning of culturally responsive teaching but her response to implementation showed great teaching practices for a diverse class and not a culturally responsive strategy. Susan stated, "Culturally responsive teaching is the idea that we are, you know, that we understand the students' background, their culture in general, not just their race, not just their creed, but everything that makes them an individual and we're developing curriculum that caters to the whole students." When asked about how she incorporated it, Susan replied, "The first thing you must do is get to know your students. It is more like how all the confluence of your cultures come together in your class, and then you take the ideas that have sort of the personality of your class, and then you respond to them that way."

Thus, the theme of being aware of the concept of culturally responsive teaching emerged. Most responses above indicated that the teachers were aware of diverse classroom needs and strategies of great teaching but not necessarily culturally responsive teaching strategies. The participants seemed more aware of culture, diversity, and equity aspects, but also seemed to have very little experience in understanding how to integrate these elements effectively into their

teaching strategies or lessons. The teachers often associated culturally responsive teaching with acknowledging the presence of diverse students and recognizing their backgrounds. This prevalent connection might be influenced by the equity and diversity training the school had undergone in the past year on the importance of diversity and culture but not really culturally responsive teaching strategies or implementation. Based on the teachers' responses, there seems to be some disconnection on how culturally responsive teaching could be incorporated into learning or curriculum.

However, it is important to note that the teachers also acknowledged that there was likely more to culturally responsive teaching than they had experienced, which was based on their lack of training or exposure in culturally responsive teaching practices. All the teachers in the focus group agreed with Peter's statement "During my time here as a teacher, I cannot really say that we have had any kind of training focused on culturally responsive teaching or raising achievement in minority students. Most training courses are focused on at-risk, tier one and two grading, but nothing really in culture, except the diversity and equity push this year." In addition to this, the survey results highlighted a noteworthy divide among teachers. While 50% agreed on the importance of implementing culturally responsive teaching, a significant portion (41.5%) indicated a lack of such practices in their current curriculum or lessons. This suggests a need for further studies and implementation of culturally responsive teaching strategies.

During the focus group discussions, it became clear that practical challenges, such as time constraints and inadequate training, prevented teachers from effectively incorporating culturally responsive teaching into their classrooms. Shannon concluded, "It's not the lack of understanding, it is that we have other more pressing things and no time or training to even on how to begin." Overall, despite the potential inclusion of equitable practices and diverse

perspectives, the theme of awareness of the concept of culturally responsive teaching indicates that many teachers primarily linked cultural responsiveness to acknowledging student diversity in the classroom rather than implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies into curriculum and instruction.

Challenges in the Application of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Based on the data collected, a set of common challenges associated with the implementation of culturally responsive teaching and its impact on raising the achievement of minority students was evident. These challenges included a lack of sufficient training, time, support, and other teacher obligations. The most significant and common challenge that emerged was the lack of sufficient training and guidance in incorporating culturally responsive strategies into teaching. Many teachers expressed that they had not received specific professional development or training on culturally responsive teaching let alone how to effectively integrate into the curriculum or lessons. George stated, "We have not really had a training or PD specifically about this. you know. The training does not have anything like 'try this,' 'do this.' It's more so, this is an issue, and we need to solve it." Janet stated, "I understand what it means and its impact, but I can't really tell you that it is something that I know how to do." Rachel response on training, "I can't say that I've had a lot. So not a lot." Majority of the participants were honest in their lack of implementing culturally responsive teaching mainly due to the lack of training within the school and district. Some simply stated that there was no training whatsoever.

During the focus group discussion, Lin shared her observation that over the past two years, there had been an increased effort to introduce equity-related training within the school. She noted that the district promoted this focus, even establishing an equity team to address these

matters. However, Susan's perspective presented a different viewpoint. She expressed skepticism about the impact of these efforts, stating that she has never been part of the Equity Committee and felt that, despite the discussions and meetings, valid progress toward implementing culturally responsive teaching or any changes within the school was lacking. Susan exclaimed, "I've never been on the Equity Committee. I don't know but just I feel like it's lip service for us, all types of kids and not actually moving forward sometimes. Lots of meetings but nothing tangible to change the school." Interestingly, most of the other teachers in the group shared similar feelings and agreed with Susan's viewpoint. Thus, most of the teachers were unable to answer how culturally responsive strategies raised the achievement of minority students because they did not implement it within the class and could not assess its impact.

Another challenge that emerged was the capability of implementing it in core subjects, especially math. Timothy, a math teacher said "I think it's much harder when you're talking about the cube root of a polynomial or something to really make that about anyone's culture. I think some subjects make it a little harder to bring culture into the lesson, but I think the biggest barrier is just, you know, time and focus on, and all the other things we have to do." All participants were core teachers and thus this indicated the desire for culturally responsive teaching strategies to extend to all subjects, especially core subjects of math, English and science.

Other key factors that contributed to this sub-theme also included lack of time and having other additional teacher obligations. Teachers often indicated that the demands of covering curriculum content, managing classroom dynamics, and fulfilling administrative requirements left them with limited time to explore or implement culturally responsive teaching approaches. The sentiment expressed by Bob in his interview described the struggle to balance time and

resources toward culturally responsive teaching when faced with various other responsibilities. Bob responded, "I just don't. I don't think it's really addressed that much; like it's not. We have so many other things, other balls in the air to juggle, that it's more of like, what are we going to accomplish this as a whole for everyone, and we don't really break it down to like culturally responsive teaching." George stated, "Some of it is just the ignorance of not understanding what it is and not really having solid training or explanation of what it is. I think some barriers are that, you know, teachers don't like a lot of change. We deal with so much change already that it just seems like another thing to change or deal with. So, there's always going to be some kickback from that."

The survey data further reinforced these challenges, as only a small portion (16.7%) of the respondents agreed that they design lessons that are culturally responsive. This statistic highlights the gap between the perceived importance of culturally responsive teaching and its practical application in the classroom. The challenges of time, lack of training and other obligations were a common pattern.

Misconceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Misconceptions about any topic generally occur due to lack of knowledge but in this case due to lack of training and limited experience with culturally responsive teaching. Teachers have a passion to help all students based on the needs of the students, but some teachers' responses indicated that they were reluctant to implement culturally responsive teaching as it was not perceived as a student need. These ideas were based on their personal knowledge which also seemed clouded by misconceptions due to limited or lack of training. Some teachers viewed culturally responsive teaching as a new instructional method that would change how they instructed different groups of students. Mark exclaimed, "I guess the challenge I have is

understanding why that makes a difference of what color skin you have or what culture you come from. But then why does this kid get more benefits than that kid?" This perspective suggests a misconception that culturally responsive teaching involved treating students differently based on their cultural backgrounds rather than implementing a broader change in teaching approach that values and integrates diverse perspectives into the curriculum.

Culturally responsive teaching redefines teachers' perspectives from knowing what to do in a classroom to thinking and reflecting on what they observe (Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2017). Teachers that practice culturally responsive teaching include content integration of cultural aspects without changing the rigor to lower ethnic disparities as indicated by the National Center of Educational Statistics, 2018. A subtheme of stereotypes and assumptions was created due to the lack of knowledge and experience with culturally responsive teaching. The emergence of this theme further shows the need for teachers to undergo training to fully understand culturally responsive teaching and its implications towards the achievement of minority students.

