

WHAT WE BELIEVE, WE PRACTICE: THE IMPACT OF BELIEFS ON
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

by

ALLYSON JEAN WALROTH

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION:
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

2026

Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

Doctoral Advisory Committee:

Julia Smith, Ed.D., Chair
Robert Martin, Ph.D.
Cynthia Carver, Ph.D.

© Copyright by Allyson Jean Walroth, 2026
All rights reserved

To my mother and father, for raising me to truly believe there are no limits to what I can achieve.

To my husband, for supporting me, encouraging me, and loving me unconditionally.

To my boys, for inspiring me to show up every day and in every way. I just want to make you proud.

To the voters of the 2024 election, for reminding me that this work is never done.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for my dissertation committee, Dr. Robert Martin and Dr. Cynthia Carver. I am grateful that you both agreed to travel this journey with me. Your unique perspectives opened my eyes to new ideas and considerations.

To my dissertation chair, Dr. Julia Smith, I would not be here without you. You listened to me, encouraged me, and refused to let me quit. You never failed to remind me how capable I am, and I cannot find the words that adequately express how thankful I am to have you in my corner.

Allyson Jean Walroth

ABSTRACT

WHAT WE BELIEVE, WE PRACTICE: THE IMPACT OF BELIEFS ON CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

by

ALLYSON JEAN WALROTH

Adviser: Julia Smith, Ed.D.

This dissertation explores the extent to which teachers' personal beliefs impact their likelihood of using culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom. With a focus on critical race theory, cognitive dissonance, and teacher agency, this study investigates the degree to which teachers' multicultural attitudes impact their use of equity-focused instructional methods. A three-part survey was used to gather both demographic data as well as self-reported information related to participants' attitudes and beliefs and their classroom practices. The findings highlight the various beliefs that act as predictors for the use of culturally responsive practices, as well as those that act as barriers for implementation. This research contributes to the discourse on equity by considering the psychological and structural barriers to inclusive teaching and providing a strategic roadmap for districts to bridge the gap between theoretical multiculturalism and a sustainable classroom transformation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION	1
Background	2
Significant Terms	8
Theoretical Framework	10
Critical Race Theory	10
Cognitive Dissonance Theory	23
Agency Theory	27
Theoretical Connections	32
Research Questions	33
Significance of Study	34
CHAPTER TWO	
LITERATURE REVIEW	36
Search Terms and Databases	38
Culturally Responsive Teaching	10

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Classroom Experiences	40
Roadblocks to Implementation	52
Conclusion	65
CHAPTER THREE METHODS	67
Overview	67
Research Questions	67
Research Design	68
Participants	68
Instrumentation	71
Data Collection	73
Data Analysis	74
CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS	75
Overview	75
Average Teacher Responses to Survey Items	75
Testing the Relationships Between Constructs	95
Demographic Comparison Among Constructs	101
Conclusion	111
CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS	113
Introduction	113

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Summary and Implications of Findings	114
Limitations	124
Directions for Future Research	127
Conclusions	131
APPENDICES	
A. IRB Approval Letter	135
B. Survey Part One: Demographic Questions	137
C. Survey Part Two: Teachers' Multicultural Attitudes Survey	140
D. Survey Part Three: Culturally Responsive Teaching Preparedness Scale	142
REFERENCES	144

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	Background Characteristics of Survey Participants	69-70
Table 4.1	Questions from Survey 1 Grouped into Five Constructs	76
Table 4.2	Questions from Survey 2 Grouped into Five Constructs	87
Table 4.3	Linear Regression Results Examining the Impact of Survey 1 Constructs on Culturally Responsive Assessment and Communication	96
Table 4.4	Linear Regression Results Examining the Impact of Survey 1 Constructs on Culturally Responsive Instructional Design and Delivery	97
Table 4.5	Linear Regression Results Examining the Impact of Survey 1 Constructs on Culturally Responsive Engagement and Collaboration	98
Table 4.6	Linear Regression Results Examining the Impact of Survey 1 Constructs on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness	99
Table 4.7	Linear Regression Results Examining the Impact of Survey 1 Constructs on Culturally Responsive Classroom Climate and Relationships	100
Table 4.8	Independent Samples T-Test Comparing the Responses to Survey 1 Constructs between White and Non-White Participants	102
Table 4.9	Independent Samples T-Test Comparing the Responses to Survey 2 Constructs between White and Non-White Participants	103
Table 4.10	Summary of T-Test Results for Comparing Grade Level Differences in Survey 1 Constructs	106
Table 4.11	Summary of T-Test Results for Comparing Grade Level Differences in Survey 1 Constructs	108

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1	Average Response to items in Construct 1: Teachers' Multicultural Awareness and Efficacy Beliefs	77
Figure 4.2	Average Response to Items in Construct 2: Teachers' Resistance and Negative Attitudes Toward Multiculturalism	79
Figure 4.3	Average Response to Items in Construct 3: Perceived Irrelevance of Multiculturalism and Responsibility	81
Figure 4.4	Average Response to Items in Construct 4: Teacher Awareness and Encouragement of Family Engagement	82
Figure 4.5	Average Response to Items in Construct 5: Perceived Challenges and Need for Role Redefinition	84
Figure 4.6	Average Response to Items in Construct 1: Culturally Responsive Assessment and Communication	88
Figure 4.7	Average Response to Items in Construct 2: Culturally Responsive Instructional Design and Delivery	90
Figure 4.8	Average Response to Items in Construct 3: Culturally Responsive Engagement and Collaboration	91
Figure 4.9	Average Response to Items in Construct 4: Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness	93
Figure 4.10	Average Response to Items in Construct 5: Culturally Responsive Classroom Climate and Relationships	94
Figure 4.11	Average Response to Survey 1 Constructs for Each Grade Level	105
Figure 4.12	Average Response to Survey 2 Constructs for Each Grade Level	107
Figure 4.13	Average Response for Teacher Resistance and Negative Attitude by Number of Years Taught	109
Figure 4.14	Average Response for Culturally Responsive Engagement and Collaboration	110
Figure 4.15	Average Response for Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness	111

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, schools have been placing a greater emphasis on culturally responsive pedagogy. As societies become more diverse, it is important for all students to feel valued and respected, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or socio-economic background. Additionally, culturally responsive pedagogy seeks to address systemic injustices and inequities that exist within our society by teaching children how to foster empathy and become agents of change. It encourages students to be critical thinkers who commit to being active participants in a global society by identifying their own biases and challenging them in others.

While there has been a push for teachers to implement equitable practices in their classroom, the actual implementation of these practices is varied. According to a 2021 survey from American Instructional Resources, the majority of teachers across the United States reported that they used culturally responsive teaching practices to some degree; however, there were still 23% of teachers who said that this type of education was not present in any part of their teaching practices or curriculum (Woo et al., 2022). This disconnect can be attributed to a lack of significant training, strong building or district leadership, or appropriate teaching materials. In addition, anti-bias education has been met with pushback at the state and national level. In fact, President Donald J. Trump took significant actions to block and dismantle Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs across the federal government and in the private sector through a series of Executive Orders and directives almost immediately upon entering his second term in the White House (U.S. Department of Education, 2025). These actions, along with a myriad

of other legislative items, are hot-button issues in this heavily contentious political climate. As a result, the implementation of culturally responsive teaching has been limited or, in some cases, completely lacking.

Along with various external factors, teachers' personal beliefs may also block culturally responsive classroom practices before they ever make it through the door. According to Nelson & Guerra (2014), educators who expressed little to no cultural awareness were more likely to operate from a deficit point of view, blaming situational culture clashes on lack of knowledge or misconduct of students and families as opposed to biases within the education system itself. When educators operate from this point of view, they are less likely to act as change agents for a broken system. Moreover, the individual beliefs of teachers play a significant role in how they see the world around them, shaping their classroom behavior even more than learned professional knowledge (Gay, 2013; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). It is important to consider how these beliefs may impact the practices the teachers are utilizing in the classroom. If teacher beliefs are as much of a significance as external factors like professional development or curriculum resources, then this knowledge can inform a myriad of structures, such as hiring practices and teacher education programs.

Background

In 2020-21, 80% of public-school teachers identified as non-Hispanic White, while only 9% identified as Hispanic and only 6% identified as Black, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2023). By comparison, about half (46%) of all public-school students identified as non-Hispanic White, while 28% were Hispanic and 15% were Black. The share of the teaching force who identify as White has declined

about 7% since the 1987-88 school year, but it has not kept pace with the increasing diversity of the student population over the same time span. Not only do White teachers outnumber those of other races, but they also work in vastly different environments. Most Hispanic and Black teachers are employed at schools with greater percentages of racial or ethnic minority students, while the majority of White teachers are employed in schools with larger populations of White students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). This imbalance means that in schools where the majority of students are White, Hispanic or Black students are unlikely to see teachers of their same race or identity.

Considering these statistics, it is not hard to imagine that the cultural values and experiences of teachers may differ from those of their students. Sleeter (2008) conducted a review of teacher education programs and found that the majority of White preservice teachers had little understanding of systemic oppression and racism that permeates through the US school system creating inequalities for marginalized students. More than a decade later, Sleeter's (2008) conclusions continue to reflect current realities in education, as the demographic gap between a predominantly White teaching force and an increasingly diverse student population persists, and research continues to show that many educators feel underprepared to address issues of culture, identity, and systemic inequity in their classrooms. When Black students are being taught by Black teachers, the teachers are more likely to have insight into the critical situations, both inside and outside school, which impact student behavior and student learning. They understand the root causes that impact students' experiences with education because they have also lived them (Milner, 2016). The idea of ethnic matching, where the race and ethnicity of students and teachers are the same or similar, has an influence on student success. Milner

(2016) states, “Black teachers are able to develop curricula and instructional opportunities for Black students that illuminate content in ways that teachers outside may not be able” (p. 419). When students are educated by teachers who may not understand their experiences, it can be difficult for them to make connections to the content they are learning in class. This disconnect is not to say that White teachers are unable or ineffective at teaching non-White students, but they must intentionally build the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to support culturally diverse students (Milner, 2016).

Culturally responsive teaching operates on the claim that powerful, privileged groups control the rules and regulations for how students learn and behave. These majority groups, generally people of European ancestry and middle-class lifestyles, have power and create institutions, such as schools, that reflect their beliefs as normative and universal. The tenets of culturally responsive teaching argue, instead, that:

No ethnic group should have exclusive power, or total cultural and political dominion over others, even if it is an ethnic majority. Rather, ethnic, racial, cultural, social, and linguistic pluralism is considered as a natural attribute of humankind, as a fundamental feature of the democratic ethos . . . , and as a necessary component of quality education. (Gay, 2015)

Even though students from underrepresented groups consistently perform below their White, middle-class peers on all measures of academic achievement, including standardized test scores (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022), scholars are “increasingly pointing out that ethnic minority individuals, groups, and communities have personal strengths, social capital and cultural funds of knowledge worthy of inclusion in regular school programs and practices” (Gay, 2015). While some blame the achievement

gap of culturally and linguistically diverse students on cultural deficits, institutional factors, inequitable access, or a discontinuity between home and school, it can be debated that the real issue is a lack of preparation to equip teachers with prerequisite knowledge to engage all learners in an equitable environment (Clark & Zygmunt, 2014).

Additionally, teacher bias can produce negative learning outcomes for students (Gay, 2013), and stereotypes can translate to lower expectations and confirmation biases that jeopardize the success of all students (Clark & Zygmunt, 2014). Addressing systemic inequities and confronting teacher biases are essential steps toward creating inclusive, culturally responsive classrooms that affirm all identities.

Culturally responsive teaching is an approach that uses students' cultural knowledge as a way to facilitate the learning process. It is grounded in the theory of social constructivism, which posits that students learn best through lessons that are experiential and socially interactive, developing students as critical thinkers (Banks & Banks, 2019). It is not something that is easily achievable by taking a graduate course or reading a book on diversity. It is a deeply reflexive process that requires continuous reexamination of one's own beliefs and knowledge of systems of power and privilege (Kahn et al., 2014). Culturally responsive teaching has been associated with positive outcomes for diverse students, including an increase in standardized test scores and attitudes toward learning (Brown et al., 2018). Additionally, culturally responsive teaching can be tied to "increased attention spans; . . . more reading engagement and comprehension; more detailed and coherent writing; greater mastery of higher order thinking and analytical skills; . . . and higher academic self-concepts" (Gay, 2015, p. 136). In 2019, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

released a statement on advancing equity, expressing that “all early childhood educators have a professional obligation to advance equity . . . and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable learning opportunities” (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2020, p. 1). When these culturally responsive practices are not put into place, it can have a damaging effect on the students who are unable to see themselves reflected in their education (Kintner-Duffy et al., 2022).

While teacher education programs have begun to adopt the tenets of culturally responsive education, it isn’t necessarily translating into classroom practices (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). The standardized curriculum and pedagogy of the typical public school have certainly usurped these teaching practices in the classroom. There are also reasons more specifically connected to the teachers themselves that prohibit these practices from moving from theory to action. Many prospective teachers leave their higher education programs with relatively little experience with diverse students and without much practice examining their own beliefs about the abilities of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Brown et al., 2018; Milner, 2016). Additionally, recent research from Schramm (2026) showed that in many classrooms where teachers attempted to incorporate culturally responsive practices, it was often diluted, with teachers avoiding explicit discussions of race, racism, and oppression, instead using more vague language, such as “all students”. In many classrooms, culturally responsive teaching has been “washed out” into discrete, low impact practices - such as celebrating holidays or incorporating diverse images - creating a gap between its original intent as a transformative framework and its day-to-day implementation.

Regardless of location, demographics, or social status, there is a lack of implementation of culturally relevant practices across all types of schools (Cooper, 2003). Some scholars indicate that this dissonance between beliefs and implementation is due to a myriad of external factors. Students attending schools in poor and urban communities, who have the most to gain from educators who are social justice minded, are more likely to have fewer resources and less qualified teachers (Cooper, 2003). Cooper (2003) explains, “The growth of culturally diverse student populations in public schools over the past decade has coincided with decreased student achievement rates and a disturbing decline in the amount of qualified and certified teachers who wish to teach in urban schools” (p. 102). Students who already lack resources are also being subjected to inadequate teaching practices. Additionally, the teachers who do recognize the need for culturally responsive teaching report that they are unsatisfied with the level of preparation they receive to teach diverse learners, both from their pre-service university courses and through the in-service they receive from their districts (Gay, 2013; Lambeth & Smith, 2016).

Additional research attributes the lack of implementation of these practices to internal factors specific to individual teachers. According to the research of Rychly and Graves (2012), there are four teacher characteristics that lend to a higher likelihood of utilizing culturally responsive teaching: “(1) that teachers are empathetic and caring, (2) that they are reflective about their beliefs about people from other cultures, (3) that they are reflective about their own cultural frames of reference, and (4) that they are knowledgeable about other cultures” (p. 45). Similarly, Cooper (2003) suggests that teachers need to intentionally build political clarity in order to be change agents in a

system built on social inequity. Teachers who are unwilling to learn about cultures and experiences different from their own, reflect on their personal beliefs, and challenge the status quo are more likely to allow their biased judgements, their peer socialization, and their lack of race-based experiences to influence their own teaching practices in a negative way (Cooper, 2003). This research suggests that teacher beliefs can have a significant impact on the choices they make in their classrooms.

Significant Terms

In order to better understand the context and importance of this discussion, I will begin with a few relevant terms and definitions.

Equity specifically refers to the distribution of resources among individuals or groups, taking into account their unique differences and needs. Unlike equality, where people receive the same resources regardless of their circumstances, organizations applying equitable practices recognize that individuals or groups may require different levels of support to achieve fairness. This often requires addressing historical and ongoing injustices, promoting inclusivity, and dismantling systemic biases and barriers.

Personal beliefs are the deeply held convictions, values, and principles that an individual holds to be true or important. They shape the individual's attitudes and behaviors. They are rooted in and shaped by experiences, religious views, education, and anything else of personal significance. Personal beliefs are unique to each individual and affect how they interpret the world around them.

Bias is the tendency for beliefs, whether implicit or explicit, to influence our judgements, decisions, and actions in any given situation. It can involve favoring or disfavoring a particular group or concept based on preconceived notions or systems. In

educational settings, bias manifests itself in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and interactions between school personnel and students, hindering the academic success and well-being of historically marginalized students. It can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and a variety of other factors.

Institutional racism reflects the dominant norms, routines, and practices that have adverse effects on individuals and groups from racial minorities, whether deliberate or unintentional. Institutional racism is multifaceted and deeply ingrained within educational institutions, stemming from a system that perpetuates racial biases and discrimination. These practices result in disparities in access to opportunities, resources, and fair treatment.

Culturally responsive teaching is the curricular approach in which students are taught explicitly about issues of identity, diversity, equity, and bias. This may also be referred to throughout the research on this topic as *anti-bias education*, *diversity education*, and *equity education*. Because culture and diversity can refer to such a wide range of characteristics and qualities of a person or group, it is important for authors to clarify how they view these terms. For the purpose of this dissertation, I understand culturally responsive teaching as teaching to and through race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexual orientation.

Internal factors are those that come from within a person, including their thoughts and feelings. Internal factors can also be biological or genetic, such as race, sexual orientation, or physical ability.

External factors are those outside of the person and are generally created by the environment. In the field of education, these could include access to resources or support from administration.

Theoretical Framework

What follows is an analysis of the theory that centers culturally responsive education in the historical and contemporary context. Additionally, I examine the theories that influence teacher beliefs and how they may impact their decision to use culturally relevant teaching practices in their classroom.