Stereotypes and Assumptions

Several assumptions were evident throughout the data collection. It is important to note that the participants based these assumptions on their minimal experience and lack of training in culturally responsive teaching: A factor they seemed to be aware of as 83.4% of the survey data indicated that the teachers needed to get more training in culturally responsive training. A prevalent assumption that some teachers believed is that all students should perform the same if taught the same was evident. Abigail exclaimed, "I think with math, you either get it or do not, it's not about culture influences." Bob alluded to the lack of time as a reason, "So trying to get rid of your own lens and personal biases to allow everybody to access the science culturally seems too much in addition to what we have to do." There was a clear misconception as some

teachers assumed that culturally responsive teaching played no significant role in subjects such as math or science.

The survey data indicated that 50% of the participants agreed that culturally responsive teaching should only be implemented in electives and not core subjects of math or science but yet 75% also agreed that implementing it would improve achievement and motivation of minority students. Research has shown that incorporation of culturally responsive teaching even in core subjects not only creates an inclusive classroom for the diverse student body but encourages motivation which increases achievement (Parkhouse et al. 2019).

Other teachers who were willing to implement culturally responsive teaching seemed to believe that only minority teachers can effectively and successfully implement culturally responsive teaching. Peter stated, "So that's the first barrier that our schools overwhelmingly have white teachers. So that's a massive barrier to understanding somebody who's lived a different life than you have." Culturally responsive teaching calls for awareness and incorporation of diverse cultural aspects into curriculum, (Markowitz & Puchner, 2014; Mar, 2018) it does not require teachers to identify with students who come from diverse backgrounds. This assumption was a big concern for most teachers. Rachel, who believes in culturally responsive teaching, also stated, "But coming from a place that I have not experienced those things. And so, I feel I really do want to use culturally responsive teaching practices, but I do struggle because I am white and have not experienced these things. And I just have not learned as much as I could have." As mentioned previously, the data collected suggested the need for culturally responsive training.

The stereotype that veteran teachers are not as technology-driven and reluctant to change was also mentioned by several teachers, Caden said, "And so all of our older teachers are

going to have the first barrier of trying to interact and understand kids that have grown up with technology their whole life, and our students are different than what they used to be." Susan remarked "When it comes to introducing new types of curriculums, because they've been teaching the same curriculum and for so long, veteran teacher, they're afraid to or they just don't want to. It seems like they don't want to try something new, even if it would benefit their students." Most teachers now, more than ever due to Covid, have become more technologically advanced than before. In addition to this, it is not only the veteran teachers that are resistant to trying something new. Change seems to be difficult and uncomfortable for most individuals but the one thing that most teachers have in common is that ability to be flexible, to adjust and adapt to the ever-changing education programs and mandates that are put forth every year.

Significance of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Several researchers have already studied the significance and benefits of culturally responsive teaching (Ashbrook, 2021; Hu et al., 2018; Patrón-Vargas, 2021; Tichavakunda, 2019; Vincent et al., 2011; F. Wang, 2016; Weiler & Caton, 2021). It is not a new concept and while most of the participants in this study indicated that they lacked training in culturally responsive teaching, they understood that there were benefits in the implementation of culturally based learning. The percentage was relatively small, 16.7 % from the survey data, in terms of the teachers that expressed positive outcomes resulting from the cultural ideas they had tried to incorporate into their classrooms. Others expressed what they believed may be the significance of culturally responsive teaching based on their experiences. Janet remarked, "From my experience people are more likely to listen to you and to pay attention and to engage with you if you are doing things that that represent their individual cultures and their individual personality. Keep in mind that the school's ongoing diversity and equity training throughout the year

prepared teachers with strategies for promoting inclusive classrooms which is also a section of

beginning a culturally responsive approach, but not culturally responsive teaching.

Thus, some teachers shared positive experiences with the significance of culturally

responsive teaching. Lín exclaimed with excitement, "It's all been positive, and they all want it.

They talk to you more, they smile more, they participate more. So anytime I have, I try to learn

about people's culture." Her response seemed to indicate the positivity and motivation she

noticed from her students. Despite some of the teachers doing minimal tasks that include

relevance in culture, some teachers indicated positive outcomes from the students. Other teachers

seemed to be aware that there was significance in the implementation of culturally responsive

teaching but expressed that their background and upbringings made it difficult for them to fully

incorporate. George stated, "I will never be able to put myself in a position where, like they

relate to me like as like one of their cultures. But like any little things that include their interests I

can do that. Their reaction completely changes to how they look at you." Thus, a new subtheme

of perceptions and beliefs was added to this theme.

Perceptions and Beliefs

Teachers' perceptions and beliefs about culturally responsive teaching varied. While most

teachers expressed willingness to support minority students, they differed in their outlook on the

significance of implementation of culturally responsive teaching. George said, "That's a

challenge that we have is just thinking that all students are going to be the same or learn the

same. And they are not at all. So, we just have to kind of like not have a blind eye and look at it

through another lens. I think." His response may have been based on the old belief of education

that has long changed, that all students should learn the same if they have the same instruction, a

belief that may still be common with some teachers. Abigail exclaimed, "I think with math, you

either get it or do not, it's not about culture influences." Some assumptions made also seemed to be rooted in beliefs and perceptions.

During interviews, many teachers shared personal experiences, stating that their upbringing and background did not include diverse cultures. "So, my exposure to like ethnicities and like cultures was largely, literally like Nordic European countries. And that was it's like the biggest town I lived in was 2,500 people, and that's when I finally started seeing Hispanic American culture, you know, coming in" Abigail exclaimed. George stated "The first time there was a city where there was an African American person was when I was in ninth grade, So like, that's how isolated I was, you know, and to say that, like I had to be taught how to be culturally responsive and aware it's like an understatement 100th degree". Thus, their perceptions and ideas on diversity were limited to what they had picked up from other avenues such as media. We are all aware that media portrays diverse cultures from views that may be clouded with assumptions and stereotypes. Adewumi and Mitton (2022) identified societal curriculum as knowledge and impressions about ethnic groups portrayed in mass media such as social media and so on.

This perception further added to another prevalent belief among most of the teachers. Some teachers stated that they could not fully comprehend the experiences of minority students due to differing upbringing and varying cultural backgrounds. Culturally responsive teaching is not about identifying with different cultures as your own but including cultural aspects and differences into teaching. This perception suggested a misconception due to lack of extensive knowledge or training in culturally responsive teaching. Timothy exclaimed, "But I am never going to like, understand their experience and what they go through, right? And so, for them to really connect with me that, that's just that area that I am not going to be able to get past, like it helps for kids to see people that look like them. And so, I'll never be able to like truly get there. I

can try." Some teachers seemed to want to be more culturally responsive in their instruction, but they acknowledged that training is needed. Susan remarked, "When I went to college I went to Tucson, Arizona, and I made a very conscientious choice to go to a very large, very diverse, very mixed population. Because I was like, I don't. I? I think I'm missing something, and I need to get trained."

Outlier Data and Findings

Some findings were unexpected, particularly regarding the varying definitions of minority students within the school. The study's aim was based on the definition that minority students are students of a racial or ethnic group other than that which represents the majority group and needs support due to cultural differences which mostly includes African American students, American Indian students, Hispanic students, or Pacific Islander students, just to mention a few (Maker, 1996). Different teachers associated minority students with special education, attendance, or socio-economic status.

With this varied definition, the responses based on the questions may have impacted their perception on the significance and application of culturally responsive teaching. Peter's definition was special education students, "Well, typically my students that received special services would get like the lowest performance but have the most like support." George based minority students on attendance, "The next thing would be like, it's not really a student, demographic, but definitely attendance. Anybody who is missing 30- 40 days." Shannon termed minority students to socio-economic status, "I believe students that do not have the access to the resources or the cultural attitude of appreciating school." Thus, the survey question that inquired if minority groups were the lowest performing group within the classrooms had 78 % of the

participants disagree. This seemed to be greatly influenced the varying definitions of what the participants considered to be minority groups.

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Research Question Responses

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This section will examine and analyze answers to the central research question and sub-questions as presented in the data collected from the participants. The data summarizes the overall themes and patterns identified to adequately answer the questions researched. The summary will include data collected from the face-to-face interviews, surveys and focus groups.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of high school teachers with culturally responsive teaching strategies to improve achievement of minority students? The central research question was a two-part question aimed at examining how high school teachers utilize culturally responsive teaching strategies and how these strategies impact the achievement of minority students. From the interview to the survey and focus group, it was clear that most teachers had a general awareness of the concept of culturally responsive teaching. This awareness seemed to be based on their experiences and not training that they had received in relation to culturally responsive teaching. George stated, "We have not really had a training or PD specifically about this. you know. The training does not have anything like 'try this,' 'do this.' It's more so, this is an issue, and we need to solve it." Janet stated, "I understand what it means and its impact, but I can't really tell you that it is something that I know how to do. " Rachel response on training, "I can't say that I've had a lot. So not a lot." A percentage of 83.4 of the survey data collected indicated that the teachers needed to get more training in culturally responsive training. The majority of the teachers acknowledged that they had not received sufficient training, if any, which contributed to their understanding of culturally responsive teaching. In addition to this, the school has recently

undergone training on equity and diversity and some teachers related aspects of that training as being culturally responsive. Being culturally aware and implementing culturally responsive teaching are two separate aspects.

The data suggested a range of barriers which included inadequate training, time constraints, and a lack of support. Shannon stated, "It's not the lack of understanding, it is that we have other more pressing things and no time or training to even on how to begin." These barriers contributed to the teacher's inability to effectively implement culturally responsive strategies. Consequently, they found themselves unable to provide evidence of whether culturally responsive strategies played a role on the impact on the academic improvement of minority students. The survey data indicated that 33.3% of the participants understood the importance of culturally responsive teaching but lacked the opportunity and time to implement it. Surprisingly, the question asking whether implementing culturally responsive teaching had impact on students,58.3% disagreed with the statements while the remaining 41.7% was neutral. This further indicated that teachers are aware that although benefits may arise as an impact of culturally responsive teaching, they are still not in a position to attest to its impact due to lack of implementation within their classrooms.

Sub-Question One

What are the personal experiences of high school teachers with culturally responsive teaching relating to the achievement of minority students? Most participants indicated that they had limited experience with culturally responsive teaching from a personal perspective. These experiences were attributed to upbringing, background and perceptions on what culturally responsive teaching entails. Some teachers did acknowledge that they believed in the positive impact that culturally responsive teaching may bring. Others believed they could not be effective

culturally responsive teachers due to their inability to identify with students of a different background, a notion not required to be an affective culturally responsive teacher. Caden exclaimed, "Yeah, I absolutely believe in culturally responsive teaching to raise achievement. I think there are a lot of studies that that show it's true, not only because of the data itself, but just from a you know, a human standpoint. To watch how those cultural experiences, play out and have students apply those lessons that they learn to their own lives. In short, I guess, yes, I personally have seen how positively impactful it can be for students to see themselves represented in the classroom through culturally responsive teaching practices."

The data from the survey contradicted what was collected from the interviews and survey as 50% of the participants agreed that they had expertise in implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies yet over 80% of the participants indicated they had not received any training on it and were unable to adequately implement culturally responsive teaching. All the participants in the focus group also agreed that they had limited personal experiences with training and knowledge.

Sub-Question Two

What are the professional development experiences of high school teachers with culturally responsive teaching relating to the achievement of minority students? Similar to personal experiences, most teachers expressed that they had not received professional development training or skills in relation to culturally responsive teaching. Mark explained, "Again, not a ton. Unfortunately, I feel like we should definitely be having more than we have during professional development meetings days that we've had in the past. And that could be my fault, too, for maybe not seeking it out more. But I just haven't noticed a whole lot in terms of training." Sarah's response on training, "Just from, you know, personal experience and personal

failure in the classroom. You know, when in doubts. Try, try again. And that's been nice, because

this I think the students themselves are really the best training if no other training is

forthcoming."

This was a common factor throughout all the data collection. Lack of training,

insufficient training, lack of support and just having a basic awareness of what culturally

responsive teaching might be and not fully understanding how to implement it or how it impacts

minority students. The participants varied in their years of teaching and all the participants

indicated that they had not received training specifically on culturally responsive teaching.

Sub-Question Three

What are the culturally responsive teaching strategies that teachers are using to raise

achievement of minority students? As mentioned earlier, teachers indicated several barriers that

prevented them from implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies. George stated,

"Some of it is just the ignorance of not understanding what it is and not really having solid

training or explanation of what it is. I think some barriers are that, you know, teachers don't like

a lot of change." Carol exclaimed, "This is important to these times, or like how people treat

others, like we don't see, you know, like, racially, ethnically, culturally, all these aspects of the

kiddos. That's not kids, that's teachers. We did that. And it's I think it's in part the fact that we

don't see kids, and we don't know how to see cause like I'm guilty of that. I don't know how to

see a kid but if no one tells me how to see a kid, I don't know how and sometimes I think

teachers are scared to learn, scared to change."

Based on the data collected from this study, participants also seemed not to recognize

minority students as the lowest performing students within the school: 75% of the survey data

strongly disagreed on the question stating that minority students were the lowest performing

group within the school. Most teachers admitted to the lack of implementation of culturally responsive strategies to raise achievement as 80% of the survey responses indicated that participants had not received any training on culturally responsive teaching and were unable to adequately implement culturally responsive teaching. Rachel stated, "So trying to get rid of your own lens and personal biases to allow everybody to access the science culturally seems too much in addition to what we have to do daily."