Critical Race Theory

Developed by Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Cheryl Harris, Patricia Williams, and other scholars, critical race theory (CRT) has its origins in the Critical Legal Studies movement of the 1970s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023; Kaerwer & Pritchett, 2023; Lopez et al., 2021). Building on the concepts of critical legal studies, radical feminism, conventional civil rights, and ethnic studies, CRT attempts to explain the relationship among race, racism, and power, generally making the claim that American society and its institutions have been constructed to benefit White individuals at the expense of Black citizens. Offered as a response to the civil rights gains and the changing political discourse of the 1960s, CRT examines how racism produces and sustains inequality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023; Lopez et al., 2021; Tate, 1997). In 2021, the American Bar Association published an article stating that CRT extends beyond implicit bias and overt hostility to recognize that “racism is codified in law, embedded structures, and woven into public policy...that it is the systemic nature of racism that bears primary responsibility for reproducing racial inequality” (as cited in

Kaerwer & Pritchett, 2023, p. 301). In 1995, Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate introduced CRT as a tool for examining the inequities in the educational system, such as school discipline, affirmative action, high stakes testing, and historical inaccuracies in curriculum (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

The basic tenets of critical race theory can be sorted into five general features: (a) racism is a common, everyday occurrence for people of color; (b) the system of racial hierarchy serves an important purpose for the dominant group, (c) race is a concept that was created by society and is not biological, (d) racialization of minority groups changes and shifts over time to the advantage of the dominant group, and (e) the voices of those in the minority group bring a unique and important competence when speaking about race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). Critical Race Theorists are generally divided into two groups: “idealists” and “realists.” Those who fall into the camp of idealists believe that racism is dependent on attitude and mentality. By changing the way that people view, speak about, and understand one another, we can unmake discrimination and racism.

By contrast, realists believe that racism is more than words and implicit biases; rather, it is a means by which the dominant group gains and maintains its privilege. Racial hierarchy determines who gets the best homes and schools, the highest wages, and any number of other tangible and intangible benefits. Realists believe that the only way advancements happen are when they also benefit the dominant group, an idea known as interest convergence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). In an analysis of the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*, scholar Derrick Bell (1980) argued that the decision to end segregation in American schools was strongly connected to political and social benefits

of the White majority both at home and abroad. Bell contended that the Supreme Court's decision was a way to assuage the African American soldiers who had risked their lives to fight in the recent wars only to return home to face racism and discrimination.

Additionally, the United States, at the time engaged in the Cold War, needed to project a more positive image to emerging countries in order to win the fight against international communism (Bell, 1980). Realists argue that in order to eradicate racism, the physical circumstances of minorities must change through aggressive color-conscious efforts, as opposed to just advances in cultural discourse (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023).

A frequent response to critical race theory is the color-blind principle, an ideology based on the idea that there is no one race greater or less than the other and that all races should be viewed as equal. From the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruling to Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, the color-blind principle has existed in civil rights discourse. In a perfect and just society, race would not exist, so White philosophers who argue for color-blindness operate under the condition that acknowledging racial differences only gives validity to the inferiority complex (Mills, 2008). This is the central argument for those arguing against affirmative action - by viewing race as a factor for admission, it exacerbates racial tensions and stigmatizes minorities (Chemerinsky, 1996). However, those who argue against the color-blind principle posit that without acknowledging and recognizing the influence race has on nearly everything, it is impossible to make the necessary changes that would ultimately result in an equitable outcome (Chemerinsky, 1996; Tate, 1997).

Mechanisms of Racism

Race is a social construct that changes over time, often driven by political factors. It is a human-invented classification system that is “used to create or sustain hierarchies of power and dominance, and has consistently been used to include and exclude certain groups from equal participation, resources, and human rights” (Picower & Kohli, 2017). While early colonists were aware of race, racial lines were not delineated between social groups. When terms of service for “unfree” White labor were introduced and the demand for labor intensified, race was born out of chattel slavery and the classification of Black laborers as property. “Black” was used as an identity marker for “slave” and “White” signified “free” (Harris, 1993, pp. 1716-1717). Continuing into more modern times, while race is often used to define physical characteristics between people, it is still used as a classification system. Racism is the structure of dominance that is built from the hierarchical classes of race.

Scholars of CRT have purported that racism is found in all United States institutions. According to legal scholar Cheryl Harris (1993), there is a pattern of White racial domination that ensures higher economic, political, and social privileges. Just as Whiteness was a line of protection from slavery, it still provides access to both explicit and implicit privileges that guarantee a higher level of survival. It is to the benefit of those who are White to uphold this racial construct by utilizing antiblackness as a tool for oppression (pp. 1713-1714). Robin DiAngelo (2016) defines White supremacy as “an overarching political, economic, and social system of domination . . . captur[ing] the all-encompassing centrality and assumed superiority of people defined and perceived as White and the practices based on this assumption” (p. 28). This ideology promotes the

idea that Whiteness is the ideal for humanity. Charles W. Mills (2008) suggests that White supremacy is an unnamed, invisible system that dictates all aspects of the modern world today. While it is not explicitly stated, there exists a racial contract intended to promote and maintain the superiority of White supremacy across all sociopolitical systems. By failing to acknowledge this racial contract, DiAngelo (2016) argues that its invisibility is what protects White supremacy from examination and eradication.

Implicit Bias. The study of implicit bias brings the conversation of systemic racism to an individual level by considering someone's personal beliefs and ways of thinking. Implicit (or unconscious) bias "refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understandings, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner, and it emerges from a combination of the way our brains seem to work and the way we are socialized (Kempf, 2020). Automatically, humans begin to make schemas to understand the world around them. This allows us to quickly interact in our everyday lives without too much forethought.

Psychologists estimate that we are processing an exorbitant amount of information every second. In order to process all of this information, our brain generally relies on two different types of thinking - System 1 and System 2. System 1 cognition is the quick, almost thoughtless responses that occur outside of our conscious awareness, such as automatically pulling your hand back when it touches something hot. System 2 cognition requires conscious thought and concentration, like completing a difficult math problem (Staats, 2016). Oftentimes, those seemingly unconscious categories that we are forming over time are created through direct and indirect messages we receive from our experiences and the people with whom we interact - parents, teachers, friends, media,

schooling, religion, etc. Additionally, one's own identity is formed by their class, gender, race, sexuality, and a number of other factors that inform how we see and interact with the world. Through all of these internal and external influences, one begins to both form unconscious associations known as implicit bias (Kempf, 2020).

Microaggressions. Through implicit bias and stereotypes, individuals may make negative associations about people different from themselves based on factors more loosely connected to race, such as language, class, and culture. These covert forms of racism are often more subtle and are referred to as microaggressions. According to Kohli & Solórzano (2012), racial microaggressions are: (a) subtle, often unconscious, verbal or nonverbal assaults; (b) layered insults based on one's race, gender, language, or some other marker that makes someone different than the dominant group; and (c) negatively impactful on the subject of the insult.

Racial microaggressions can span from a passing inquiry from a coworker about where one is "really from" to the mispronunciation of a student's name in the classroom. While these actions may be enacted without intending harm, a teacher stumbling over a student's name sets a tone for cultural 'othering' that can follow the student for years to come. For example, in a study about the effects of name mispronunciation, one student recounts the time a middle school teacher couldn't pronounce his Hindu name, Nitin. Instead of learning how to pronounce it, the teacher instead gave him a completely different name, Frank, which followed him throughout the rest of his education and into adulthood. Instead of stepping outside his own comfort zone and learning how to pronounce a name that was unfamiliar to him, the teacher essentially removed Nitin's identity and changed his own self-perception (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). These types of

microaggressions, often unintentional, occur because the perpetrator is unaware of his personal biases.

Inferiority Complex. One of the strongest mechanisms of racism is the idea of the inferiority complex. This paradigm, rooted in stereotypes and racial characterization, is “built on the belief that people of color are biologically and genetically inferior to Whites” (Tate, 1997, p. 199). The origin of the inferiority paradigm in the United States can be traced as far back as the formation of the Constitution, laying the groundwork for the allowance of slavery and the creation of laws banning the formal education of African Americans (Tate, 1997). Failure to uphold these laws could lead to financial or physical consequences for those disobeying and were essentially put in place to further White control. Consequently, the prohibition of education for African Americans fed into the White-Black binary thinking that validated socially constructed identities and justified the oppressive social policies and laws that the United States was founded upon (Tate, 1997).

Padilla and Lindholm (1995) argued that certain characteristics inherent in the inferiority paradigm continue to inform educational research and policies today. These assumptions place the White middle class male American as the standard by which all others are measured, fail to recognize the role of race and social class in learning, and are biased against any ethnic minority. According to Carter and Goodwin (1994), social scientists and researchers continue to use race as a determining factor for aptitude and perceived intelligence. This biased view has influenced the legal system and the construction of laws concerning education, often characterizing racial minorities as “intellectually inferior and rais[ing] doubts about the benefit of equitable social

investment in education and other social services” (Tate, 1997, p. 202). This perception makes race a critical factor in determining who does and does not benefit from daily commodities (Carter & Goodwin, 1994).

Sociologist Joe Faegin coined the term “white racial frame” to explain the phenomena of the inferiority complex (DiAngelo, 2016). At its most general level, the frame addressed the basic nature of the inferiority complex in that Whites are viewed as superior to people of color in all aspects of social, economic, and political decisions. From there, he acknowledged the fact that social institutions, being controlled by White dominance, position White people with more privilege and enrichment, creating the misconception that White people are somehow more deserving of these amenities. At the deepest level, racial stereotypes are reinforced, leading to both implicit and explicit fear and resentment (DiAngelo, 2016, p. 34).

Inequities in Education

Schools, one of the most basic American institutions, are built around inequitable policies that serve the interests of White students over those of students of Color. These inequities can be found in a lack of funding, under-resourced educational opportunities, and marginalizing messages of inferiority. Additionally, the standardized curriculum that is present in most schools often lacks historical perspectives and values of minoritized communities, sometimes downright omitting the truth altogether. For example, in 2015, a Black mother’s complaint went viral when she brought to light that her child’s ninth-grade *World Geography* textbook from publisher McGraw-Hill described enslaved individuals simply as “workers,” ignoring the fact that they were forced into migration and labor against their will as slaves. Similarly, in 2018, a teacher issued an apology after

being called out for requiring her either-grade students to discuss the positive and negative aspects of slavery (Lopez et al., 2021). In a study completed by the Southern Poverty Law Center, 58% of the over 1,800 teachers surveyed reported that their textbooks inadequately taught about slavery and that their curricular scope and sequence allowed very little time for instructions about the impact and nuances of slavery (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018). By rallying opposition to efforts to teach children a full and accurate understanding of American history, those who fight against CRT are using fear as a way to maintain political power.

While there are educational and race scholars who have worked to deconstruct the racism inherent in schools, “institutional culpability is often masked by ideologies, policies, and practices of deficit thinking; the ignorance of race or racial difference; and meritocracy . . . leaving racism in schools untouched but often invisibilized” (Picower & Kohli, 2017, p. 4). Many educational scholars argue that in order to combat the cultural disconnect between the increasingly diverse populations of students and the generally White, middle class teaching force, educators must enter schools prepared to recognize and name racism that exists within the current structure (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Picower & Kohli, 2017; Tate, 1997). One of the reasons that it is difficult for the current educational workforce to name discrimination in schools is that it is less often an act of overt racism but more often a result of implicit bias.

Work to apply critical race theory to education has been in place since the early 1990s, led by Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate. Their posit that the main tenets of CRT could also be applied to the world of education was met with mixed response, prompting the authors to engage in prolonged scholarship connecting CRT to the field of

education (Kaerwer & Pritchett, 2023). They recognized that theories of class and gender could inform issues of race in education, but the “omissions and blind spots suggest the need for theoretical perspectives that move beyond the traditional paradigmatic boundaries of educational research to provide a more cogent analysis of ‘raced’ people and move discussions of race and racism from the margins of scholarly activity to the fore of educational discourse” (Tate, 1997, p. 196). The researchers offered critical race theory as a lens through which to analyze the disparaging data surrounding inequitable educational access for children in the racial minority, namely through the avenue of culturally responsive education.

Culturally Responsive Education

As a way to combat the various ways that racism manifests itself in education, educational scholars have begun exploring the idea of culturally responsive education. Existing under a number of different labels - culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, and multicultural education, to name a few - each of these approaches has its own defining characteristics, but all are grounded in the ideological foundations of critical race theory (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Educational theorists use CRT to examine the rise of racism in education through the resegregation of American schools, the historical inaccuracies portrayed in curriculum and textbooks, and the deficit theory approach that some educators apply to students from minority cultures. As with legal studies, Critical Race Theorists in the field of education apply an activist approach, seeking not just to understand but also to change (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023).

Culturally responsive teaching, a concept that Geneva Gay (2013) began developing in the 1970s and 1980s, originally argued for accurate and increased

portrayals of ethnically and racially diverse perspectives in curricula. According to Gay (2013), “Accurate information about ethnic and cultural diversity was necessary for both minority and majority students to counteract the negative discriminations and distortions perpetuated in conventional conceptions of knowledge and truth, in school generally, and in society at large (p. 49). This type of inclusion helps students acquire knowledge about how different cultures and experiences shape the world in which they live.

Building on and adding to Gay’s work, Ladson-Billings (1995) suggested, “Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (p. 160). She defined academic success as high standards for all students, believing that any student can be successful. Students need to develop their skills in all areas of education in order to participate actively in a democracy. In the area of cultural competence, Ladson-Billings encouraged teachers to “. . . utilize students’ culture as a vehicle for learning” (p. 161), demonstrating an understanding of various cultural backgrounds and the ways that these experiences can be centered in instruction. Django Paris (2012) took this a step further, suggesting that culturally relevant pedagogy did not go far enough to honor and protect languages, literacies, and cultural practices in order to not only honor but also maintain a multiethnic society. He coined the term culturally sustaining pedagogy, which he suggested aimed to maintain “explicit resistances that embrace cultural pluralism and cultural equity” (p. 93). Rather than just encouraging students to respect each others’ differences, he emphasized

the need to teach students how to honor and maintain their unique linguistic and cultural identities.

In order for students to be successful with culturally responsive teaching, they need to demonstrate four foundational characteristics: (1) be caring and empathetic, meaning that they will be “unwilling to tolerate underachievement” (Rychly & Graves, 2012, p. 45), (2) be reflective about their attitudes towards and biases of other cultures, (3) be reflective of their own cultural frames of reference, recognizing that their own personal experiences and cultures affect their beliefs of the world, and (4) be knowledgeable about cultures other than their own (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Students learn best when they feel like they are active members of the learning community and that they are the intended audience of the instruction. This can be achieved when teachers have an understanding of the diverse perspectives within their classrooms and can make effective connections between students’ background knowledge and natural ways of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Rychly & Graves, 2012).

Critical Race Theory in Education Today

Since early 2020, there has been a growing attack on critical race theory across the nation, especially in its connection with schools and curriculum. In general, those opposed to CRT are seeking to ban historically accurate information related to race and racism in public schools. From individuals storming school board meetings to legislation passed in multiple states, “advocates of these administrative and legislative actions argue that providing students with information on race and racism is un-American, divisive, and itself racist” (Lopez et al., 2021, p. 3). Similarly to other race-based attacks, such as those aimed at the civil rights movement of the 1960s-1970s and the more recent Black Lives

Matter movement, these attacks on critical race theory seem to be politically motivated. Used as a weapon in a highly significant political year, the attacks of early 2020 were intended to induce fear and encourage the support of far Right wing politicians and policies, as well as deter those from marginalized communities to participate fully in the civic process (Lopez et al., 2021). Right-wing commentator for Fox News, Christopher Rufo (2021), tweeted:

We have successfully frozen their brand - critical race theory - into the public conversation and are steadily driving up negative perceptions. We will eventually turn it toxic, as we put all of the various cultural insanities under that brand category. . . .The goal is to have the public read something crazy in the newspaper and immediately think “critical race theory.”

Following former President Trump’s unsuccessful attempt at withholding funding from federal entities that promoted ideals that he termed “divisive concepts” through Executive Order 13950, a number of individual states introduced legislation that would ban curriculum, employee training, and student activities that promoted equity and historical accuracy under the guise that they were anti-democratic. They also banned teaching the general ideas that racism is inherent in the United States and that White people enjoy privileges that are not afforded to those from minority races (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023; Lopez et al., 2021).

In addition to the fight to provide students with accurate interpretations of historical events, there are other front-burner issues related to CRT that are present in educational institutions today. Sparked by student-led marches asking for safe spaces, many institutes of higher learning have adopted codes of conduct to discourage hate

speech on campuses and prove that they are welcoming environments in which to learn. Another issue regarding speech in education is the right for non-English speakers to use their native languages in the classroom. Given that language is an important part of a person's culture and identity, critical race theorists argue that the U.S. should encourage multilingualism instead of criminalizing it along with immigration controls and restrictions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

In general, individuals strive toward consistency in their lives; they want their beliefs and actions to align. Leon Festinger (1957), the father of cognitive dissonance theory, posits that two elements of knowledge can either be relevant or irrelevant to each other. When they are relevant, they are consonant, or agreeable; however, when people's beliefs and actions are disagreeable, they are considered dissonant. Festinger (1957) likens *dissonance* to a frustration or disequilibrium, more specifically "the existence of nonfitting [sic] relations among cognitions" (p. 3). By the term *cognition*, Festinger is referencing "any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, or about one's behavior" (p. 3). The existence of dissonance makes one psychologically uncomfortable, motivating them to reduce the dissonance in some way. In addition to removing the dissonance, the person will work to actively avoid situations that may increase their discomfort (Festinger, 1957).

At the heart of cognitive dissonance theory is the idea that people often act in ways that are consistent with their beliefs (Festinger, 1957). For example, a parent who believes that athletics play a pivotal role in a child's social development will likely encourage his children to play sports. As uniquely significant are the instances in which

actions and beliefs do not align. Festinger (1957) offers up for consideration a person who chooses to smoke, even though he is aware it is bad for his health. If this person chooses not to resolve his dissonance by changing his behavior, he could attempt to rationalize the inconsistencies by removing the dissonant beliefs, adding new knowledge that supports his actions, reducing the importance of the dissonant beliefs, or increasing the importance of his actions. He may simply decide to believe that smoking is not bad for his health (removing the dissonant beliefs), consider the positive effects that smoking have had on his weight loss (adding new knowledge that supports his actions), consider the likelihood of smoking-related deaths in comparison to other types of deaths (reducing the importance of the dissonant beliefs), or remind himself how much joy he gets from smoking (increasing the importance of his actions) (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019). When a person is unable to remove or rationalize his psychological discomfort, that is when cognitive dissonance occurs.