Teachers mainly discussed the barriers preventing them from implementing culturally responsive teaching when asked this question. Caden stated, "And it's I think it's in part the fact that we don't see kids, and we don't know how to see, like I'm I'm guilty of that. I don't know. Always know how to see a kid but if no one tells me how to see a kid, I don't know how." Mark explained, "Again, not not a ton. Unfortunately, I feel like we should definitely be having more than we have during professional development meetings days that we've had in the past. And that could be my fault, too, for maybe not seeking it out more. But I just haven't noticed a whole lot in terms of training." Thus, overall based on the evidence collected from this study, teachers are currently not implementing culturally responsive strategies to raise the achievement of minority students, but they are implementing other strategies to raise the rigor of all students within the classroom.

Summary

It is important to note that teachers, regardless of their experiences, perceptions and beliefs, strive to teach all students to their full potential. The wide range of data collected was based on commonality; three main themes emerged. The first theme was understanding the concept of culturally responsive teaching, which was evident with most teachers recognizing the importance of acknowledging students' diverse cultural backgrounds and needs. However, there

was a limited understanding of how to integrate it into the curriculum, leading to two sub-themes: acknowledging the concept of culturally responsive teaching and the lack of confidence in the application of culturally responsive teaching. This was mainly attributed to lack of time and lack of training. The next theme identified addressed the misconceptions of culturally responsive teaching, due to the lack of training and extensive knowledge regarding this topic, some teachers viewed it as a new and separate method of instruction, leading to a subtheme of stereotypes and assumptions about the implementation of culturally responsive teaching. These assumptions seemed to set varying barriers for teachers to adequately implement or want to implement culturally responsive teaching. The final theme discussed the significance of culturally responsive teaching, with teachers recognizing the positive impact of culturally responsive teaching on relationships, classroom management, and student achievement. The sub-theme that evolved here was teachers' perceptions and beliefs. Majority of the teachers are willing to promote culturally responsive teaching but also believe that their background and upbringing prevents them from fully understanding the proper way to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies.

The outlier data and findings indicated that some teachers had varying definitions of minority students which also affected the perception and application of culturally responsive teaching. In response to the research questions, most teachers have a basic understanding of culturally responsive teaching, but barriers such as lack of time and training hinder its implementation, making it difficult to fully assess its impact on the achievement of minority students. Personal experiences with culturally responsive teaching are limited, but some teachers acknowledged the positive impact it plays on student achievement. However, professional development experiences related to culturally responsive teaching have been lacking. Many

teachers have not received specific training in this area. Moreover, there is a lack of culturally responsive strategies being used to raise the achievement of minority students.

Overall, the data suggests there is an extensive need for increased training in culturally responsive teaching to promote the effective implementation within the school. Once teachers have been successfully trained, potential benefits in improving minority students' achievement can be further investigated.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this study is to examine and investigate high school teachers' experiences with culturally responsive teaching and its impact on the achievement of minority students. The research gathered data using a combination of semi-structured in-person interviews, an online survey, and a focus group. This chapter will present and interpret the research findings, examine the implications for educational policy and practice and discuss the theoretical and empirical implications. A critical review of the study is also included through analyzing its limitations and delimitations and proposing potential ideas for future research based on the findings.

Discussion

The aim of this section is to analyze the study's findings through the exploration of themes derived from the research. By examining both empirical and theoretical themes, this discussion will establish the connection between the study and the evidence gathered. The section will be divided into five major subsections: Interpretation of Findings, Implications for Policy or Practice, Theoretical and Empirical Implications, Limitations and Delimitations, and Recommendations for Future Research. Each of these subsections will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the study's outcomes and their significance for further research and practical applications.

Interpretation of Findings

The collected data were categorized into three primary themes: understanding the concept of culturally responsive teaching, misconceptions of culturally responsive teaching, and significance of culturally responsive teaching. From the participants' responses, a range of data emerged, leading to the identification of subthemes discussed in Chapter Four. These subthemes

encompassed: acknowledgment of culturally responsive teaching, lack of confidence in application, stereotypes and assumptions, and perceptions and beliefs.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Thematic findings in this research are derived from common patterns and codes collectively gathered from the data. The data collected for this study included semi constructed face to face interviews, an online survey and a focus group. Based on the findings discovered during the study three main themes emerged: Understanding the concept of culturally responsive teaching, misconceptions of culturally responsive teaching and significance of culturally responsive teaching.

Throughout each form of data collection, it was evident that the teachers had some experience with the idea of what culturally responsive teaching entailed. The teachers were honest in their responses, and all the participants agreed that they had very limited knowledge about it. The school had been undergoing diversity and equity training for the past year and it seemed that most teachers were relating culturally responsive teaching to the discussions from this training. Throughout most of the responses, excluding the survey, the teachers would admit they were not sure about their response, or they would further explain or link their responses to lack of training, time and upbringing. Some of the teachers described their backgrounds and admitted to being raised in smaller towns or in areas where diversity was never emphasized. Two teachers admitted that they did not relate with individuals outside their race until college and adulthood and had a harder time connecting culture to teaching or instruction.

Although the teachers had a basic idea of what culturally responsive was, some wanted to learn more, and others were adamant that it was not as important. Either way, as they explained their upbringings, perceptions and experiences, it was clear that their backgrounds had a

significant impact on how they perceived things. Some participants seemed to view culturally responsive teaching as a separate approach that needed to be added to their teaching instead of a strategic differing point of view that could be assimilated to their teaching. Most individuals especially teachers are not comfortable instructing anything that they have limited knowledge and understanding, let alone no training in. It is a teacher's job, pride and obligation know the teaching content or at least have training in any new concept and strategy before implementation of it within the classroom. So, asking teachers about culturally responsive teaching, its implementation and its impact seemed to be a task for them as they were all lacking in training and extensive knowledge about it. At the same time, some did not believe it was that crucial as it was not been emphasized and training had not been offered and yet they had been teachers for years.

Due to lack of training, others seemed to believe that culturally responsive teaching would only impact minority students and not the majority, hence it may be disruptive rather than helpful. The most prominent pattern was that most teachers whether for or against culturally responsive teaching, seemed to believe that they could not be effective culturally responsive teachers as they could not identify with the needs and struggles of minority students. Thus, patterns emerged forming the theme of understanding the concept of culturally responsive teaching which had a subtheme of awareness of culturally responsive teaching and challenges of culturally responsive teaching. The theme of misconceptions of culturally responsive teaching had a subtheme of stereotypes and assumptions of culturally responsive teaching and lastly the theme of significance of culturally responsive teaching had a subtheme of perceptions and beliefs.

Grasping the Concept of Culturally Responsive Teaching. Most of the teachers seemed to have an idea of culturally responsive teaching but majority of these ideas were based on their own understanding and not necessarily comprehension obtained from culturally responsive teaching strategies or training. Mark exclaimed, "The culturally responsive thing, I think, is as some attempt to recognize that cultures might have effect on different values based on diversity." Some of the teachers were aware of the positive effects of incorporating cultural beliefs not necessarily culturally responsive training but several barriers, ranging from personal beliefs and time and lack of training seemed to be consistent in the implementation of culturally responsive teaching within the classroom. The participants' common lived experiences indicated lack of training, and hardly any experience with culturally responsive teaching. George stated, "Some of it is just the ignorance of not understanding what it is and not really having solid training or explanation of what it is. I think some barriers are that, you know, teachers don't like a lot of change. We deal with so much change already that it just seems like another thing to change or deal with. So, there's always going to be some kickback from that."