Dissonance is seen most commonly in two different types of situations. When a person is presented with new or unexpected information, he may experience temporary cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). As he learns more about the subject and gains confidence with the information, this discomfort may dissipate. Additionally, one may experience dissonance in a situation where an opinion must be formed or a decision must be made. Festinger (1957) offers an example of a Republican farmer who opposes his party's position on farming prices. This person may face cognitive dissonance when he has to take action in the voting booth that disagrees with his previous opinion. While these examples are the two most common ways that dissonance can arise, there are also a variety of other ways that this discomfort can occur: (a) from logical inconsistency,

(b) because of cultural differences, (c) because of generalizations about particular groups, and (d) as a result of past experiences (Festinger, 1957, p. 14).

Dissonance Research Paradigms

There are a variety of paradigms used within dissonance research. One of these paradigms is the belief-disconfirmation paradigm (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019). Research has shown that when people are confronted with information that goes against what they believe, they are likely to strengthen their belief, rather than change it (Harman-Jones, 2012). For example, in a 2020 study about cognitive dissonance in politics, researchers presented participants with information about the wrongdoings of then presidential candidate Donald Trump (Harmon-Jones et al., 2020). They then showed the participants a meme of political rival Hillary Clinton which alluded to her wrongdoings. Researchers asked participants how likely they were to share the meme as well as how much they supported Trump. The participants who more strongly supported Trump were more likely to share the meme, supporting the theory behind the belief-discrimination paradigm. Another aspect of this paradigm is the idea that people who are confronted with dissonance will seek out others who share the same beliefs or attempt to persuade others to accept one's belief (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019). These are both strategies that people use to reduce their own discomfort.

The induced-compliance paradigm is seen when people choose to do something that previously went against their beliefs because something induces them to do so (Harmon-Jones, 2012). This induction can be a result of something positive, like a reward, or something negative, like a consequence. In an experiment conducted by Festinger and Carlsmith (1959), researchers found that participants who were provided

monetary incentives to engage in a boring task were more likely to rate it as favorable the less money they are paid. This effect, known as the negative-incentive effect, occurs when participants feel that they have freedom to engage in the task. When people feel forced to engage, they require a higher incentive to do so. A variant on this paradigm is the forbidden-toy paradigm, in which the likelihood of a person engaging in a dissonant behavior is increased when threatened with a punishment, rather than provided a reward (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019).

The discomfort experienced when individuals encounter something that challenges their beliefs will ultimately cause them to either change their beliefs to align with new information, rationalize their existing beliefs, or avoid contradictory evidence. This dissonance can sometimes result in more extreme positions, while also eliciting negative emotions like guilt or anxiety. Ultimately, cognitive dissonance plays a crucial role in shaping how beliefs are formed, maintained, or altered.

Cognitive Dissonance in Education

This theory is significant when considering teaching practices regarding culturally responsive teaching because the likelihood of a teacher implementing those practices could rely heavily on whether or not it creates dissonance with their personal beliefs. The majority of teachers are White, middle class women, while a growing number of students are students of color (Clark & Zygmont, 2014). While we cannot assume that all White educators who enter the teaching profession lack social awareness, a large proportion enter into the field with conscious or implicit biases that they attribute to “diverse” groups, mostly drawn from stereotypical and misleading media representations (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). When confronted with new ideas around multicultural education

that could conflict with their personal beliefs, they may experience cognitive dissonance. These teachers may choose to remove this dissonance by changing their behaviors to match their new understanding and use equitable practices in the classroom or find a way to devalue or disprove the new knowledge altogether (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001).

Interestingly, when educators are aware of the cognitive dissonance they may face when learning new and contradicting ideas, they are more likely to respond positively to the information. In a study by McFalls and Cobb-Roberts (2001), the researchers presented an article about White privilege to two different groups of undergraduate students. With one group, provided the article to read and then followed it up with a discussion. For the second group, they prefaced the article with a lecture about cognitive dissonance theory before reading the article and discussing their responses. In an analysis of their responses, students in the group who were provided the lecture prior to their assignment were more aware of their hidden privileges than the group who was not. Additionally, they were less likely to report feelings of uncertainty or denial (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001, p. 166-169). Using an instructional technique similar to the one employed by these researchers may create an awareness to dissonance that learners can be aware of as they enter into new cognitions.

Agency Theory

Agency has been described as a person's ability to "critically shape their responses to problematic situations" (Biesta & Tedder, cited in Priestley et al., 2011, p. 2). It means that a person has an influence over how he responds to life as opposed to it just happening around him. Historically, research on agency has been criticized for taking too much of a micro view, focusing solely on the individual, or too much of macro view

focusing on the impact of social factors and ignoring the individual. More recently, theorists offer a middle ground, suggesting that individuals make decisions based on their own internal motivations as well as being influenced by social constraints (Priestley et al., 2011). Building on this, Biesta and Tedder (2007) suggest that a person's ability to gain agency depends on “. . . the interplay of individual efforts, available resources, and contextual and structural factors as they come into play together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations” (p. 137). This viewpoint connects with that of theorists Emirbayer and Mische (1998), who view agency as a “chordal triad” that is a blend of influences from the past or *iteration dimension*, considerations of the future or *projective dimension*, and the consequences of the present or *practical-evaluative dimension*.

Agency, as defined by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors are those over which people control. Their background knowledge and contextual experiences inform their beliefs, which can influence their agency judgments. Fear, either of making a mistake or of failure, is a typical internal factor that can impact decision making. Additionally, the way people respond to challenges can also impact their response to difficult situations. Individuals with a growth mindset, are more likely to push forward and accept opposition as it comes. External factors are those that stem from one's surroundings. Family, friends, and culture are all external factors that may have a significant impact on one's decision making.

Teacher Agency

Teacher agency is the ability of individuals to take ownership of their professional growth and make choices about instruction. It is heavily influenced by teachers' life and

cultural perspectives as well as professional histories (Min et al., 2022). When viewing teacher agency through the triad lens outlined by Emirbayer and Mische (1998), teachers make educational decisions based on their personal and professional histories, the cultural, structural, and material environment they are currently experiencing, and the future short and long-term consequences they may encounter (Priestley et al., 2015).

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) define iteration agency as “the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, routinely incorporated in practical activity” (p.971). They posit that people, in this case teachers, are able to apply their background and past experiences to present situations in order to make appropriate decisions, often incorporating the current experiences in their expanding background knowledge. This emphasis on personal capacity and beliefs highlights the importance of a strong teacher education program and continued professional development that provide teachers with resources and competencies as well as opportunities for reflection. Additionally, exposure to rich dialogue with colleagues through professional learning communities can also shape a teacher’s personal agency (Priestley et al., 2015).

Along with past experiences, teacher agency is also heavily influenced by the projective dimension, which involves, “draw[ing] upon past experiences in order to clarify motives, goals, and intentions, to locate possible future constraints, and to identify morally and practically appropriate courses of action” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Teachers who are able to consider their future aspirations are more likely to have a strong sense of agency. Often the decisions a teacher makes will be in alignment with his beliefs and may be influenced by different types of aspirations, either personal or professional.

While agency is guided by the past experiences and future aspirations of the teacher, it is enacted in the present. This practical-evaluative dimension involves “the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgements among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971). When making instructional decisions, teachers consider the judgements they may receive for their actions. These decisions are often difficult to make, and they sometimes conflict with their personal beliefs. In those cases of cognitive dissonance, a teacher must consider his past experiences, his future aspirations, and the resources currently available to him in order to determine an appropriate course of action.

In a school setting, teacher agency is also affected by the external factors outside of their control. For example, if a teacher is mandated to implement new practices or new curriculum, they have limited agency to make those decisions. If they choose not to participate in the mandates, it can impact their job performance. These types of power relationships and structural factors impact a teacher’s agency (Juutilainen et al., 2018).

Teachers as Change Agents

Educational change is a factor of teachers’ lives. Recent studies have considered how individual teachers practice agency in response to change, which can bring up a range of responses, such as resistance, ambivalence, and approval. Teachers make decisions on whether or not to lean into change, often influenced by their own personal beliefs. This research demonstrates that teachers take an active role as change agents, as opposed to being forced into reforms (Tao & Gao, 2016). Generally speaking, teachers

have the power to make decisions and choices when it comes to their professional actions and identities.

In recent years, there has been a growing body of work on teacher agency in reference to social justice (Biesta et al., 2015; Min et al., 2022). In their ever changing role, teachers are now often responsible for fighting for social justice, and the way they implement these practices is directly associated with students' growth as critical citizens. According to Min et al. (2022):

Pantic (2015) is one of a few scholars who attempted to theorize the constituent attributes of teacher agency for social justice, identifying four key elements (1) sense of purpose (teachers' beliefs about their roles as social justice agents), (2) competence (teachers' practices for promoting social justice), (3) autonomy (teachers' perceived power for decision making), and (4) reflexivity (teachers' capacity to reflect and evaluate their practices). (p. 565)

Similarly to culturally responsive pedagogy, in order for teachers to be successful change agents, their beliefs must align with their actions in order for them to feel agency in their classroom instructional practices. While previous studies have shown that teachers are often experts in their curriculum, many are unaware of how to respond to complex situations and teach their students how to enact social change themselves (Juutilainen et al., 2018).

Teachers' personal identities are not fixed, and they are ever changing over time as they experience new situations and continue to learn themselves. Professional development opportunities provide teachers with new knowledge and instructional strategies, which may or may not mesh with what a teacher already believes. They may

need to experience cognitive dissonance in order to question their own personal beliefs and grow as learners. The term *identity-agency* refers to “the agency individuals practice when they actively reform their ideas of what it is to be a professional” (Juutilainen et al., 2018, p. 118). When teachers experience opposing viewpoints that challenge what they already believe, it may cause them to modify their own self-image, allowing them to reflect and enact change (Priestley et al, 2015).

Theoretical Connections

Given that teachers operate within an educational setting that is riddled with racial inequities, critical race theory provides a lens through which to understand the barriers that may limit teacher agency (Ladson-Billings, 1995). By recognizing these barriers for both themselves and their students, teachers can develop strategies to navigate and challenge them. Teachers who strongly believe in providing equitable opportunities for their students may use their agency to incorporate culturally responsive teaching practices (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

When teachers make decisions about their instructional practices, they may experience cognitive dissonance when their professional values conflict with the realities of the educational system (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019). For example, a teacher who does not believe in the pervasive nature of racism in education may experience dissonance when asked to participate in implicit bias training or incorporate more culturally diverse perspectives in his curriculum. Recognizing their role as someone who may perpetuate inequities can cause teachers discomfort. They may choose to become agents of change and support anti-racist education, or they may choose to resist and lean into their previous beliefs (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). My study is shaped by the

idea that the majority of teachers, most of whom are White and middle class, are inherently biased. When confronted with ideas that may conflict with their personal beliefs, they must decide to either reshape their beliefs to conform to these new understandings or reject them completely. Their personal beliefs, whether confirmed or reshaped, influence their actions in the classroom. Teachers who shape their understanding to accept the constructs of equity and inclusion may feel more comfortable with the concepts of culturally responsive teaching and be more likely to use it in the classroom. This framework is informed by literature on culturally responsive teaching and its implementation in the classroom.

Research Questions

While there is an abundance of theory speculating that internal biases and beliefs affect teachers' decisions about instructional practices, there is little quantitative research testing this theory. Through qualitative studies involving interviews and focus groups, researchers are able to draw connections between what teachers say and these theories, but I would like to determine if a quantitative comparison between beliefs and practices would demonstrate the same connection. In order for schools to maximize resources and target them appropriately, they need to be aware of the factors that most significantly impact teacher implementation.

To address the gap in research regarding the connection between teacher beliefs and their likelihood to regularly infuse culturally responsive pedagogy in their classrooms, I aim to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do teachers' personal belief systems relate to their implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices?

2. What beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about students and learning are most influential in shaping teachers' CRT practices?
3. How do teacher belief profiles vary across different contexts (e.g., subject area, grade level, years of experience)?

Significance of Study

This study addresses an important gap in understanding how teacher beliefs influence the use of culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom. Although the research base supporting culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is well established, these practices are not consistently implemented across schools. Exploring the relationship between teachers' personal beliefs about equity and their self-reported instructional decisions offers insight into one potential reason for this disconnect.

By identifying whether teachers' beliefs align with their reported classroom practices, this study has practical implications regarding professional development and school improvement efforts. If beliefs are found to be a strong predictor of culturally responsive teaching, school leaders can prioritize learning opportunities that help teachers examine their values, biases, and assumptions about students. This intentionality would support more targeted professional development to include deeper cultural understanding and self-awareness.

This research also contributes to the field by offering data that can guide teacher education programs and influence hiring practices for districts. Colleges and universities can better prepare teachers to work in diverse classrooms by understanding how beliefs support or detract from culturally responsive teaching practices. At the same time, districts may use this information to refine their hiring practices and seek candidates

whose values align with equity-based teaching. These practices can help build a more inclusive and student-centered school culture.

Ultimately, this study supports efforts to make classrooms more equitable and inclusive. By examining the connection between what teachers believe and what they actually do in the classroom, this research helps identify one of the root factors that may influence whether culturally responsive teaching takes place in the classroom.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

What follows is an analysis of the current research regarding the implementation of teaching practices that work to be more inclusive and supportive of equity in the classroom, in particular culturally responsive teaching practices. In this paper, I will explore how culturally responsive teaching practices have evolved over time, examining the shifts in its conceptual framework, how it has been implemented in the classroom, and its role in addressing diverse educational needs. Additionally, I will analyze the persistent roadblocks that hinder its success, including systemic challenges, resistance to change, and gaps in teacher preparation.

Search Terms and Databases

I began exploring the literature by searching the ERIC database for peer-reviewed journal articles containing the phrases “culturally responsive teaching” or “culturally relevant teaching” in the abstract. This search yielded 565 results, so I narrowed my scope to sources published from 2015 to 2024. This modified search still resulted in 385 sources, which I began to explore. I began to go through these sources, looking for those which mentioned specific culturally relevant teaching strategies and practices being used in the classroom or those that explored the factors influencing a teacher’s likelihood of intentionally using such practices. Many of the resources discussed the theory of culturally responsive teaching and its implications for Black students, but fewer specifically discussed its implementation.

Even though my search had yielded quite a few results, it was difficult to find resources that matched my criteria for consideration. I shifted tactics and began

considering the resources listed in the few articles that I did find useful. When I read a statistic or a reference that I felt was valuable, I marked it on the list of references. Then I started creating my own reference list broken down into categories or themes that I was starting to see emerge in my research (ie. culturally responsive teaching background, multicultural education, diverse learners, teacher beliefs, challenges, professional development, etc.). I returned to ERIC to search for these particular resources, as well as expanding to use additional databases, like JSTOR and ProQuest. I also ordered quite a few chapters of books through the Interlibrary Loan, which was incredibly helpful. Every time I found an article or chapter that I felt met my criteria for consideration, I downloaded it and then saved it in a folder of articles in my Google Drive. As I read the articles and took notes, I moved them into a different folder for articles I had finished.

Once I had read a number of articles and reached a level of saturation, I began to take my notes and organize them into themes, which I then started forming into an outline. I decided to structure my literature review into three main sections: 1) the evolution of culturally responsive teaching over time, 2) the classroom strategies that teachers use to positively impact student learning, 3) the roadblocks that teachers face when trying to implement these practices. It is important to note that culturally responsive teaching takes on many names. I have chosen to refer to these practices under the umbrella of culturally responsive teaching, as that seems to be the most frequently used term. When used in this way, I am referencing any of the practices that stemmed from multicultural education intending to intentionally teach racially diverse students within and beyond their own cultural and experiential contexts. I will expand on these practices in the first section of this paper.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

In the early 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement highlighted the systemic inequities in education, and educators began addressing issues of cultural diversity in curricula. Pioneered by John Banks, multicultural education emerged in the 1970s as a distinct field that focused on integrating diverse perspectives into the curriculum. Multicultural education incorporated the idea that all students, regardless of their gender, race, religion, or other cultural characteristics, deserve an equal opportunity to education (Banks & Banks, 2019). Banks believed that schools are social structures built around a dominant culture. Because of these structures, students who reflect that dominant culture have a better chance to learn than students who do not (Banks & Banks, 2019). Banks advocated for systemic change to policies, teaching practices, and curricula that promoted educational equity.

In the 1980s, Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson-Billings began developing theories of culturally relevant pedagogy, with Ladson-Billings formally introducing it in her groundbreaking book *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* in 1994. Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is defined as “one that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 2022, p. 20). It is the knowledge that teachers need in order to make them successful in an oppressive educational system that works against marginalized children. There are three components, or learning outcomes, of culturally relevant pedagogy: academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness (Young & Young, 2023). Culturally responsive pedagogy insists that teachers center what they are teaching and why they are

teaching it within a sociopolitical context. They must study their students and use students' experiences to maximize learning.

Geneva Gay followed in 2000 with her book *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, introducing culturally responsive teaching (CRT) as a research-based framework. CRT is defined as “teaching students who belong to different ethnic or racial groups in a way that respects their cultural heritages, experiences, and perspectives” (Young & Young, 2023). If culturally responsive pedagogy is the learning outcomes expected once teachers implement culturally responsive practices, then culturally responsive teaching is the knowledge of instructional practices that teachers need to make those outcomes occur. Milner (2016) stressed that CRT “situates culture as central, not tangential, to the teaching and learning exchange” (p. 421). In outlining her framework, Gay (2018) noted the importance of culture as an asset to the education process, centering the need for intentional action and educational reform. She viewed cultural diversity as a strength and emphasized the importance of viewing assessment scores as a result of the achievement problem, not a symptom. She challenged the use of grades and test scores as the only data-point for understanding student challenges.

In 2014, Zaretta Hammond published *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain*, which connected culturally responsive teaching to the neurological development of critical thinking skills. While these variations on multicultural learning assume different labels, they share the commonality of creating equitable experiences for students. Through the early 2020s, increased attention has been paid to culturally responsive teaching in response to a global movement for racial equality and social justice, although it has been a hotly contested topic in the U.S. political landscape.

Classroom Experiences

At the heart of culturally responsive teaching are a number of core dimensions. These approaches to teaching use intentional knowledge and skills, applying much more than just good teaching strategies. Teachers who implement these practices have high expectations for all students. They believe that all students are able to do rigorous work while providing scaffolding to support student success. They also believe in collaborative, cooperative, collective learning that encourages positive relationships in the learning community, whether between students and teachers or teachers and their peers. Additionally, they find ways to connect the learning with the students' lives and communities by intentionally integrating culture into the curriculum. They consider how students may view topics through different lenses and adjust their curriculum and assessment design through divergent thinking. Culturally responsive teaching is also a form of social justice, aimed to disrupt systems of oppression, such as racism. Through a review of literature on culturally responsive classroom practices, a number of examples of these themes emerged to demonstrate what culturally responsive teaching should look like in the classroom.

High Expectations

Culturally responsive teachers are validating and have high expectations for all students. According to Milner (2016):

Successful teachers of Black students are those who maintained high expectations for their students . . . so that students had the best possible chance of mobilizing themselves and empowering their families and communities to fight against and combat racism and racist policies and practices (p. 419)

Culturally responsive teachers have an asset-based view of their students, believing that students from any cultural or linguistic background can be highly successful (Brown et al., 2018). Generally, low income and urban students have been told, either directly or indirectly, that they are incapable of learning difficult subjects. Culturally responsive teachers believe in exposing all students to grade-level curriculum and differentiating or providing scaffolds to support their success, giving the message that they believe in the success of all students (Ukpokodu, 2011). Studies have shown that environments with racially and ethnically diverse samples of students in supportive classrooms where the teachers held them to a standard of high expectations are more engaged in classroom instruction and perform better on standardized assessments (Franco et al., 2024). For example, in a study of 2,756 teachers in schools across the United States, Franco et al. (2024) observed teachers employ “warm demand” strategies, described as a balance of both caring and high expectations. In one example, a group of students were referencing cultural experiences during instruction. The teacher then challenged them to solve high-level problems connected to those experiences. The students were receptive to the teacher’s demands because they felt she was genuinely interested in their lives and that she communicated a belief in their ability to succeed (Franco et al., 2024). The authors’ results showed that teachers’ promotion of culturally responsive social relations, when associated with warm demand, had a significant positive impact on students’ perception of fairness, especially between Black students and White teachers. In this environment of authentic care, paired with rigorous academic standards, students felt respected and valued, increasing their willingness to rise to high expectations. In culturally responsive

classrooms, teachers create learning environments that empower all students to thrive academically while affirming their identities.

According to Gay (2015), positive, respectful relationships give students a sense of security, resulting in a higher likelihood that they will participate in peer-to-peer dialogue and seek out challenging experiences. Conversely, negative relationships silence students, discouraging and disinviting them from classroom participation. A longitudinal study of over 2,000 students found that an increase in the number of positive relationships with high expectations predicted greater student engagement and success (Martin & Collie, 2019). Similarly, when students experienced an environment where the teacher set low expectations, their achievement lowered. The researchers found that the more positive, supportive relationships that students had with their teachers, the higher the correlation was with academic achievement (Martin & Collie, 2019). The assets-based approach to teaching empowers students with permission to succeed and reach their full potential.

Communal Learning

Numerous studies in the literature on culturally responsive teaching have documented that the preferred learning style of most minority students is cooperative, collaborative, and communal, forming a core element of culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2022; Ukpokodu, 2011). In a study by Dill and Boykin (2000), students learning in a communal or peer-tutoring format recalled significantly more than students studying individually. Unfortunately, the type of learning where students ask for help from their peers is sometimes considered to be cheating and is discouraged in many classrooms. Culturally responsive teachers need to be able to recognize and accept this

type of collaboration as a way to enhance learning, not a way to avoid it. Participants in a study on utilizing culturally responsive teaching practices for a mathematics classroom recommended a variety of ways to create collaborative learning. These strategies include frequently using grouping structures so that students are able to build trust with each other; creating heterogeneous groups with different races, genders, and ability levels; providing group structures with roles and responsibilities; and creating complex tasks with multiple different levels. By varying groupings and difficulty level, all group members are able to access the content and contribute (Ukpokodu, 2011).

Teachers who provide students with opportunities to work together create real-world situations for problem solving. In a study conducted by Civil and Kahn (2001), students in Kahn's class, along with help from their parents, worked together on a community garden to learn mathematics. The students were divided into "garden groups" and were responsible for a container garden. They had to work together to successfully grow their garden, completing math problems to complete tasks like measuring soil and determining area for a tarp to cover their gardens. The students used problem-solving skills to find the area for an irregular shape. Through small group exploration and a whole class discussion, the students discussed strategies before coming to a general consensus. Over the course of the year, the garden project provided the students with a variety of ways to work together on a common goal. The teacher used culturally responsive teaching practices to help the students master rigorous mathematical concepts and connect the content to knowledge and experiences they brought from their families at home.

Communal and collaborative learning structures play a critical role in enhancing student achievement, particularly for culturally diverse students. Research consistently shows that when students are given opportunities to work together - whether through peer tutoring, group problem-solving, or culturally connected projects - they demonstrate deeper understanding and improved academic outcomes. Culturally responsive teachers embrace these communal learning styles not only as a means of instruction but as a way to honor students' cultural strengths, promote equity, and build inclusive classrooms. By fostering an environment of trust among students, teachers create opportunities for all students to achieve.

Culturally Relevant Content

Culture influences how students learn, as well as how teachers teach. Gay (2018) defined culture as “a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others (p. 8). Teachers, along with students, bring their experiences and cultures to school with them, acting as a filter for how to understand content and respond to situations. They construct perceptions of each other, often unconsciously, through a lens of prejudices and preconceptions. School systems were built upon the values and beliefs of the cultural majority, which means problems inevitably arise when the home and school cultures of minority students are inconsistent. Culturally responsive teaching “suggests that school structures and programs should be *synergistic*, or *composites* of diverse peoples and influences that make up a nation and humanity” (Gay, 2015, p. 128). As a result, acknowledging and incorporating students' diverse cultural

backgrounds in teaching practices is essential to creating more inclusive and effective educational experiences.

Culturally relevant content is a foundational element of culturally responsive teaching, as it bridges students' home experiences with academic learning. Gay (2018) emphasizes that instruction must include content that reflects the histories, values, and contributions of diverse groups as integral to the curriculum. When teachers incorporate literature, examples, and perspectives that are representative of their students' backgrounds, they promote engagement and a sense of belonging. Studies show that students are more motivated and perform better academically when the curriculum reflects who they are and the communities they come from (Dee & Penner, 2017). Culturally relevant content cannot be simply an add-on to traditional curriculum but must be a significant tool for building an equitable learning environment.

Culturally responsive teachers find a variety of ways to incorporate material that connects to students' lives. They attempt to find links to aspects of a student's humanity by using cultural, historical, social, and political content to teach about ethnic groups within their own school community and across the country (Brown et al., 2018; Gay, 2015; Milner, 2016). In an analysis of math teachers, Ukpokodu (2011) observed teachers integrating culturally relevant content and social justice issues by drawing on connections between content and the real world. Teachers used examples and perspectives from different cultural frames, including word problems that were culturally familiar, integrating social issues, and looking for hidden bias in the curriculum. By making these connections, teachers help students see themselves in the curriculum while also deepening their understanding of the world around them.

Culturally responsive teachers understand the importance of valuing and exploring student culture in their classroom. They affirm students' background and the knowledge they bring from their families and cultural experiences. Milner (2016) observed a teacher, Mr. Jackson, who demonstrated "a deep level of interest in, knowledge about, and connections to the life experiences of his students" (p. 425) by including world problems and examples with real world relevance. Mr. Jackson expressed that his knowledge of rap music, sports, and video games was essential to incorporate in his instruction because that is the world in which his students live. According to Milner, "He was able to quote verses of hip-hop songs, list names of the most popular professional athletes, and had an idea of the latest movies that were out - he was, in a sense, immersed in pop culture" (p. 426). Mr. Jackson expressed a consciousness of what was happening both within his classroom and within the community and world abroad, based on what his students felt comfortable sharing with him. He validated the lived experiences of his students, making sure not to assume that just because they had cultural similarities he automatically understood them. He felt it was part of his job as a teacher to engross himself in the world of his students, and his students responded by communicating with him about ideas outside of the content he taught in the classroom. By validating to his students that they were the experts in their own lives, he built trusting connections, which allowed Mr. Jackson to become a "community member" with his students, not just a "spectator" (Milner, 2016, p. 425). By experiencing his students' culture along with them, Mr. Jackson was able to build a structure of trust within his classroom.

Non-Dominant Cognitive Frameworks

Culturally responsive teachers recognize that they need to be multidimensional in their delivery of material, addressing multiple modalities of student learning. This alternative way of teaching means they may need to reform all of their practices - instruction, grading practices, assessment, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, and more - to be cultural-centered (Milner, 2016). This type of plural instruction should be seen in:

different kinds of content in subjects taught; different kinds of learning materials and resources used for teaching and learning; different invitations and opportunities to participate in learning; different kinds of praise and criticism feedback provided; different kinds of performance assessments; different kinds of interactions between students and teachers and among students; different methods for conveying what needs to be known, what is known, and what one can or cannot do. (Gay, 2015, p. 135)

Since the conceptual premise behind culturally responsive teaching is to respond to the individual needs of each student, these different approaches will vary depending on the specific need, demographics, and experiences of its intended audience.

Teachers must consider who has “access” to school and who does not. Students are not explicitly taught how to function in a school setting; it is something they are already expected to know based on their collective lived experiences (Gay, 2018). The problem is that for students in the minority, these cultural norms may be contradictory to their home and community cultures. In a longitudinal study of discipline in American schools, Elmesky & Marcucci (2023) discovered that the hyper-disciplining of black

students by their white teachers was a result of the anti-Blackness built into American institutions. For example, a group of Black students were reprimanded for talking during a film because the teacher found it disruptive. The students explained that their talking was a form of cultural engagement, discussing the movie in real-time. Instead of recognizing this as a valid form of participation, the teacher imposed discipline based on the dominant culture's expectation of passive silence. This example illustrates how anti-Blackness and cultural mismatch are a root cause of inequitable treatment in schools.

Culturally responsive teachers understand that they may need to explicitly teach procedure and behavior protocols, including “test-taking skills such as how to read test items strategically; how to readjust one’s personal and cultural work habits to match the rhythms, routines, and ethos of educational institutions; and how to master ‘school speak’” (Gay, 2015, p. 133). This intentional instruction around the norms of school does not mean that students should abandon their one cultural heritage in favor of the cultural majority. Instead, they should be taught to maintain their own culture alongside “learning about other heritage groups and histories, and their nation’s mainstream cultures, while simultaneously mastering academic knowledge and skills” (p. 134). This theme of crossing cultural borders is paramount in culturally responsive teaching.

Along with the norms and expectations of school, standardized tests and curriculum are written from the dominant, Eurocentric, and middle-class perspective. Students with lived experiences that deviate from that point of view may struggle to find success when considering answers using their lived experiences. For example, Tate (2005) describes a mathematical problem to which a group of predominantly African-American urban students responded “strangely.” In the question, students were supposed

to determine if a daily or weekly bus pass was the better deal. While the correct answer was clear to the majority of participants who processed it from a middle-class perspective of utilizing the pass to simply go from home to work during the week, the students who failed the item did so because they contextualized the thinking from their lived experience. They considered the benefit of the weekly pass because they entertained the possibility of having multiple jobs, working on the weekends, and utilizing the pass for all additional travel. While this response was incorrect based on the standardized test answer key, it is important for teachers seeking to utilize culturally responsive teaching practices to understand the perspective of the students who responded this way. Considering students' cultural perspectives when designing assessments ensures that questions measure understanding rather than familiarity with dominant cultural norms.

Social Justice

Culturally responsive teachers understand that education is not apolitical, and they use classroom instruction to help students understand their role in society, creating a sociopolitical consciousness in their students. Students see themselves as change agents, capable of impacting their community and beyond (Brown et al., 2018; Milton, 2016). Ladson-Billings (2006) stressed that this tenet of her culturally responsive pedagogy was not about teachers pushing a political agenda on their students; rather, it was about equipping students with knowledge “to better understand and critique their social position and context” (p. 37). To achieve this goal, teachers may invite students to identify oppressive practices and create plans to remedy these inequitable situations when possible.

Embracing their roles as social justice educators, teachers must critically examine the cultural perspectives they bring into the classroom to intentionally foster equity through culturally responsive practice. Ebersol et al. (2016) interviewed teachers participating in a graduate level course on ethnicity to determine how they viewed their role as social justice educators. One student discussed his realization that as an educator he was a conduit of his own culture within his classroom. He highlighted the need for teachers to be conscious of the experiences they bring to their practice and also those they lack. The researchers stated, “He recognizes that teaching is a political act and is moving towards a transformative perspective that supports culturally responsive teaching and embeds culture in every aspect of teaching throughout the day” (p. 101). When teachers recognize that they teach culture, whether consciously or unconsciously, through their own perspectives, they can more intentionally structure their lessons and instructional practices around culturally responsive values.

Culturally responsive educators use their subject area instruction as a platform for social justice, encouraging students to analyze real-world inequities. In a study of math teachers utilizing culturally responsive practices, Ukpokodu (2011) observed that some teachers had students examine social justice issues by looking for disparities in data between racial groups and genders as well as reviewing data related to job opportunities, leadership positions, and school graduation rates for different races and genders. One teacher had students compare the number of liquor stores to grocery stores in a neighborhood. Another teacher used unemployment data from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics to teach fractions and ratios. When making decisions about the cultural elements that teachers bring into the classroom, it is important that they

are self-reflective, taking caution of trivializing or stereotyping their students' experiences.

Educators who use culturally responsive teaching practices encourage students to develop the skills to question how power structures are created and maintained in their communities and country. Teachers prepare students with skills to question inequalities and transfer what they learn in the classroom into real world experiences. In a study of one history teacher's experience teaching urban low-income African American students about racism and political change, Epstein et al. (2011) observed the teacher, Ms. Vega, reframe the historical perspective of the events she was teaching so that people of color were seen as "agentic, individual, and collective actors in history and society . . . integrated into the curriculum" (p. 4). Instead of focusing on the limited historical perspectives of people of color that are typically found in classrooms, Ms. Vega organized her class into themes around racism, government authority, and political activism, emphasizing the fact that, while it may take on different forms than in the past, racism is still active today. She also centered conversations around the various forms of resistance that took place when the government oppressed people of color, hoping that by teaching these lessons would provide examples of activism that "young people themselves might consider in dealing with racism and other acts of oppression in their lives" (p. 9). These culturally responsive teaching practices helped students to understand the complexities of prejudices and the sacrifices necessary to stand up to it.

The literature underscores that culturally responsive teaching is not simply about acknowledging diversity, but about actively working to dismantle inequities through intentional instructional choices. Teachers who recognize their role as social justice

educators embed critical perspectives into their pedagogy, helping students discover societal disparities through academic content. By reflecting on their own cultural influences and remaining cautious of reinforcing stereotypes, educators can create inclusive learning environments that affirm students' identities and empower them to engage with the world as informed critical thinkers.

Culturally responsive teaching is a holistic, equity-driven approach that deeply informs all aspects of classroom practice. Teachers in these classrooms maintain high academic expectations, paired with intentional scaffolding to ensure success for every student. They prioritize building relationships with and between students while embedding students' cultural experiences into the curriculum in meaningful and authentic ways. These educators also reflect on how different worldviews may influence student thinking, designing assessments and instruction that value multiple perspectives. Finally, culturally responsive teaching becomes a vehicle for social justice, challenging systems of oppression and promoting inclusive learning environments. The classroom examples presented demonstrate that this approach honors the identities, voices, and potential of all learners.

Roadblocks to Implementation

There is a growing body of research that highlights ways teachers best learn how to implement culturally responsive practices, such as reflecting on their own beliefs, participating in culturally relevant classroom experiences themselves, and being supported through the curriculum design. That being said, researchers still struggle to find an effective approach used by higher education to guide teacher preparation in

culturally responsive teaching and assessment so that they are regularly using these practices in the classroom (Brown et al., 2018; Ebersol et al., 2016).

Studies on multicultural education reveal a disconnect between what preservice teachers learn and what they actually implement in the classroom. In an action research study of graduate level students participating in a course on ethnicity and education, Ebersol et al. (2015) analyzed teachers' participation in discussions and implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices. They found that many of the 18 teachers who participated in their study reported doing superficial cultural activities, such as including black authors during black history month, or limited their culturally responsive teaching to a unit as opposed to ingraining it in their everyday practice. One teacher reported having students complete a cultural research project where they would make cultural foods, and another commented that she would only be able to do the cultural project if she completed the rest of the mandated curriculum. Both of these examples highlighted the belief that teachers viewed culturally responsive teaching as something extra and optional outside of the daily curriculum. Ebersol et al. noted, "For teachers who viewed teaching about culture as an activity, some were intimidated by their lack of cultural knowledge or did not see the value of being responsive to a students' culture" (p. 100). This sort of "touristic view" of culture devalues and trivializes the lived experiences of minority students in the classroom.

While there is a significant amount of research dedicated to the theoretical impact of culturally relevant education, the operationalization is relatively unexplored in the area of teacher resistance (Young & Young, 2023). When examining the limited research that is available, multiple roadblocks surface that stop teachers from implementing culturally

responsive teaching practices in their classrooms. One of the biggest reasons a teacher may not implement culturally responsive practices is because they do not fundamentally believe that CRT is necessary, either because of implicit bias or overt racism. With limited research on the quantitative measurements of its effectiveness as a means to student achievement, teachers are weary of implementation (Young & Young, 2023). Even some teachers who recognize the need to teach in a culturally responsive way fail to implement because they do not have the self efficacy to feel that they can do so effectively. They lack examples to use as models because professional development that provides specific examples for implementation is limited (Ukpokodu, 2011). They also lack the time and resources to make intentional changes in lesson plans. What follows is a deeper analysis of these roadblocks to implementation.

Teacher Beliefs

Teachers' beliefs about ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity in their classroom have a direct impact on their likelihood of utilizing culturally responsive teaching practices. Research shows that beliefs and behaviors are interdependent (Gay, 2015). Teachers who believe their students, regardless of race or ethnicity, can be successful “provide them with intellectually rigorous curriculum content, and imaginative, engaging, and uplifting learning experiences” (Gay, 2015, p. 126). Unfortunately, strong cultural bias is embedded in the education system, which translates into “low-performance expectations, and offering low status programs and . . . insignificant learning experiences (such as rote memory, regurgitation, and drill)” (p. 127) for non-mainstream students. These actions are contradictory to the values of culturally responsive teaching.