Teachers were aware of the need for a change as they admitted that the student body demographic had changed, and some indicated a need to explore culturally responsive teaching. Since the school district has also just recently begun to promote equity and diversity programs, teachers were aware of the concept of culturally responsive teaching. The challenges that were expressed such as time, and lack of training indicated barriers to its implementation. The evidence collected was clear that insufficient training had been explored both personally and professionally, therefore had a basic understanding of the concept of culturally responsive teaching, but the lack of knowledge towards its application was evident.

Misinterpretations of Culturally Responsive Teaching. By incorporating Bandura's self-efficacy theory, the study also aimed to assess the impact of teachers' personal beliefs on their teaching influence. The participants' experiences and beliefs revealed led to a sub-theme of varying stereotypes and assumptions. Many teachers believed that their personal upbringing and racial differences hindered their confidence in implementing culturally responsive teaching. Some considered culturally responsive teaching a separate additional entity that required them to instruct minority students using a different curriculum. These assumptions seemed to be due to a lack of extensive knowledge on how to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies and lack of training as well. In addition to this, many teachers were skeptical about how to approach it effectively in their core classrooms. Math teachers seemed to have the most challenging time with the discussion of implementing culturally responsive strategies within their classroom.

Overall, the teachers' personal beliefs, including their perceptions of their capabilities on culturally responsive teaching as indicated by Bandura self-efficacy, seemed to also be a significant barrier contributing to the lack of implementation of culturally responsive teaching within the classroom. Teachers who believe they are not in a position to instruct something, and have also not received any training or support, will often opt out of doing it if it is not a requirement.

Importance of Culturally Responsive Teaching. Data obtained from the National Center of Educational Statistics (2019) indicates that across American schools, exists higher counts of low achievement of minority students, despite all students receiving the same instruction. The benefits of culturally responsive teaching have been extensively demonstrated in the literature (Ashbrook, 2021; Hu et al., 2018; Patrón-Vargas, 2021; Tichavakunda, 2019; Vincent et al., 2011; F. Wang, 2016; Weiler & Caton, 2021). However, there is a lack of

necessary actions to integrate these strategies into educational practices. The participants in this study displayed a basic comprehension of culturally responsive teaching and acknowledged its significance. However, the challenge lay in perceiving its impact as positive, yet not large enough to require changes throughout the entire school. The participants listed time as a constraint and excess amount of other professional responsibilities were identified as key factors preventing the full implementation of culturally responsive teaching strategies. Most teachers viewed culturally responsive teaching as an additional and unnecessary burden rather than a mindset guiding the methods and strategies used for instruction.

Surprisingly, despite the proven benefits, culturally responsive teaching remains one of the most neglected variables in educational research (Abacioglu et al., 2019; Ashbrook, 2021; Barrett-Zahn, 2021; Gay, 2010; Griffith & Lacina, 2020; Grissom et al., 2017; Lomeli, 2021). This factor was also evident in this study, participants that had been teachers for years, had never undergone culturally responsive training within the district and thus they determined it not to be an important aspect. Researchers argue that it is crucial to prioritize and invest in culturally responsive teaching as a fundamental aspect of educational practices to address the achievement gaps and improve outcomes for all students (Abacioglu et al., 2019).

With the ever-changing demographic within the school, and the district beginning equity and diversity training, hopefully this is a start towards culturally responsive teaching and not just being aware of the culture within the classrooms. In conclusion, the participants did acknowledge that they understood implementation of culturally responsive teaching may have some significance, but with the lack of implementation and training they were unable to attest to the validity of this.

Implications for Policy or Practice

Although the primary focus of this study centered on teachers' experiences and perspectives, the findings highlight the need for the involvement of higher-level organizations, including state authorities, policy makers, and other stakeholders to intervene. This section will discuss implications for policy and practices that could be implemented to promote culturally responsive teaching practices.

Implications for Policy

The findings of this study indicated the significance of providing training and support to teachers in culturally responsive teaching to overcome barriers to its implementation. It is evident that addressing perceptions, beliefs, and misconceptions that were evident in the study could also be facilitated through proper training. To promote the effective implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices, school districts could implement policies mandating consistent culturally responsive training for all staff within the professional development calendar. Additionally, schools and districts could offer strategies, resources, and ongoing support related to culturally responsive teaching to empower educators and assist teachers.

A critical recommendation for the state is to establish policies that require culturally responsive teaching courses and strategies within teacher preparation programs for new teachers. In 2021, states like California and New Jersey implemented policies towards inclusivity by mandating ethnic studies for all K-12 schools (George Lucas Educational, 2022). However, other states, including Idaho, Iowa, and Oklahoma, adopted policies banning teachers from discussing race and social injustices (Educational Weekly, 2021). It is essential for education policymakers to undergo culturally responsive teaching training and that they thoroughly understand research and evidence data before implementing or banning policies. This will promote informed decisions that promote a more inclusive and equitable learning environment for all.

Implications for Practice

Research-based evidence indicates diverse classrooms offer new challenges that heighten academic motivation and achievement as they are highly influenced by the students' experiences within the school (Byrd, 2015; Lomeli, 2021). The setting of this school is similar to a majority of schools that experience diverse student bodies. Some recommendations for practice include teachers developing or ensuring that the curriculum taught is culturally diverse to include content from various ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds. This will also include the availability of culturally relevant teaching materials, textbooks, and resources that incorporate diverse cultural perspectives, histories, and contributions.

School administrators and teachers can also foster inclusive classrooms that celebrate cultural diversity and appreciation of all students. This can be done through celebrations, school posters and community involvement and speakers. Promoting school events and programs that encourage mutual understanding and appreciation among students and staff could also create a positive cultural school environment. The teachers can incorporate teaching strategies that not only allow but also encourage students to incorporate different cultural backgrounds including their own. Most of the teachers expressed how they already tailor teaching methods and materials to accommodate different learning styles and preferences, but they can also investigate and understand how they could also tailor those strategies to include cultural perspectives, backgrounds and values.

When student cultures are excluded from the learning process, this also excludes the students as individuals from connecting to the learning (Aronson, 2020). By embracing culturally responsive teaching and integrating diverse perspectives into the curriculum, schools

can foster a more engaging and meaningful learning experience for all students, supporting their academic and personal development.

The availability of ample resources and support can play a crucial role in addressing biases and assumptions about culturally responsive teaching and its implementation. When teachers have access to appropriate resources, professional development, and support, they can develop a deeper understanding of culturally responsive teaching and how to integrate diverse cultural perspectives into their instruction effectively. By addressing biases and assumptions, teachers can create more inclusive and equitable learning environments where students from diverse cultural backgrounds feel valued and engaged.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This section's purpose is to address the theoretical and empirical implications of this study. This section will also explore how research has examined theories related to culturally responsive teaching and their impact on raising academic achievement of minority students. Through the theoretical implication based on Vygotsky social cultural theory (1978), this section aims to connect culturally responsive perspective to understand this research.