In order to teach in a culturally responsive manner, teachers have to be willing to be personally invested in examining their own implicit and explicit biases (Young & Young, 2023). They need to be willing to learn about diverse issues and self-reflect on the role they may have played in a system that marginalizes some of their students. It can be uncomfortable. If teacher preparation programs or professional development presents culturally responsive teaching practices as a way to “fix” the fact that teachers are dissimilar to their students, it may make them feel inadequate or like they have done something wrong (Young & Young, 2023). This approach could turn them off from this type of instruction altogether or make them feel as if they are being told they are harmful to their students.

The crux of culturally responsive teaching is intentional actions aimed toward social justice and addressing educational inequities. Teachers who are unwilling to acknowledge the disconnect between society and marginalized students cannot be culturally responsive, even if they utilize good teaching strategies (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). In an interview with an ELA teacher, Dyches et al. (2022) asked about the teacher’s intent behind some of her instructional choices. The teacher repeatedly insisted that she was to remain neutral in regard to social issues and topics. While some of her actions appeared to be culturally responsive, she expressly intended not to impact her students’ sociopolitical consciousness, stating that doing so was not her role as an ELA teacher. This teacher’s personal beliefs caused her to fall short of fully implementing CRT as intended by Ladson-Billings’ (2014) vision of CRT that “explicit[ly] engages questions of equity and justice” (p. 74). Without a conscious commitment to equity,

teachers risk undermining the foundations of culturally responsive teaching, reducing it to strategies rather than an intentional practice.

Teachers' perspectives of culturally responsive teaching significantly influence the depth and consistency of its implementation in their classrooms. After analyzing the classroom practices of teachers enrolled in their college course on equity, Ebersol et al. (2016) categorized them into three categories: (1) those who provided their students with cultural activities, (2) those who were moving toward a culturally responsive perspective, and (3) those who viewed themselves as culturally responsive teachers. The researchers found that the teachers who viewed culturally responsive teaching as a perspective as opposed to an activity believed in its importance and found ways to infuse it in their classrooms, regardless of barriers. Ebersol et al. stated, "For those who saw culturally responsive teaching as an activity, this meant they had to have outside resources come in to teach them how to do it and without those resources and support, it wasn't possible" (p. 102). The teachers who saw CRT as a perspective were not concerned with their lack of knowledge or cultural understanding; instead, they examined their critical racial and socio-cultural consciousness and took it upon themselves to learn and grow along with their students. Teachers who embrace culturally responsive teaching as a guiding perspective rather than a one-time activity demonstrate a sustained commitment to transformative practice.

Lack of Evidence

Another roadblock to the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices is that it is difficult to observe its effectiveness. According to Young and Young (2023), culturally responsive teaching remains "over theorized and under operationalized

based on the well-documented lack of quantitative evidence to substantiate the effectiveness of these innovations. This absence of quantitative evidence directly impacts observability” (p. 104). Teachers are more likely to take on a new task, even if they may not completely believe in or understand it, as long as there is quantitative evidence to support it. When there is a lack of evidence, they are more likely to continue with what they are currently doing. Unfortunately, according to Young and Young:

The number of studies yielding valid effect sizes for CRP and CRT implementation lacks the statistical power to justify a meta-analysis . . . The absence of a representative number of quantitative results prevents researchers from establishing size benchmarks . . . which is the empirical lens to observability. (p. 104)

Without quantitative evidence connecting culturally responsive teaching practices with student growth and achievement, it may be difficult to convince teachers of its value.

Culturally responsive teaching not only affirms the identities of Black students but also enhances learning outcomes for all students through student-centered instructional practices. Through an analysis of several educational studies, Gay (2018) concluded that Black students experienced greater academic success when taught through practices that emphasized their own culture. A number of other studies found that culturally responsive instructional practices are good for all students (Bassey, 2016). Culturally responsive teachers value all children for their contribution and are responsive to the care and needs of every student. They use multiple teaching strategies to engage students and adapt instruction to meet their individual needs. When teachers are empowered to make decisions about their instruction based on what they know and have

observed of their students, they expand the intellectual abilities of all children in their classroom.

When considering student achievement, almost exclusive attention is paid to academic content mastery; however, learning is multidimensional. Student success can be influenced by a multitude of factors, such as security, respect, understanding of norms and protocols, and contextual influences (Gay, 2015). Tatiana, Kobicheva, Tokereva, and Mokhorov (2022) studied the relationship between psychological security of students and their academic engagement and performance. Through an analysis of results from an online survey, an academic engagement scale, and academic performance results, the researchers found that psychological security predicted academic performance positively. Without attending to these psycho-emotional influences, achievement gaps will continue to persist. Culturally responsive teaching emphasizes the importance of educating the whole child, which means attending to their perspectives and experiences as well as their academic needs.

Some researchers have demonstrated that culturally responsive teaching practices have a positive influence on achievement for marginalized groups. This success can be observed in increased time on learning tasks, better attendance and discipline records, and higher grades and test scores (Gay, 2015). Conversely, in school environments where students' learning environments or ethnic identities and contributions are ignored or denigrated, these same factors decrease.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

While a growing number of teachers recognize the need for culturally responsive teaching practices, many of them lack the self-efficacy necessary to move forward with

implementation. In her book on culturally relevant pedagogy, Ladson-Billings (2006) described an encounter with a teacher who expressed frustration that while teachers are being asked to teach with a culturally relevant mindset, no one is telling them how to do it. Ladson-Billings goes on to explain that cultural competence is not something that can be prescriptively taught. Students come into a classroom with a wide range of cultures and experiences that change from year to year and class to class. What works for one group of students will not work for another, which is why teachers need to develop a deep cultural competence about their students. Milner (2010) stated, “Cultural competence is about student acquisition of cultural knowledge regarding their own cultural ways and systems of knowing society and thus expanding their knowledge to understand broader cultural ways and systems of knowing” (p. 67). Milner emphasized that it was not necessary for teachers to enter into their classrooms with an abundance of knowledge; rather, they need to be open and willing to learn. Some common techniques for learning about student backgrounds are for teachers to conduct home visits or immerse themselves in the students’ culture by participating in service learning projects. Unfortunately, many teachers reported feeling uncomfortable with these practices, citing that they were intrusive to families or beyond the demands of a teacher’s required work schedule (Brown et al., 2018).

Culturally responsive teaching requires intentional self-reflection, relationship building, and a willingness to engage with cultural differences. In a study of a qualitative research study on the culturally responsive teaching practices of a White teacher in an urban school district, Milner (2010) observed classroom practices, analyzed artifacts, attended school events, and conducted interviews over a 19 month period. He was

interested in discovering how the teacher, Mr. Hall, was able to cultivate competency in a culture different from his own. Milton discovered that Mr. Hall was able to perpetuate meaningful and authentic relationships with his students, which allowed him to learn from them. He was unafraid to confront and discuss racial issues, and he created a culture of collaboration with his colleagues, building a collective efficacy within his school. Milner stated, “This White teacher was able to develop congruence with his highly diverse learners because he developed cultural competence about them and concurrently deepened his knowledge and understanding of himself” (p. 87). By reaching outside the walls of his own classroom, Mr. Hall took responsibility for and learned from all the students in the school, not just his own. Instead of asking for a blueprint for how to teach students who were different from himself, Mr. Hall worked to find connections and understandings through relationships and collaboration. Mr. Hall’s experience illustrates that culturally responsive teaching is not about following a scripted approach, but rather about embracing a continuous process of learning, connection, and collective responsibility.

Time

The amount of time needed to prepare lessons that are culturally responsive is fairly significant. This type of lesson planning requires intentional moves on the teacher’s part to infuse all of the different elements of CRT (Young & Young, 2023). Teachers need to be specifically responsive to the group of students they have in their classroom, which means their lesson plans must change every year. They can’t use blanket lessons that may come with a canned curriculum or reuse entire lessons from year to year. Additionally, if teachers are expected to design lessons around their individual students’

cultures and backgrounds, they need time to get to know their students. This deep dive into understanding their students can be a struggle for some teachers. Brown et al. (2018) interviewed one teacher who participated in a focused professional development course designed to enhance teachers' understanding of CRT stated, "[In one of the readings] they showed how important it is to go to the family's home and meet the family and see the home life to learn more about the student, but how could you possibly do that with all your students? . . . It's very hard to do all that a teacher is expected to do" (p. 30). While culturally responsive lesson planning is critical to meeting the diverse needs of students, the time it takes to tailor instruction for each unit poses a significant time challenge for teachers already navigating demanding workloads.

Teachers also need time to learn new practices. They already spend an average of 55 hours per week on teaching and preparation (Najarro, 2022). If learning how to implement CRT takes too much time, they will not commit. In a focus group that Ukpokodu (2011) conducted with teachers discussing the levels of implementation in their classrooms, many cited the changing dynamics of education, focusing on the uniformity of courses to teach toward the state and national standards. They mentioned concerns with the impact that individualized instruction could have on the results of their students' high-stakes testing, explaining that teaching from the textbook that is already aligned to those standards is simply more convenient and less time consuming. The time-intensive nature of applying culturally responsive practices, compounded by the relentless demands of standardized testing, creates a significant obstacle for implementation of culturally responsive practices.

Schools that expect teachers to implement culturally responsive practices may be more successful with a phase-in approach so that teachers can continue to learn as they design lessons around different elements of the culturally responsive practices (Young & Young, 2023). Researchers Brown et al. (2018) found that teacher collaboration, either with a small cohort or a cooperating teacher, was essential to allow teachers to exchange ideas and engage in conversations. Working together allowed teachers to critically reflect on their practices, challenge their personal biases, and co-develop culturally responsive curriculum. In one specific example, teachers co-constructed lessons that integrated students' cultural background into science content. Teachers discussed their classroom experiences, shared resources, and critically examined how race and culture intersect with science instruction. These discussions helped them reflect on their biases and improve their teaching strategies to be more culturally responsive. Schools that encourage a phased-in collaboration model could provide opportunities for teachers to share the workload and create deeper, more substantive learning opportunities for students.

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Despite growing diversity in the classroom, many teacher preparation programs leave future educators feeling unequipped to meet the needs of culturally diverse students (Brown et al., 2018). Teacher education programs focus on pragmatic skills and assets-based methods to serve all learners, as opposed to looking more deeply at inequities impacting students of color. They do not specifically emphasize core elements of culturally responsive teaching, such as sociopolitical consciousness and cultural competence, outside of the brief introduction in mandatory diversity courses for teacher educators (Brown et al., 2018). For example, Ligocki (2023) conducted a case study

examining the experiences of teachers within their first three years of teaching. The study revealed that many new teachers felt that what they learned in their teacher preparation courses did not adequately prepare them to address the cultural and linguistic diversity they actually experienced in the classroom. The research emphasized the need for teacher preparation programs to bridge the gap between theoretical coursework and the realities of a diverse classroom. Even those courses that are specifically focused on deeper elements of culturally responsive teaching practices provided varying interpretations because of inconsistent understanding by faculty. This lack of exposure also leads to limited opportunities for preservice teachers to test out and receive feedback on culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom during their teacher preparation (Young & Young, 2023). Without consistent opportunities to develop and practice core tenets of culturally responsive teaching, new teachers often enter classrooms underprepared to support all learners effectively.

School districts may choose to respond to the holes in teacher preparation by providing their own professional development, but it often varies in quality and duration. Kozlowski (2017) examined a professional development program aimed at enhancing teachers' awareness of culturally responsive teaching for English learners. The research found that while the PD allowed teachers to develop knowledge of strategies, it did not foster a deeper understanding necessary for sustained instructional change. Additionally, Penner-Williams et al. (2019) investigated the sustainability of teacher growth from PD in CRT. The study concluded that while professional development efforts have expanded, the evidence showed that the effectiveness of the PD was limited to changes in instructional practices during and immediately after training, with fewer long-term

implications. A lack of sustained and in-depth PD may add to resistance from teachers because they may become frustrated at the additional time taken away from their teaching (Young & Young, 2023). If teachers already feel discouraged from CRT because they have not seen any evidence of its effectiveness, feeling unsupported in their preparation and continued professional development could potentially drive a larger wedge.

When teachers participate in well-designed courses or professional development that emphasize reflection and culturally responsive thinking, teachers are able to adjust their previous understanding to reflect new practices. When Ebersol et al. (2016) worked with graduate students enrolled in their ethnicity and education course, they began to see students change their viewpoints and classroom practices. One teacher who was relatively new to discussions about culture and equity addressed how his personal reflection on CRT caused him to change his classroom practices. After participating in the course, he started to notice that his students were using ethnic name-calling in his school. Through some internal dialogue, the teacher addressed his personal tensions regarding whether to conform to what seemed to be socially acceptable in his environment or confronting what he knew was inappropriate, which ultimately led him to implement a no-tolerance policy in his classroom. The researchers noted that “the course was a beginning place for him to self-reflect, confirm his personal values, beliefs, and in effect, initiate a policy within his classroom which supported those values” (Ebersol et al., 2016). With coursework geared toward self-reflection and intentional implementation strategies, teachers are able to move toward becoming culturally responsive teachers.

Despite the growing emphasis on culturally responsive teaching in educational discourse, significant roadblocks hinder its implementation in classrooms. One major

barrier lies in teacher beliefs - educators who do not view teaching as a sociopolitical act or who hold deficit-beliefs views of students may struggle to embrace CRT practices fully. Additionally, a lack of large-scale, empirical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of CRT contributes to teachers' hesitancy. Teachers also report feeling unprepared to design and deliver culturally responsive lessons due to limited training in their teacher preparation programs and inadequate professional development opportunities. Even when teachers are willing to engage in CRT, many lack the self-efficacy needed to implement it with confidence and fidelity. On top of these challenges is the time required to prepare lessons tailored to the unique backgrounds and experiences of students. Together, these factors reveal the complex challenges teachers face in making culturally responsive pedagogy a sustainable part of their instructional practice.

Conclusion

This literature review underscores the persistent mismatch between the racial and ethnic composition of teachers and students in U.S. public schools and the consequences this incongruity has on educational equity. While the teaching force has become slightly more diverse over time, it has not kept pace with student demographics, reinforcing systemic challenges in how education is delivered to historically marginalized populations. Research suggests that teacher-student ethnic matching can foster stronger academic and social outcomes, yet the underrepresentation of teachers of color in predominantly White schools limits many students' opportunities for such connections. This gap highlights the broader need for all educators to develop the skills and awareness necessary to engage in culturally responsive teaching.

Culturally responsive teaching has been linked to improved student engagement, comprehension, and critical thinking, yet its implementation remains inconsistent. Despite growing attention in teacher education programs, many educators enter the classroom without the necessary experience or reflective practice to integrate these strategies effectively. Systemic constraints, including rigid curricular structures, institutional resistance, and personal biases, further hinder the transition from theory to practice. As a result, many classrooms continue to operate within frameworks that prioritize dominant cultural norms, leaving students from diverse backgrounds without the inclusive learning experiences that research suggests are critical to their success.

The challenges in fully realizing culturally responsive teaching reflect broader structural inequities within the education system. Addressing these barriers requires better teacher preparation, self-reflective practices, and ongoing professional development that moves beyond surface-level discussions of diversity. Without meaningful structural change, the opportunity gap will persist, further disadvantaging students from historically marginalized backgrounds. However, if implemented with fidelity, culturally responsive teaching has the potential to reshape educational experiences by valuing students' cultural knowledge and identities as central to their learning process.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Overview

This chapter examines electronic survey results from 179 teacher participants from across the United States. The results explored potential relationships between a person's beliefs about certain topics related to equity and inclusion and their self-reported use of culturally responsive teaching practices in their classroom. I also considered if demographic information had any impact on teachers' answers to either set of questions. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), "Assessing whether certain factors predict an outcome is best suited to quantitative research" (p. 13). Additionally, Sukamolson (2007) suggested that quantitative research is best suited for situations in which the researcher wants to quantify opinions or beliefs, explain a phenomena, or to test out a hypothesis. The quantitative research provides a systematic framework for measuring variables and analyzing statistical relationships to draw objective conclusions about patterns and outcomes.

Research Questions

To analyze the connection between teacher beliefs and their likelihood to regularly infuse culturally responsive pedagogy in their classrooms, I researched the following questions:

1. To what extent do teachers' personal belief systems relate to their implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices?
2. What beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about students and learning are most influential in shaping teachers' CRT practices?

3. How do teacher belief profiles vary across different contexts (e.g., subject area, grade level, years of experience)?

Research Design

My research questions sought to determine the relationship between teacher beliefs and their classroom practices in order to inform future research on widespread implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices. This research could also be used to identify gaps between teachers' beliefs and their actual use of strategies to reveal professional development needs. In order to find relationships between variables, I used a three-part survey that asked questions about participant demographics, their personal beliefs about equity, and their classroom practices.

Participants

The target population for this study was any in-service teachers. Ideally I wanted to survey participants who represented a strong cross section of the teaching population so that I could consider differences between participants' race, gender, teaching experience, grade level, and other demographic factors. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), individuals participating in the study should be randomly selected, with a minimum number of 350 participants to adequately conduct survey analysis. While it would have been ideal to survey that many teachers, realistically I wanted to receive a minimum of 100 results from full-time K-12 teachers from schools across the United States who represented an even mix of demographics. While it would be ideal to have more participants, I was well aware of survey fatigue and how difficult it would be to find teachers who had the time and the willingness to respond. Teachers were considered if they completed at least one full academic year of teaching and were

teaching in general or special education classrooms. Participation in my survey was anonymous, voluntary, and confidential. Teachers did not receive any financial incentive for participating in my study. Prior to data collection, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A).

Upon the completion of my survey, a total of 179 teachers participated. Table 3.1 shows the background characteristics of these teachers.