Furthermore, from an empirical viewpoint, many studies on culturally relevant pedagogy have shown positive effects on the achievement of minority students, though it's worth noting that most of these studies rely on quantitative methods (Aronson, 2020). Thus, the empirical implication will be based on Bandura's self-efficacy concept, from this qualitative study in hopes of finding new insights on culturally responsive teaching and its impact on raising the achievement of minority students.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications of this study draw from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of incorporating students' culture, beliefs, and social norms into instruction (Lewis, 2019; Vygotsky, 1978). The findings from the study revealed that the lack of implementation of culturally responsive teaching could be attributed to teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and insufficient training in this area. A factor that participants seemed to be aware of as 83.4% of the survey data indicated that the teachers needed to get more training in culturally responsive training, while only 16.7% indicated that they implemented culturally responsive teaching strategies. Based on the evidence collected, there is a need for teacher education programs and professional development to address these issues and equip teachers with the knowledge and confidence to effectively integrate culturally responsive practices into their instruction.

Several studies have been conducted based on teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and lack of culturally relevant knowledge of minority students (Agirdag & Houte, 2016; Alemán & Gaytan, 2017; Glock et al., 2019). The study also provided insights into how teachers' understanding, and application of culturally responsive teaching played a role on the impact of minority students' achievement, aligning with Vygotsky's emphasis on the role of social and cultural factors in human development. Some participants exclaimed that they would implement culturally responsive teaching if they knew how to, while others expressed that there was not enough time, or training available to do it. Bob responded, "I just don't. I don't think it's really addressed that much; like it's not. We have so many other things, other balls in the air to juggle, that it's more of like, what are we going to accomplish this as a whole for everyone, and we don't really break it down to like culturally responsive teaching." George stated, "Some of it is just the ignorance of not understanding what it is and not really having solid training or explanation of

what it is. I think some barriers are that, you know, teachers don't like a lot of change. We deal with so much change already that it just seems like another thing to change or deal with. So, there's always going to be some kickback from that." Thus, as the theory suggests, the participants understand its importance but lack implementation due to the barriers stated above.

The second guiding theory, Bandura's self-efficacy concept, is also relevant to the study's empirical implications. The findings suggest that teachers' lack of confidence in implementing culturally responsive teaching is due to lack of training, and this is a significant barrier. This aligns with Bandura's et al. (1999) assertion that individuals' task performance is influenced by their confidence in their capabilities. Rachel remark, "That's going to be one of the biggest barriers to making our kids successful to making schools successful is we don't like to be embarrassed. We don't like to have our pride hurt. We don't like to be wrong." Carol exclaimed, "This is important to these times, or like how people treat others, like we don't see, you know, like, racially, ethnically, culturally, all these aspects of the kiddos. That's not kids, that's teachers. We did that. And it's I think it's in part the fact that we don't see kids, and we don't know how to see cause like I'm guilty of that. I don't know how to see a kid but if no one tells me how to see a kid, I don't know how." Self-efficacy also affects how teachers manage lessons and change their teaching to fit the students they have in their school (Veronika et al., 2018). What teachers think about their own abilities not only decides how well they teach but also influences how well students do and how good their relationships are (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Participants seemed willing but the barriers stated such as lack of training and time also seemed significant. Teachers bring their own beliefs, attitudes, and experiences into the classroom, and this shapes how they see their students (Maine et al., 2017; Lauermann & Berger, 2021).

Teachers' experiences are influenced by beliefs and perceptions of society more so if there is lack of training to counteract what is portrayed. This theory supports the importance of addressing teachers' self-efficacy beliefs through targeted interventions and professional development, as self-efficacy can significantly impact teachers' willingness and ability to adopt culturally responsive practices. Most teachers were clear in their beliefs and lacked confidence and knowledge of implementing culturally responsive teaching in the classrooms.

Empirical Implications

Aronson and Laughter's (2016) research on implementing culturally responsive education in STEM (Science, Technology, and Math) highlighted positive application in elementary schools. It also established the lack of teachers' knowledge in translating culturally responsive education into practice. The participants in this study included core teachers of math, English and science and evidence collected showed that majority of the teachers acknowledged their lack of training in the application of culturally responsive instruction in the classroom. This relates to the study because some teachers felt they couldn't effectively use culturally responsive teaching because they didn't have enough training or background knowledge, and this made them feel unprepared to do it. Thus, the survey only had 16.7% responding that they implemented it while 80% believed in its significance.

Adewumi and Mitton (2022) identified societal curriculum as knowledge and impressions about ethnic groups portrayed in mass media such as social media, magazines, movies, and so on We live in the digital age where both students and teachers alike form ideologies about minority groups based on how they are portrayed, and most of the knowledge is prejudicial and inaccurate as mass media essentially represents minority cultures as less significant (Campbell, 1995; Cortes, 1991; Johnson et al., 2020). Shannon response during the focus group on

implementation, "We have to open the conversation. I think that color blindness doesn't work pretending that all kids are the same doesn't work. The fact is the teacher is not willing to bend on something and we don't agree on what's bendable versus what's core."

The findings suggest that teachers' lack of confidence in implementing culturally responsive teaching is mainly due to lack of training in culturally responsive teaching and this was a common and significant barrier. Mark stated, But I just haven't noticed a whole lot in terms of training." How teachers see their ability to use culturally responsive teaching and what they know about different cultures are connected to most studies conducted in culturally responsive teaching. When teachers believe in themselves, it can motivate them, make them more committed, and help students learn better (Bourne et al., 2021). George stated, "We have not really had a training or PD specifically about this. you know. The training does not have anything like 'try this,' 'do this.' It's more so, this is an issue, and we need to solve it." Janet stated, "I understand what it means and its impact, but I can't really tell you that it is something that I know how to do. Participants seemed to believe that they were not efficiently prepared or experienced in culturally responsive teaching.

A meta-ethnographic literature review conducted over 40 studies of cultural education proved that equitable classrooms that arise from culturally responsive teaching show higher academic achievements, motivation, and self-efficacy (Parkhouse et al., 2019). One important thing noted from this study is that specific requirements such as teacher training and culturally centered instruction are necessary to connect cultural aspects to the curriculum. Teachers bring their own beliefs, attitudes, and experiences into the classroom, and this shapes how they see their students (Maine et al., 2017; Lauermann & Berger, 2021). Teachers' experiences are influenced by beliefs and perceptions of society more so if there is lack of training to counteract

what is portrayed. Most teachers were clear in their beliefs and lacked confidence and knowledge of implementing culturally responsive teaching in the classrooms.

One new unexpected factor identified in this study was the various definitions of minority students from the participants. The teachers defined minority students as students with chronic absences, students receiving special services, students with lower socioeconomic status, and gender identity. This reflected the evolving and diverse nature of student populations that are prevalent in today's society. Minority students are generally defined as students belonging to a racial or ethnic group other than that which represents the majority group and needing support due to cultural differences (Maker, 1996). The new variation in definition gave rise to the need for a more comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of what defines a minority student.