Table 3.1

Background Characteristics of Survey Participants

Characteristic	Percentage
Teacher Gender	
Female	85.8
Male	13.5
Non-Binary/Other	0.7
Teacher Race/Ethnicity	
Amer. Indian/Alaska Native	0.7
Asian	0.7
Black/Afr. Amer	4.1
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish	4.7
White	87.3
Multi-Ethnic	0.7
Other	2.0
Average Class Ethnicity Percentage	
Amer. Indian/Alaska Native	4.3
Asian	11.1
Black/Afr. Amer	22.0
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish	19.0
White	53.1
Multi-Ethnic	11.8
Other	16.5
School Type	
Public - traditional	83.8
Public - Charter	4.7
Private - Religious	7.4
Private -Non-religious	0.7
Magnet school	0.7
Other	2.7

Table 3.1 (cont.)*Background Characteristics of Survey Participants*

Characteristic	Percentage
Region of US	
Northeast	6.8
Midwest	64.2
South	17.6
West	8.1
Outside the US	3.4
Grade Level Taught (overlapping)	
K-2 nd	20.9
3 rd -5 th	25.0
6 th -8 th	31.8
9 th -12 th	39.2
Years Experience Teaching	
0-3 yrs	2.7
4-7 yrs	12.8
8-15 yrs	27.0
16-25 yrs	37.8
26+ yrs	19.6
Primary Teaching Role	
General Education	73.0
Special Education	8.8
ESL.ELL	2.0
Specialist (ex. Art, Music, PE)	6.8
Interventionist/Support staff	3.4
Other	6.1

The large majority of the teachers were female. Most of the participants considered their race to be White, with smaller numbers indicating their race as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish and Black or African American. Almost all of the teachers worked in public traditional schools, while fewer indicated that they worked in private - religious schools or in public - charter schools. Most (64%) of the participants worked in a school located in the Midwest, but almost a fifth worked in a school in the South. This group of teachers had experiences across the school spectrum, with two-fifths reporting to work with high school students in grades 9-12, a third working with middle school students in grades 6-8, a quarter working with elementary students in grades 3-5, and a fifth working with early

elementary students in grades K-2. The participants also represented teachers with a broad range of years of experience. The group that was most well represented was teachers with 16-25 years of experience, while more than a quarter of the respondents had 8-15 years of experience and a fifth of them had more than 26 years of experience in the school system. A smaller number (13%) had been in the classroom for 4-7 years, and only 3% had fewer than 3 years of experience.

Instrumentation

I created a three-part survey to conduct my research. The survey was designed to gather both demographic data and self-reported measures related to participants' attitudes and beliefs and their classroom practices. In the first section, I collected basic demographic information about each participant, including gender, race, teaching experience, grade level, and subject taught (Appendix B). These variables helped me contextualize the quantitative data, allowing me to look for significantly impactful factors during data analysis.

The next portion of the survey measured the participants' personal beliefs. I utilized the Teachers' Multicultural Attitudes Survey (TMAS), created by Ponterotto et al. (1998). This tool is a 20-item self-report survey comprising of 13 positively worded questions (e.g., "I find teaching a culturally diverse student group rewarding" and "As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher's job becomes increasingly rewarding") and 7 negatively worded questions (e.g., "Today's curriculum gives undue importance to multiculturalism and diversity" and "Multicultural training for teachers is not necessary") that is widely used in educational research to inventory teachers'

multicultural awareness and sensitivity (Appendix C). The responses are reported on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale has been found reliable in the initial development study (Ponterotto et al, 1998) and continues to be used in more recent studies (Bulut, 2025). The results of this portion of the survey helped me to determine teachers' beliefs regarding equity and inclusion.

After measuring teachers' beliefs, the final section of the survey focused on teachers' self-reported usage of culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom. I loosely based this portion of the survey on the Culturally Responsive Teaching Preparedness Scale (CRTPS). Developed by Hsiao in 2015, the CRTPS has repeatedly been used over the past decade to measure teacher competencies for culturally responsive teaching (Sandoval et al., 2023). I chose to create my own survey based on the CRTPS to ensure that I was using a valid resource while also ensuring that each question was easy to read and directly linked to one single strategy. In this 23 question Likert-type survey, teachers self-reported their use of culturally responsive teaching in their instructional practices (Appendix D). The questions in the survey represent three main components of culturally responsive teaching: curriculum and instruction (e.g., "I am able to use instructional examples that are culturally familiar to students"), relationship and expectation establishment (e.g., "I am able to communicate effectively with culturally diverse students and their parents or guardians"), and group belonging formation (e.g., "I am able to encourage students to share ideas with each other") (Hsiao, 2015). This portion of the survey helped to measure the teachers' implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices, which could then be compared to their beliefs about equity and inclusion.

In addition to the Likert-type scales, I originally included an open-ended section designed to capture qualitative responses regarding the origins of participants' perspectives. Specifically, I intended to ask participants, "Reflecting on your professional experiences, which have had the most impact on your beliefs about these topics? Likewise, of your personal experiences, which have had the most impact on your beliefs about these topics?" These questions asked teachers to reflect on which personal and professional experiences had the most significant impact on their beliefs about the topics in the earlier portions of the survey. However, due to a misunderstanding of the survey delivery platform's settings, the instrument was not configured properly to record these narrative entries. As a result, while the quantitative data regarding teacher beliefs and practices remained intact, the qualitative responses were not collected. This technical limitation prevented the inclusion of personal narratives in the data analysis, a factor which I address further in the limitations section of Chapter 5.

Data Collection

While a random sampling is an ideal situation, I used a convenience sampling of participants who were willing and available. I administered the survey anonymously through Facebook groups for teachers and administrators (e.g., "Teacherinos" and "The Principal's Desk"), as well as my own Facebook page. I also asked that people in the Facebook groups share on their own pages to increase distribution. When conducting a brief review of the membership of these individual groups, the majority of the members are female with similar demographics. Unfortunately, because so many of the respondents were likely people with whom I regularly associate or who are similar demographically to me, it was difficult to guarantee representation of the entire teaching

population; however, it did offer insight into my question and provided me access to a large number of teachers.

Data Analysis

By combining two surveys that measure different aspects of my research question, I was able to make comparisons between teachers' beliefs and practices. In order to address the research question posed by the null hypothesis that personal beliefs have no impact on a teacher's use of culturally responsive teaching practices, I analyzed the relationship between their beliefs and their teaching practices. I conducted a factor and regression analysis to explore the strength and predictive nature of the relationship between them. With the factor analysis, I was able to reduce the number of variables into groups that correlated with each other. This allowed me to work with fewer, more meaningful variables. By also employing a regression analysis, the results could be used to determine the extent to which multicultural attitudes predict self-efficacy in culturally responsive teaching. This approach provided valuable insights into how educators' multicultural beliefs influence their confidence and implementation of culturally responsive practices. Finally, I conducted independent samples t-tests as well as one way ANOVA tests to determine whether any of the demographic variables impacted teachers' responses to the questions about their beliefs or their classroom practices.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Overview

In this chapter, I present the findings of my study, detailing the process I used to investigate how teacher beliefs may influence the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices. My analysis followed a multi-step process to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the data. I began the analysis by conducting a factor analysis to reduce the data into ten constructs - five representing teacher attitudes and five representing culturally responsive instructional practices. Following this, I performed a descriptive analysis to examine the average teacher responses, which provided a general look at the educators' beliefs and self-reported abilities. I then conducted multiple linear regression analysis tests to determine the impact of specific teacher attitudes on various domains of culturally responsive practice. Finally, I ended with independent samples t-tests and One-Way ANOVA tests to determine whether certain demographic variables accounted for any significant differences in teacher responses. Collectively, these steps gave me an overview of how teacher beliefs impacted their culturally responsive practices in the classroom.

Average Teacher Responses to Survey Items

There were 20 items in the portion of the survey taken from the Teachers' Multicultural Attitudes Survey (TMAS), hereto referenced as Survey 1, measuring teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism and equity. Teachers rated their level of agreement on a zero to five-point Likert scale, with five being the highest level of agreement. I ran a factor analysis on the items in this portion of the survey to reduce the

number of variables into constructs. For this question, the factor analysis revealed five constructs. Table 4.1 shows how the factor analysis grouped the questions from Survey 1 into five constructs.

Table 4.1

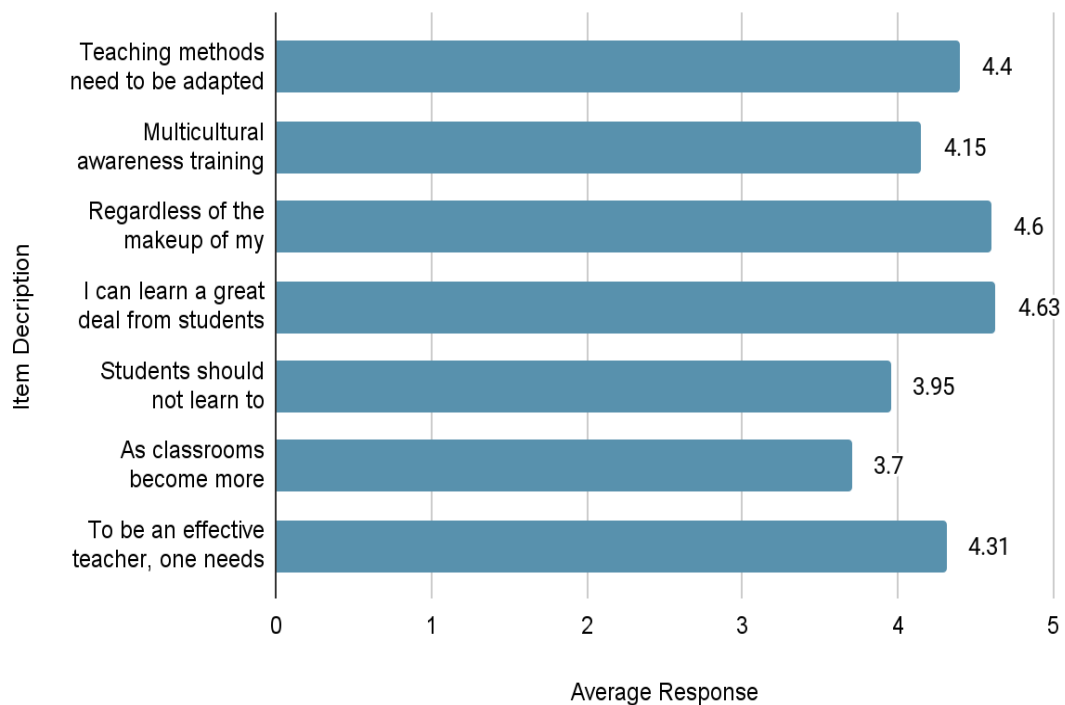
Questions from Survey 1 Grouped into Five Constructs

Construct	Survey Questions
Construct 1: Teachers' Multicultural Awareness and Efficacy	Teaching methods need to be adapted to meet the needs of a culturally diverse student group. Multicultural awareness training can help me to work more effectively with a diverse student population. Regardless of the makeup of my classroom, it is important for students to be aware of multicultural diversity. I can learn a great deal from students with culturally different backgrounds. (Students should learn to communicate in English only.) As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher's job becomes increasingly rewarding. To be an effective teacher, one needs to be aware of cultural differences present in the classroom.
Construct 2: Teachers' Resistance and Negative Attitudes toward Multiculturalism	(Teaching students about multicultural diversity will only create conflict in the classroom.) I find teaching a culturally diverse student group rewarding. Teachers have the responsibility to be aware of their students' cultural backgrounds. (Sometimes I think that there is too much emphasis placed on multicultural awareness and training for teachers.) (Multicultural training for teachers is not necessary.)
Construct 3: Perceived Irrelevance of Multiculturalism and Responsibility	(It is not the teachers' responsibility to encourage pride in one's culture.) (Today's curriculum gives undue importance to multiculturalism and diversity.) (Being multiculturally aware is not relevant for the subject I teach.)
Construct 4: Teacher Awareness and Encouragement of Family Engagement	I am aware of the diversity of cultural backgrounds in my classroom. I frequently invite extended family members (e.g., cousins, grandparents, godparents) to attend parent-teacher conferences.
Construct 5: Perceived Challenges and Need for Role Redefinition	As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher's job becomes increasingly challenging. I believe that the teacher's role needs to be redefined to address the needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds. When dealing with bilingual children, communication styles often are interpreted as behavioral problems.

This first construct, consisting of seven items, measured teachers' multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs. In general, this construct reflects a teacher's belief that cultural diversity is an asset to the classroom, rather than a challenge. It emphasizes the importance of adapting instructional methods, valuing student's backgrounds as a resource for learning, and recognizing the necessity of multicultural awareness in order to be effective in the classroom. The descriptive results of the average responses for each element of the construct can be found in Figure 4.1. Each item is shown along the vertical access, with the average positive response next to each bar.

Figure 4.1

Average Response to Items in Construct 1: Teachers' Multicultural Awareness and Efficacy Beliefs

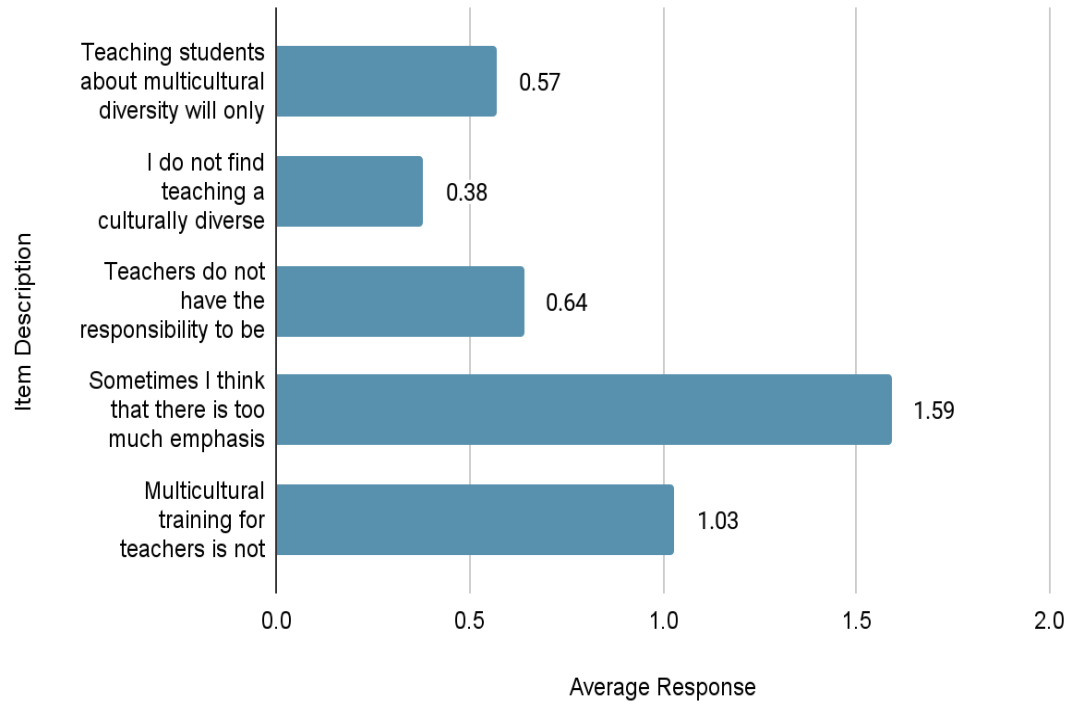


Within this construct, the item with the highest average response was “I can learn a great deal from students with culturally different backgrounds,” with a mean of 4.63 and a standard deviation of .74. The lowest rated item, with a mean of 3.7 and a standard deviation of 1.25 was “As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher’s job becomes increasingly rewarding.” The statement “Students should not learn to communicate in English only” had the largest standard deviation of 1.32, which means that while the average teacher strongly agreed with that statement, there were a significant number of teachers who did not agree to the same degree. For that particular statement, the teacher responses ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Aside from the statements about language acquisition and the positive impact on a teacher’s job, all of the items had an average above 4.0, which means that the majority of teacher responses fell between agreeing and strongly agreeing with these statements.

The second construct measured teacher resistance and negative attitudes toward multiculturalism and consisted of five survey items. This construct is made up of items that measure a teacher’s perception of multicultural education as a burden or source of friction. These items reflect a skepticism toward the necessity of diversity training and a general rejection of professional responsibility regarding cultural competence. The descriptive results can be found in Figure 4.2, formatted the same as Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.2

Average Response to Items in Construct 2: Teachers' Resistance and Negative Attitudes Toward Multiculturalism



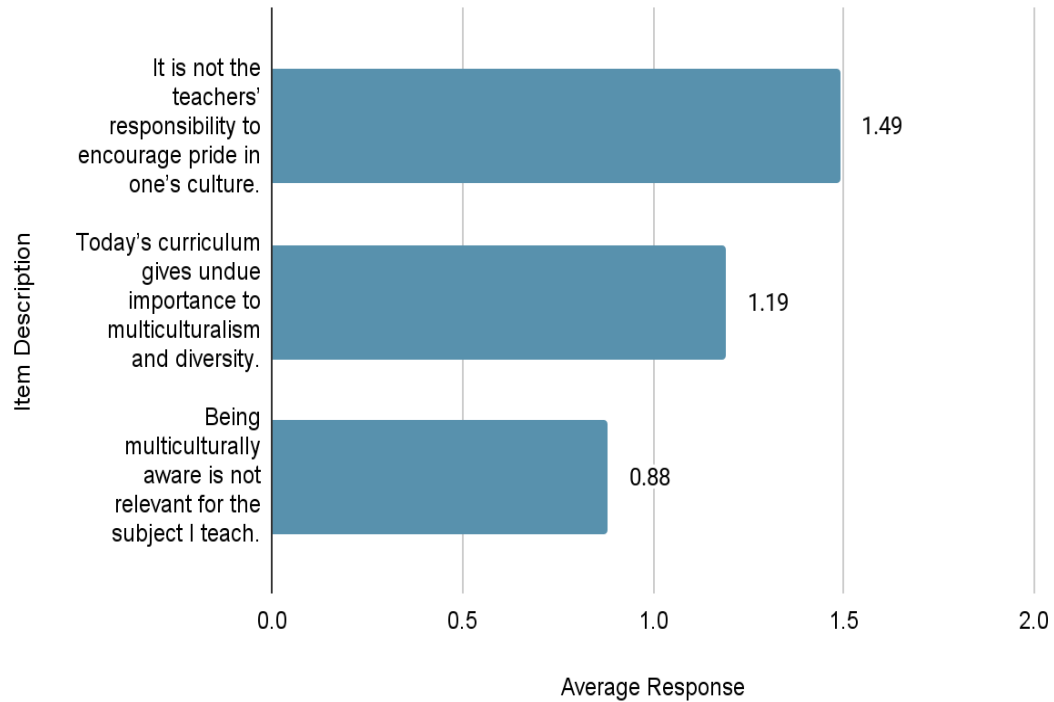
The item within this construct with the lowest average response was “I do not find teaching a culturally diverse student group rewarding,” with a mean of .38 and a standard deviation of .68. This response, along with a statement about conflict caused by teaching multicultural diversity and another about the teacher’s responsibility to be aware of their students’ backgrounds all had averages below .65, which indicates that the majority of teachers disagreed with these statements and are generally welcoming of multiculturalism in their classrooms; however, all three had maximum responses of 3 or above. This discrepancy indicates that while most teachers were open to multicultural instruction and understanding their students’ differences, some teachers are strongly against it. This

observation seems to support the item with the highest average within this construct, which is the statement “Sometimes I think that there is too much emphasis placed on multicultural awareness and training for teachers.” With an average response of 1.59 and a standard deviation of 1.57, it is clear that while most teachers felt a need for education in multicultural awareness, there were some who did not.

The third construct, with a total of three items, measured the perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism and responsibility. The items within this construct reflect the belief that multiculturalism is a distraction, rather than a core component of education. Specifically, these items measure the perception that cultural identity is an external matter irrelevant to the classroom and that diversity initiatives are over-emphasized in the educational realm. The descriptive results can be found in Figure 4.3. This figure, as well as the remaining construct figures, are all formatted the same as the previous two.

Figure 4.3

Average Response to Items in Construct 3: Perceived Irrelevance of Multiculturalism and Responsibility



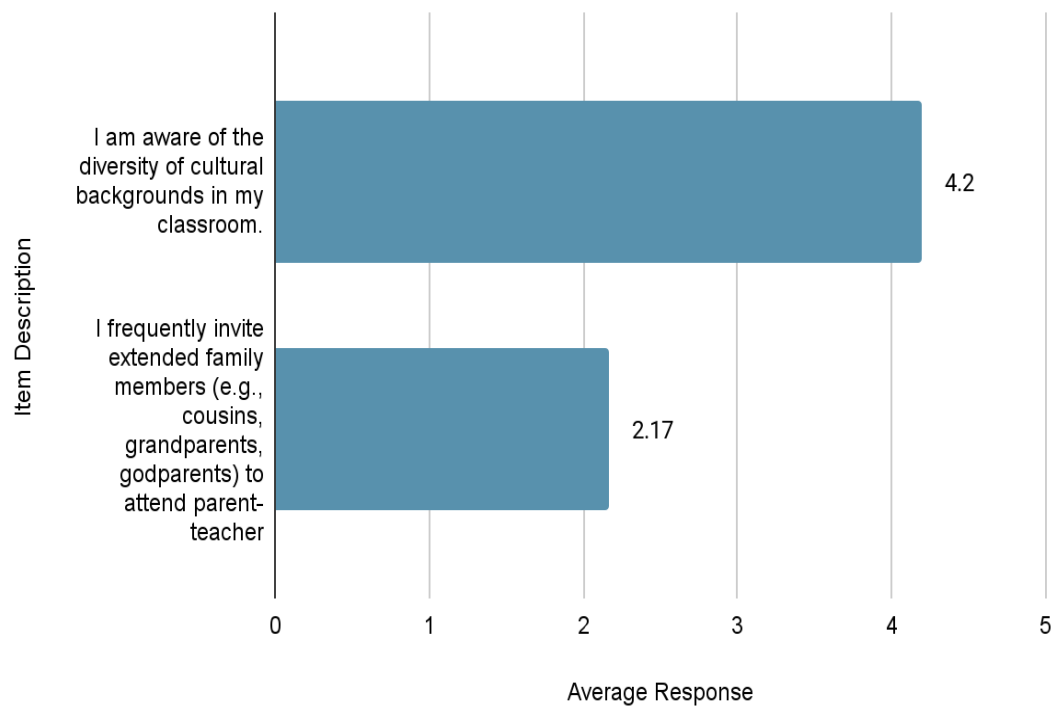
The item with the highest average response in this construct was “It is not the teacher’s responsibility to encourage pride in one’s culture,” with a mean of 1.49 and a standard deviation of 1.25. The other item in the construct with a mean above 1.0 was “Today’s curriculum gives undue importance to multiculturalism and diversity,” which had an average response of 1.19 and a standard deviation of 1.4. The survey item “Being multiculturally aware is not relevant for the subject I teach” had a mean response of 0.88 with a standard deviation of 1.33 and was the lowest average response for the construct. While all three responses had a relatively low average, each one had responses ranging from 0.0 to 5.0, which demonstrates that while the average teacher felt a responsibility

for encouraging multiculturalism in their curriculum and instruction, some teachers strongly believed it did not have a place in their curriculum and instruction.

There were two items in the fourth construct regarding teacher awareness and encouragement of family engagement. This construct represents teachers' awareness of their specific students' backgrounds combined with a commitment to inclusion of family engagement. The descriptive results for this construct can be found in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4

Average Response to Items in Construct 4: Teacher Awareness and Encouragement of Family Engagement



The responses for these two items varied, with one on the side of the scale that showed agreement while the other averaged on the disagree side. The highest average response was for the item “I am aware of the diversity of cultural backgrounds in my

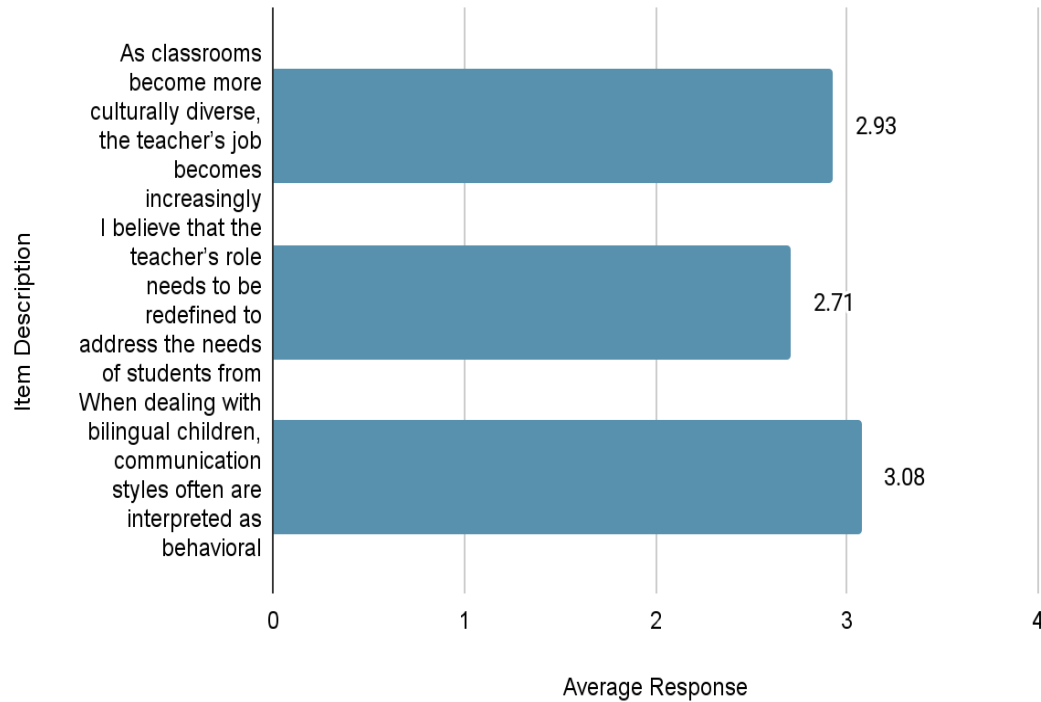
classroom.” This item had a mean response of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.88. In contrast, the second item “I frequently invite extended family members (e.g., cousins, grandparents, godparents) to attend parent-teacher conferences” had a mean of 2.17 and a standard deviation of 1.78. This difference between the two responses may demonstrate that while most teachers were aware that the students in their classrooms represent diverse backgrounds, many of them were less likely to invite those outside of the nuclear family to participate in conferences.

The final construct for this set of survey questions centered around perceived challenges and a need for role redefinition of teachers. This construct addresses the teachers’ recognition of the difficulties and occasional structural misalignments in diverse classrooms. This construct addresses the idea that cultural diversity requires a fundamental shift in how teachers define their roles and how they interpret student behavior to avoid internal bias. It represented three items from the survey, and the descriptive results for this construct can be found in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5

Average Response to Items in Construct 5: Perceived Challenges and Need for Role

Redefinition



The average responses for these three items were relatively similar, all slightly higher than the neutral position of 2.50, demonstrating that most teachers agree with these statements but do not lean strongly in that direction. The highest average response was for the item that stated, “When dealing with bilingual children, communication styles are often interpreted as behavior problems.” This item had a mean response of 3.08 and a standard deviation of 1.35. The lowest average response was for the item “I believe that the teacher’s role needs to be redefined to address the needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds,” with a mean response of 2.71 and a standard deviation of 1.51. For all three items, the responses ranged across the entire spectrum of the scale, indicating

that teachers had mixed feelings about the perceived challenges of having a multicultural classroom and their role as teachers in such an environment.

The five constructs within Survey 1 provided a detailed measure of teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism, revealing general openness yet highlighting specific areas of resistance and differing practice. The first construct showed that most teachers held positive attitudes and felt they could learn from diverse learners, although agreement on the positive career impact was lower. Conversely, the second construct on resistance and negative attitudes indicated a widespread disagreement with negative statements, though a significant minority felt there was too much emphasis on multicultural training. The third construct suggested that teachers generally felt a responsibility for multiculturalism and did not perceive it as irrelevant, despite some teachers strongly disagreeing with this position. The fourth construct revealed a divergence between awareness and practice, showing high teacher awareness of classroom diversity yet low engagement with extended family members. Finally, the fifth construct on perceived challenges indicated slight agreement among teachers that multicultural classrooms present challenges and a potential need for role redefinition, reflecting mixed feelings about these issues across the entire sample. Overall, the findings from Question 11 suggest that while the majority of teachers expressed positive attitudes and a sense of responsibility toward cultural diversity, there was a clear distinction between awareness and practice, along with notable disagreement regarding the extent of multicultural training and the challenges inherent in a diverse teaching environment.

There were 23 items in the portion of the survey based on the Culturally Responsive Teaching Preparedness Scale, hereto referenced as Survey 2, measuring

teachers' ability to utilize culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom.

Teachers reported their ability to implement each of these strategies on a zero to five-point Likert scale, with five being the highest level of comfort. I ran a factor analysis on the items in this portion of the survey to reduce the number of variables into constructs. For this question, the factor analysis revealed five constructs. Table 4.2 shows how the factor analysis grouped the questions from Survey 1 into five constructs.

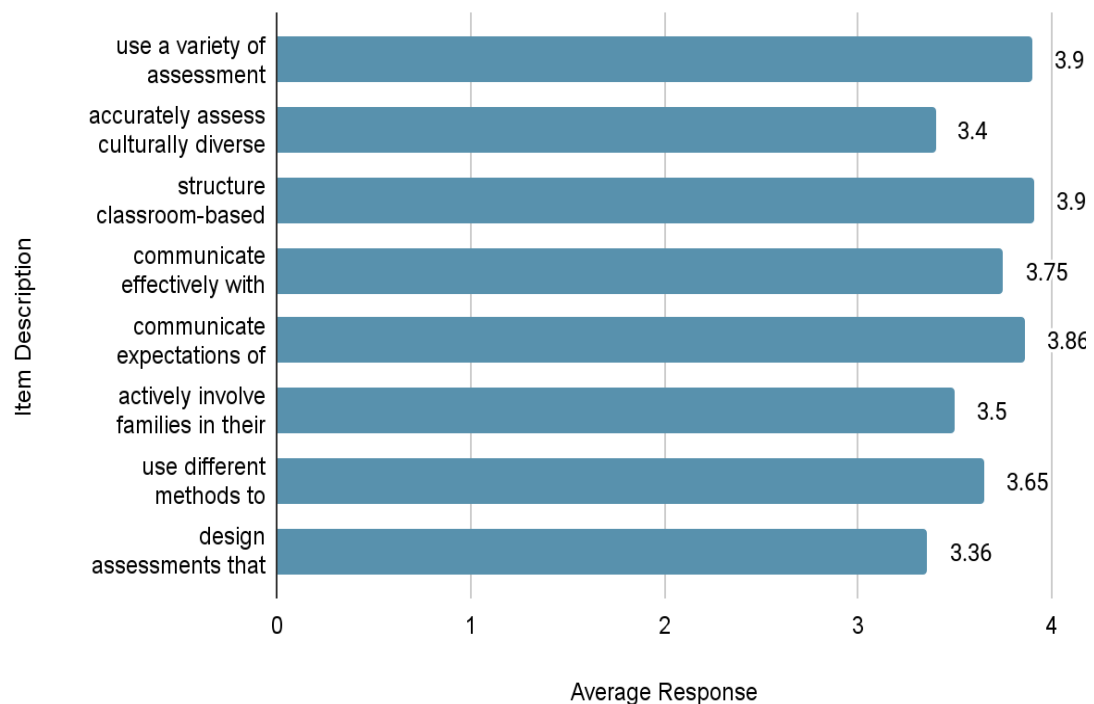
Table 4.2*Questions from Survey 2 Grouped into Five Constructs*

Construct	Survey Questions: I am able to...
Construct 1: Culturally Responsive Assessment and Communication	use a variety of assessment techniques to fairly evaluate student performance (self-assessment, portfolios, projects, etc.). accurately assess culturally diverse students' learning needs. structure classroom-based meetings that are comfortable for parents. communicate effectively with culturally diverse students and their parents or guardians. communicate expectations of success to culturally diverse students. actively involve families in their students' learning. use different methods to communicate with students in culturally responsive ways. design assessments that match the culturally responsive practices used during instruction.
Construct 2: Culturally Responsive Instructional Design and Delivery	assess/revise instructional materials to determine their multicultural strengths and weaknesses. assess/revise instructional materials to determine their relevance to students' interests. assess/revise instructional materials to determine their relevance to students' learning needs. match instructional methods to students' learning needs. establish culturally appropriate expectations for classroom behavior.
Construct 3: Culturally Responsive Engagement and Collaboration	have students work together on projects. encourage students to share ideas with each other. provide students with knowledge and skills needed to function in mainstream culture. provide instruction that holds students' attention.
Construct 4: Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness	support culturally and linguistically diverse students' classroom work. find ways to support language acquisition during instruction. use instructional examples that are culturally familiar to students. infuse the curriculum and thematic units with the culture of students represented in the classroom.
Construct 5: Culturally Responsive Classroom Climate and Relationships	develop/maintain caring relationships with students. create a warm, supporting, safe, and secure classroom environment for culturally diverse students

This first construct, consisting of eight items, measured teachers’ culturally responsive assessment and communication. This construct outlines the practical and technical skills regarding behavioral competency, focusing on how a teacher adapts their evaluation methods and communication styles to ensure equity and partnerships with parents. The descriptive results can be found in Figure 4.6. Each item is shown along the vertical access, with the average positive response next to each bar.

Figure 4.6

Average Response to Items in Construct 1: Culturally Responsive Assessment and Communication



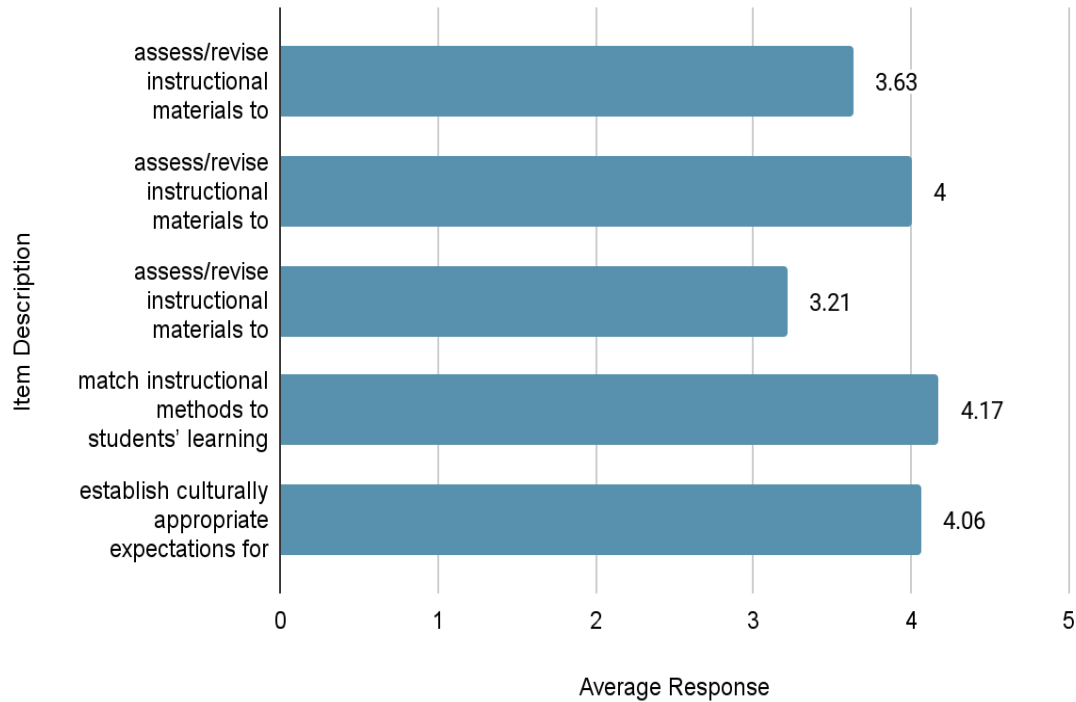
Within this construct, the item with the highest average response was teachers’ perceived ability to “structure classroom-based meetings that are comfortable for parents,” with a mean of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 1.00. The mean of this response

was followed closely by teachers' ability to "use a variety of assessment techniques to fairly evaluate student performance (self-assessment, portfolios, projects, etc.)," which had a mean of 3.0 and a standard deviation of 1.23. The lowest rated item, with a mean of 3.36 and a standard deviation of 1.33 was teachers' ability to "design assessments that match the culturally responsive practices used during instruction." This statement, along with teachers' ability to "accurately assess culturally diverse students' learning needs," both had the highest standard deviation of 1.33. This larger deviation showed that while many teachers felt that they can accurately determine the learning needs of their diverse student body and design assessments to match culturally responsive instructional practices, there were a significant number of teachers who did not feel the same level of comfort. In fact, for both of those statements, the teacher responses ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), showing that some reported the complete ability to use those strategies while others reported the complete inability. All eight of the statements in this construct had an average score of above 3.0, showing that the majority of teachers felt that they were able to implement these strategies in their classrooms.