Additionally, data collected from the study suggested that contemporary teachers must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to navigate through these evolving cultural shifts, including the impact of technological devices and the emergence of new cultural groups based on students' experiences and environments.

Limitations and Delimitations

A critical examination of research studies can be analyzed based on the understanding of the limitations and delimitations. Data collected in this research was based on understanding the experiences of participants through their beliefs and perceptions of culturally responsive teaching and its impact on raising achievement of minority students. Thus, it's important to recognize that certain constraints were present. Furthermore, this section will examine the delimitations placed to yield more focused and concise study. Culturally responsive teaching and its impact on the achievement of minority students is a broad subject, thus certain limits were placed on participants sample, setting, subject taught to guide the study.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was my familiarity with some of the participants. While we did not work in the same school, we were part of the same school district, which introduced the possibility of personal biases influencing data collection and interpretation. To mitigate this limitation, I made a conscious effort to remain neutral and impartial during face-to-face interviews. I refrained from expressing any agreement or disagreement with the participants' responses and provided them with copies of their answers to ensure accuracy.

A second limitation pertained to the sample size of the participants. Although data saturation is a difficult concept to define, many researchers agree that saturation is not about the numbers but about the depth of the data (Galvin, 2015). Saturation can be determined as the point where no new information necessarily adds insight to the overall study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Despite this, many researchers agree that saturation for interview-based studies is commonly achieved in sample sizes of ten (McNulty et al., 2015; Saunders et al., 2018; Vagle, 2018). Although the selected sample size was considered adequate for data collection, a larger sample size, proportional to the school's overall size, could have provided a more comprehensive and detailed picture of the findings related to the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices within the school and its impact on raising the achievement of minority students.

Delimitations

In conducting this study, a transcendental phenomenological approach was utilized due to its appropriateness in exploring the experiences of a specific group of participants, in this case, teachers. Transcendental phenomenology allowed the focus to be based on the common lived experiences of the participants without imposing the researchers' own perspectives or biases into

the study. As the researcher, my role was to remain neutral and unbiased, to allow the

participants' perspectives to form the foundation of phenomenological exploration (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). Culturally responsive teaching is a broad subject that can be studied under a variety

of a wide spectrum such as its relation to discipline, behavior, attendance and so on, thus the

focus of this study was aimed at understanding how it specifically impacts minority students'

achievement within the core subjects that all students must take.

Furthermore, the selection of participants was limited to teachers who taught core

subjects such as math, English, and science. This decision was based on the rationale that core

subjects typically have a lower percentage of cultural influences embedded within the curriculum

compared to elective courses. However, these core subjects are mandatory for all students in the

school. By focusing on core subjects, the study aimed to increase the likelihood of the teachers

interacting with a majority of similar students, facilitating a deeper understanding of their

experiences and perceptions related to culturally responsive teaching practices.

All interviews were conducted within the school in a private confidential area face to face

for about 30 minutes, after school. The room setting and time enables the researcher to set the

appropriate tone, direction and confidentiality needed for the interview (Craver, 2014). Thus, the

setting was at the school in which the participants were teachers and in a private but familiar area

for the participant. The setting of this school is also similar to a majority of schools that

experience diverse student bodies. The school was chosen as the student body makeup that

would assist future research on school settings with similar demographic makeup.

In addition to this, subjective questions that may be uncomfortable to ask during

interviews can be studied through surveys (Creswell & Poth, 2018), thus questions that seemed

to be more personal were mainly added to the survey method.

Recommendations for Future Research

Considering the findings, limitations, and delimitations of this study, several recommendations and future research directions can be explored. It is important to note that a significant find from this study indicated that majority of the core subject teachers admitted to not receiving any culturally responsive teaching training, thus assessing its impact on the achievement of minority students was minimal. Only a small percentage of the teaching bidy at the school was studied. The following recommendations would provide more accurate data on this topic. Researchers can conduct comparative studies across different schools, districts, or regions to expand the scope of inquiry and gather more evidence. As an example, researchers can conduct a comparative study across several school districts in a diverse metropolitan area. They might explore how culturally responsive teaching practices vary between schools with different demographics. By collecting data from both high-achieving and struggling schools, researchers could identify patterns that suggest certain teaching methods or strategies are more effective for specific groups of minority students. For instance, they might find that schools with a higher percentage of English language learners benefit more from a particular approach. Through such comparisons, themes and patterns can be analyzed and further investigated on a broader scale to identify similar issues among schools or districts.

Moreover, a comparative analysis between states and districts that implement culturally responsive teaching and those that do not could provide evidence on its effectiveness or lack thereof in raising the achievement of minority students. To understand the impact of culturally responsive teaching policies at a broader level, researchers might compare states or districts that have actively adopted these strategies with those that have not. For instance, a study could investigate how standardized test scores of minority students differ in states with culturally

responsive teaching initiatives compared to those without. Such research could influence educational policymakers in deciding whether to implement similar strategies on a larger scale.

Researchers can also study and explore the perspectives of minority students towards culturally responsive teaching and its implementation. The researchers could engage in interviews or surveys with minority students themselves to understand their experiences with culturally responsive teaching. By collecting firsthand accounts, researchers can gain ideas into the effectiveness of specific teaching practices from the students' point of view. For instance, students might express that they feel more motivated and engaged in classrooms where their cultural backgrounds are acknowledged and integrated into the curriculum. This would also promote the development and evaluation of culturally responsive practices and strategies used in the classroom based on the students' specified needs.

Additionally, investigating culturally responsive leadership in education and the effectiveness of those leaders in providing support could be valuable, based on the evidence collected (Khalifa et al., 2016). This could be a study focusing on school principals and their leadership styles based on culturally responsive teaching support or implementation. Researchers might examine how principals who prioritize culturally responsive teaching impact the overall school environment and student outcomes. For instance, they could assess whether schools with culturally responsive leaders have lower dropout rates or higher graduation rates among minority students compared to those without such leadership.

Lastly, a mixed methodology approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data, would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics related to culturally responsive teaching and its impact on the achievement of minority students. In a mixed-methods study, researchers might use surveys to collect quantitative data on student achievement and

culturally responsive classroom practices. Simultaneously, they could conduct in-depth interviews with teachers and students to gather qualitative insights into the cultural dynamics at hand. This approach could help researchers understand not only whether culturally responsive teaching works but also why and how it affects minority student achievement on more tha just an experienced based level study.

It is important to note that this study brought about the identification of new factors that teachers utilize in what they consider students to be a minority. To ensure consistency across studies, researchers could provide specific definitions of "minority students." For instance, they might define this group as students from underrepresented racial or ethnic backgrounds, students with disabilities, or those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This clarity can help future researchers compare findings across different studies and contexts to ensure uniformity and more specific study. Incorporating these recommendations and research ideas can contribute to a better understanding of culturally responsive teaching and its impact on minority student achievement, potentially leading to more effective educational practices and policies.

Conclusion

The aim of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore and analyze high school teachers' experiences with culturally responsive teaching and its impact on the academic achievement of minority students. The study was guided by Vygotsky's (date) sociocultural theory, emphasizing the importance of incorporating students' culture, beliefs, and social norms in instruction. Bandura's (date) self-efficacy theory was also incorporated to assess how teachers' personal beliefs influence their teaching practices. Data collection methods included surveys, face-to-face interviews, and a focus group. The findings of the study suggested several implications. From a policy perspective, it is recommended to include culturally responsive

teaching training as a requirement in teacher programs. As for practical implications, providing professional development trainings, resources, and strategies to teachers would be beneficial, as they already recognize the significance of culturally responsive teaching but may lack the knowledge and comprehensive understanding to implement it effectively. By adopting culturally responsive teaching practices, schools can foster stronger relationships and create more inclusive classrooms, leading to improved outcomes not only for minority students but for all students and society in general.

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Appendix A: Budget and Proposed Timeline

Appendices

November 2022—Finish coursework (approximately $7,450)

December 2022—Get a committee together and register for dissertation course ($2900)

January 2023—Defend proposal ($3,200)

February 2023—Submit research plan to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for

approval ($3,000)

Fall 2022 – Dissertation research and writing ($4000)

April 2023 – Dissertation defense ($3,500)

Appendix B: Research Questions

Phenomenological Research Questions:

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of high school teachers when using culturally responsive teaching strategies to improve achievement of minority students?

Sub-Question One

What are the personal experiences of high school teachers when implementing culturally responsive teaching for minority students?

Sub-Question Two

What are the professional development experiences of high school teachers with culturally responsive teaching relating to the achievement of minority students?

Sub-Question Three

What are the culturally responsive teaching strategies that teachers are using to raise achievement of minority students?

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Briefly introduce yourself and tell us how long you have been teaching.

2. Explain some of the changes you have been required to implement in terms of curriculum in your class? Include any changes that had a cultural implementation?

3. In what ways does the school employ any activities or teacher/student programs to promote diversity within the school?

4. Briefly describe the general student makeup in terms of diversity in your classes and in the school.

5. Based on your experience, explain which student group generally seems to have a harder time succeeding in your class at a high level? What factors may contribute to this?

6. What do you know/understand about culturally responsive teaching and its effects on students?

7. What do you believe are some of the benefits of including cultural aspects in the classroom?

8. In what ways have you been able to employ cultural aspects in your classroom?

9. Explain any barriers that may prevent teachers including yourself from implementing cultural aspects in classroom lessons or instructions?

10. Describe any training that you have ever been offered in culturally responsive teaching, or any kind of training that includes culture in education?

11. What do you believe are some of the factors hindering the school from implementing a culturally responsive curriculum?

12. In what ways can the school or school district help teachers include a culturally responsive classroom?

Personal self-efficacy questions about their own bias or views will be answered on a questionnaire/survey (These questions will include their perceptions about students of color, their beliefs of how well equipped they think they are to teach students of color, difficulties they may have experienced with conversations about race or culture, their knowledge of implications of their culture on others.)

Appendix D: Consent form

Title of the Project: The Lack of Implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching to Raise Achievement of Minority Students.

Principal Investigator: Rosalind Bailey, Doctoral student, Liberty University.

You are invited to be a participant in a research study that will attempt to explore the factors behind the lack of implementation of culturally responsive teaching to raise achievement scores of minority students within a classroom. You have been awarded this opportunity due to your experience of five years or more in a high school institution and your role as a current educator. Your participation in this research is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before committing to the research.

Purpose of the study: The reason for this study is to understand the factors that may directly or indirectly contribute to the lack of implementation of culturally responsive teaching within the classroom. The achievement scores of minority students seem to be consistently lower than their counterparts despite proven research of the benefits of culturally responsive teaching. This research attempts to understand those factors in relation to this study.

Methodology: If you agree to be in this study, you will be tasked with the following:

1. Each participant will undergo one 30-minute interview pertaining to their knowledge and experience on culturally responsive teaching. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. The interview may be shorter depending on the responses.

2. Participants will also be required to fill out a survey confidentially pertaining to their perspectives on culturally responsive teaching.

3. Participants will be invited to one focus group conducted to collect more data.

Other methods of data collection

- The schools' public records on student achievement scores by groups will be used under a false name for data collection.

- The entire process should take at least three months to complete. There will be video recordings of the interview and focus group in addition to audio.

Risks: There are no major risks associated with being part of this study. The minimal risks are equal to any risks that you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from participating in this study. They can rest assured that their involvement will improve the quality of education for all.

Compensation : Participants will not be compensated for participating in the study.

Confidentiality:

- All records associated with this study will be stored securely and privately. Public reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. If at any time the records of this research need to be shared for future studies, any information that could identify any person will be removed.

- Participants will all be anonymous, and any responses will be kept confident using pseudonyms. All interviews will be conducted in a safe and private area away from others.

- Data including recordings will be stored under a password computer and may be used for future presentations for educational purposes. Only the researcher will have access. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is **voluntary,** and your involvement will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. Participants are free to leave the study at any time.

Withdrawal: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact Rosalind Bailey at ███████████. Any responses or data collected from you will be immediately destroyed and not included in the research study.

Contacts: For any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, please contact the researcher, Rosalind Bailey at ███████████. You may ask any questions you have now or reach out later.

If you have any other questions or information regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may 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 ethically 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 agree to be part of this research. It is important that you understand what studying is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study after signing, you can contact the researcher using the contact 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 record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____   _____

Participant Printed name   Signature & Date

Appendix: Survey Questions

Culturally Responsive Preparedness Scales Questions: (5-point scale: strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Undecided, Agree, strongly agree).

1. Culturally responsive teaching is an important aspect that should be implemented in

education. SQ3

2. The curriculum I currently use has culturally responsive lessons embedded within it.SQ1

3. The curriculum is relatable to all students and does not require a culturally responsive approach, the students need to work harder to raise their scores. SQ3

4. I design assessments that include culturally responsive strategies so that diverse students can relate.SQ1

5. Making the curriculum culturally responsive may deter the other students from being engaged and affect performance.SQ3

6. The lowest performing group within my class tends to be minority students.SQ3

7. Minority students are the main group that need motivation within the school.SQ3

8. Implementing culturally responsive teaching will improve achievement scores and motivation of minority students, SQ2

9. I can relate to the needs and experiences of minority students.SQ2

10. I often struggle to relate and build supportive relationships with minority students.SQ1

11. I have excellent classroom management and high achievement scores in all student demographics.SQ1

12. I struggle with classroom management mainly from minority students.SQ1

13. Students acting up in my class misbehave due to lack of interest or motivation in what I am teaching.SQ2

14. I have knowledge and expertise of making lessons more relatable using culturally responsive strategies.SQ2

15. My classroom environment creates a safe supportive cultural environment for diverse students to feel welcomed.SQ3

16. I have tried to implement culturally responsive lessons and it did not have any effect.SQ3

17. I have limited understanding in culturally responsive teaching and implementation significance.SQ2

18. I am aware of the benefits of culturally responsive teaching but lack the opportunity and time to implement it.SQ2

19. Culturally responsive teaching should be added to electives and not core subjects of Math and Science.SQ2

20. Teachers need to get training or professional development in culturally responsive teaching.SQ2