The second construct measured teachers' ability to implement culturally responsive instructional design and delivery. The items within this construct focus on a teacher's ability to design curriculum and manage their classroom. The items reflect the ability to critically evaluate and modify materials to ensure they are culturally relevant for a specific student population. This construct included five items, and the descriptive results can be found in Figure 4.7, formatted the same as Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.7

Average Response to Items in Construct 2: Culturally Responsive Instructional Design and Delivery



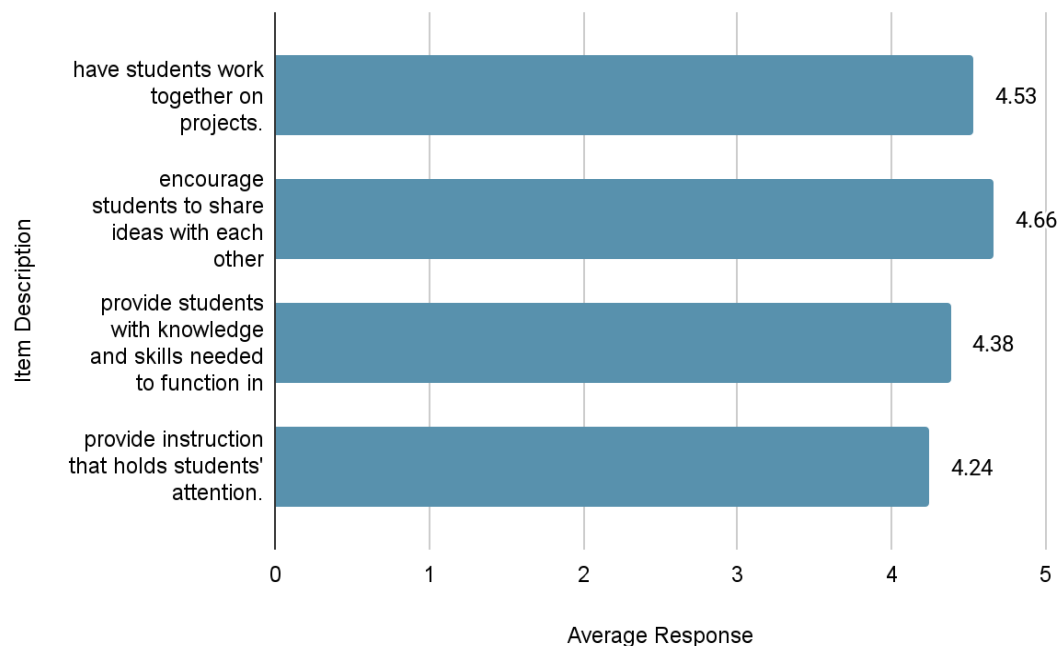
The item with the highest average response in this construct was teachers' reported ability to "match instructional methods to students' learning needs." This item had a mean of 4.17 and a standard deviation of .77, indicating that most teachers either agree or strongly agree that they can identify the individual needs of students and differentiate their instructional practices to meet these needs. In fact, the minimum response for this item was 2.40, which was among the highest minimum of all the items in Survey 2. The item with the lowest mean in this construct was teachers' comfort with their ability to "assess/revise instructional materials to determine their multicultural strengths and weaknesses." This item had a mean of 3.21 and a standard deviation of

1.37, which was relatively low in comparison to the other items in this construct. While teachers felt more comfortable matching their instructional materials to meet their students' interests and learning needs, they were less comfortable matching them to multicultural strengths and weaknesses.

The third construct, with a total of four items, measured teachers' use of culturally responsive engagement and collaboration. The items within this construct reflect a teacher's ability to use strategies that foster a collaborative classroom environment, focusing on community building and cultural competency. The descriptive results can be found in Figure 4.8. This figure, as well as the remaining construct figures, are all formatted the same as the previous two.

Figure 4.8

Average Response to Items in Construct 3: Culturally Responsive Engagement and Collaboration

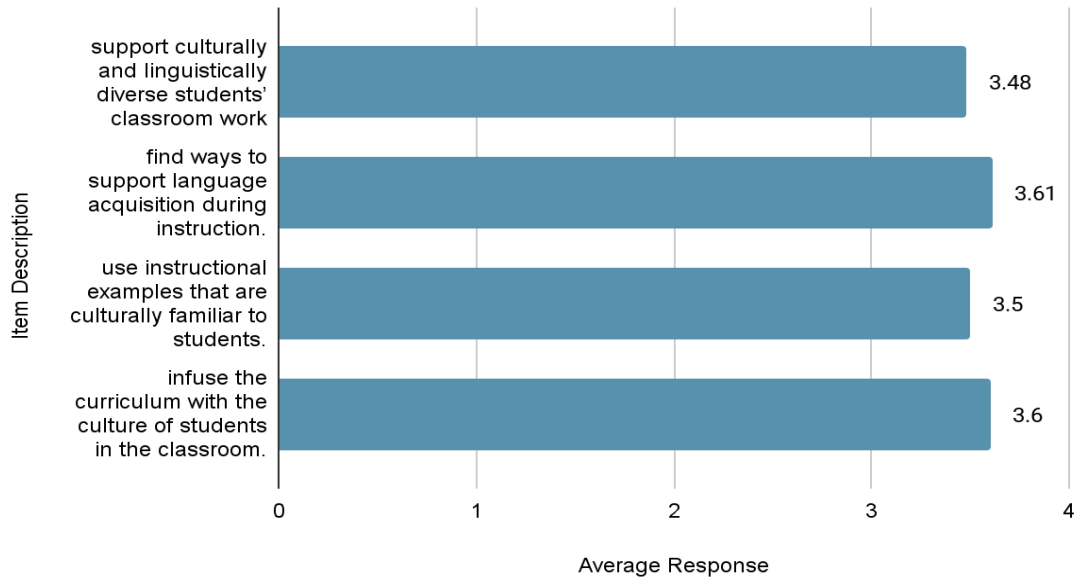


All of the items in this construct had a mean score above 4.0, demonstrating a general comfort level with engaging students and providing them opportunities to work collaboratively. The item with the highest mean was teachers' ability to "encourage students to share ideas with each other." This item had a mean of 4.66 and a standard deviation of 0.51. The item with the lowest mean of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 0.82 was teachers' self-reported ability to "provide instruction that holds students' attention." Even though this item had the lowest mean, there were not any teachers who ranked it as a 0 on the Likert scale, indicating that all teachers felt at least some level of comfort engaging students in their classroom.

The fourth construct for Survey 2 had four items and measured teachers' cultural and linguistic responsiveness. The items in this construct focus more on real-time instructional support and a teacher's ability to include a student's home language and culture into daily lessons. The descriptive results can be found in Figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9

Average Response to Items in Construct 4: Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness



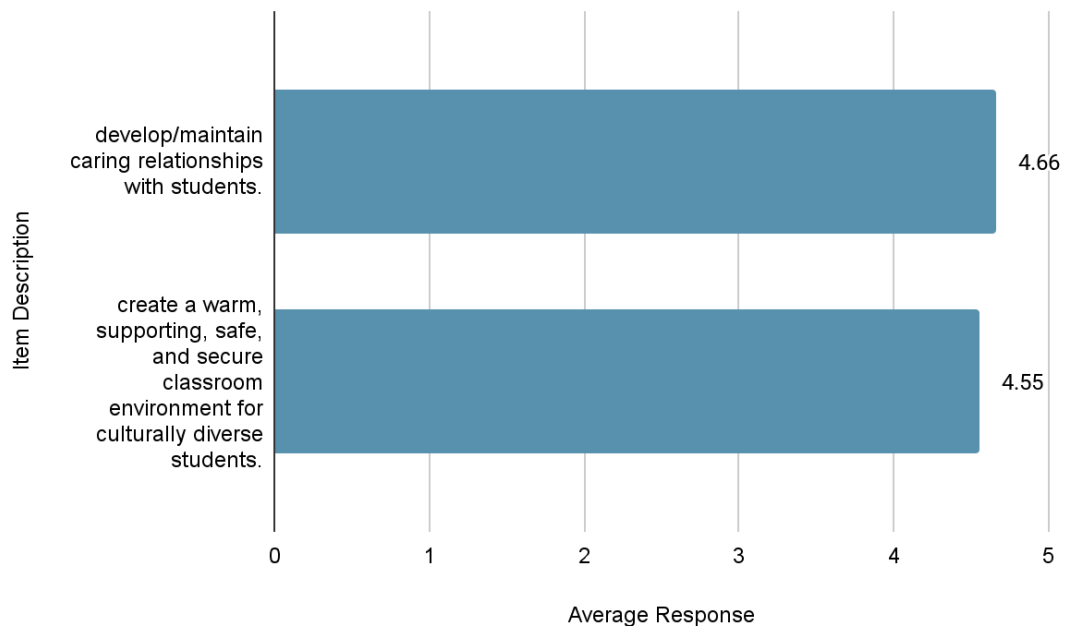
All of the items in this construct had a mean somewhere between 3.48-3.61, indicating that teachers felt very similar about all four items. While the mean responses were all on the upper half of the scale, for three of the four items, responses ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), indicating that teachers had a wide range of comfort regarding their cultural and linguistic responsiveness. While some teachers may have frequently included opportunities for students to complete work in their native language or to use culturally familiar instructional examples, other teachers did not employ either of those strategies.

The final construct for Survey 2, teachers' use of culturally responsive classroom climate and relationships, was made up of two items. The items in this construct measure a teacher's commitment to the social-emotional climate necessary for diverse students to

feel a sense of belonging and psychological safety. The descriptive results for this construct can be found in Figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10

Average Response to Items in Construct 5: Culturally Responsive Classroom Climate and Relationships



Both items in this construct reported a relatively high mean, averaging above 4.5. This means that teachers self-report a very supportive and welcoming classroom climate where they build strong relationships with their students. In one item, where teachers reported their ability to develop and maintain a caring relationship with their students, the lowest recorded response was a 2.5 on the Likert scale. Conversely, for the item that referenced creating a warm, supporting, and safe environment specifically for culturally diverse students, the lowest response was a .40. While most teachers felt that they create

a welcoming environment for all students, there were some teachers who lacked a level of comfort when it comes to supporting culturally diverse students.

When considering all of the constructs for Survey 2, teachers generally reported a high level of comfort across the five measured domains, indicating a perceived ability to implement culturally responsive practices. Specifically, teachers demonstrated the highest comfort in building relationships with students and promoting culturally responsive engagement and collaboration. While teachers felt highly capable of matching instructional methods to student needs and structuring comfortable meetings with parents, they reported less comfort in some of the more technical aspects, such as designing assessments and assessing materials for culturally responsive instruction. Furthermore, the consistent presence of a wide response range from 0 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) across most constructs, suggests that despite high overall averages, there was significant variability, indicating a group of teachers who felt unequipped along with those who reported high competence.

Testing the Relationships Between Constructs

Next, I conducted a linear regression comparing the impact of the constructs from Survey 1 on the constructs of Survey 2. Table 4.3 shows the linear regression results of the constructs from Survey 1 on Culturally Responsive Assessment and Communication. This table includes the beta, the t-value, and the p-value for each construct.

Table 4.3

Linear Regression Results Examining the Impact of Survey 1 Constructs on Culturally Responsive Assessment and Communication

Predictor	Beta	T-value	P-value
Teacher multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs	.31	3.20	.002
Teacher resistance and negative attitude toward multiculturalism	.09	.88	.38
Perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism and responsibility	-.07	-.61	.54
Teacher awareness and encouragement of family engagement	.27	2.78	.01
Perceived challenges and need for role redefinition	.19	1.89	.06

Based on the linear regression of these constructs, there were two constructs that showed a significant positive impact ($p < .05$) on teachers' culturally responsive assessment and communication. The first construct that showed a positive correlation was teachers' multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs. For every standard deviation increase in teachers' beliefs, their use of culturally responsive assessment and communication increased by .31 SD. The second construct that showed a significant impact was teachers' awareness and encouragement of family engagement. For every standard deviation increase in teachers' reported awareness of the importance of family engagement, their use of culturally responsive assessment and communication increased .27 SD. There was also a marginal positive relationship between the perceived challenges and need for role redefinition and teachers' use of culturally responsive assessments, with a standard deviation of .19 SD. The other two constructs from Survey 1 did not show any impact on this factor.

A similar linear regression analysis was performed on the remaining Survey 2 constructs. Table 4.4 shows the linear regression results of the Survey 1 Constructs on Culturally Responsive Instructional Design and Delivery. Each linear regression results table is set up the same as Table 4.3.

Table 4.4

Linear Regression Results Examining the Impact of Survey 1 Constructs on Culturally Responsive Instructional Design and Delivery

Predictor	Beta	T-value	P-value
Teacher multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs	.29	3.05	.003
Teacher resistance and negative attitude toward multiculturalism	.19	1.97	.052
Perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism and responsibility	-.07	-.62	.54
Teacher awareness and encouragement of family engagement	.29	2.96	.004
Perceived challenges and need for role redefinition	.15	1.48	.14

There were two constructs from Survey 1 that had a significant impact on culturally responsive instructional design and delivery and one construct that had a marginal impact. The first construct, teacher multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs, had a positive effect on teachers' likelihood of designing and utilizing culturally responsive instruction. For every standard deviation in multicultural awareness, teachers' use of these strategies increased .29 SD. The second construct, perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism and responsibility, had a negative impact on teachers' instructional design. In this case, as teachers found multiculturalism irrelevant, their use of culturally responsive instructional design methods decreased by .07 SD. Additionally, there was a marginally significant positive relationship between teachers' resistance and negative attitude toward multiculturalism and their use of multicultural instructional design

strategies. Interestingly, as teacher resistance and negative attitude increased, their use of culturally relevant instructional design strategies also increased by .19 SD. This positive relationship may be in part due to the cross-sectional nature of the data, in that it could be that there were more negative attitudes among teachers who had greater use of culturally relevant designs.

Table 4.5 shows the linear regression analysis results of the impact of Survey 1 constructs on Culturally Responsive Engagement and Collaboration.

Table 4.5

Linear Regression Results Examining the Impact of Survey 1 Constructs on Culturally Responsive Engagement and Collaboration

Predictor	Beta	T-value	P-value
Teacher multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs	.31	3.23	.002
Teacher resistance and negative attitude toward multiculturalism	-.03	-.28	.78
Perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism and responsibility	-.09	-.86	.39
Teacher awareness and encouragement of family engagement	.24	2.5	.02
Perceived challenges and need for role redefinition	.19	1.89	.06

There were again two constructs from Survey 1 that showed a significant impact on teachers' use of culturally responsive engagement strategies, and there was one construct that showed a marginal impact. The construct that showed the largest impact was teacher multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs. For every standard deviation increase in this measure, teachers' use of culturally responsive engagement strategies increased .31 SD. The second construct that showed a significant impact was teachers' awareness and encouragement of family engagement. As teachers increased their recognition of the importance of family engagement in their practice, their use of

collaborative strategies increased .24 SD. The construct with a marginal impact was teachers' perceived challenges and need for role redefinition. For each standard deviation increase, teachers' use of engagement and collaboration strategies increased .19 SD.

Table 4.6 shows the linear regression analysis results of the impact of Survey 1 constructs on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness.

Table 4.6

Linear Regression Results Examining the Impact of Survey 1 Constructs on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness

Predictor	Beta	T-value	P-value
Teacher multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs	.28	2.95	.004
Teacher resistance and negative attitude toward multiculturalism	.18	1.78	.08
Perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism and responsibility	-.12	-1.15	.25
Teacher awareness and encouragement of family engagement	.45	5.0	<.001
Perceived challenges and need for role redefinition	.09	.86	.39

Regarding cultural and linguistic responsiveness, there were two constructs that had a significant impact and one that had a marginal impact. Teacher awareness and encouragement of family engagement was the most impactful, with a standard deviation increase of .45 SD. The more teachers engage family in their practices, the more likely they are to be culturally and linguistically aware of what their students bring with them into the classroom. Additionally, as teachers are more multiculturally aware, they are also more likely to be culturally and linguistically responsive. For every standard deviation increase of multicultural awareness, their linguistic responsiveness increased by .28 SD. Marginally impactful was teachers' resistance and negative attitude towards

multiculturalism, which had a .18 SD increase of cultural and linguistic responsiveness for every standard deviation increase of resistance and negative attitude.

Table 4.7 shows the linear regression analysis results of the impact of Survey 1 constructs on Culturally Responsive Classroom Climate and Relationships.

Table 4.7

Linear Regression Results Examining the Impact of Survey 1 Constructs on Culturally Responsive Classroom Climate and Relationships

Predictor	Beta	T-value	P-value
Teacher multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs	.37	3.88	<.001
Teacher resistance and negative attitude toward multiculturalism	-.11	-1.1	.28
Perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism and responsibility	-.21	-2.04	.04
Teacher awareness and encouragement of family engagement	.18	1.82	.07
Perceived challenges and need for role redefinition	.11	1.08	.28

Almost every Survey 1 construct had some type of impact on teachers' classroom climate and their relationships with students. Three of the constructs had a significant impact, and one construct had a marginal impact. Only one construct had no significant effect on teachers' classroom climate. The first construct that significantly impacted classroom climate was teachers' multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs. This construct had a positive impact, with culturally responsive climate increasing .37 SD for every standard deviation increase of multicultural teacher awareness. The two remaining constructs that had a significant impact both showed negative impacts on teacher relationships with students. As teacher resistance and negative attitude toward multiculturalism increased, their classroom culture and relationships with students decreased .11 SD. Similarly, the more teachers perceived multiculturalism as irrelevant or

someone else's responsibility, their classroom climate decreased .21 SD. One additional construct, teacher awareness and encouragement of family engagement had a marginally positive effect on classroom climate. As family engagement increased a standard deviation, classroom climate increased by .11 SD.

Overall, the linear regression analysis between all five constructs of Surveys 1 and 2 reveal a consistent pattern regarding the predictors of culturally responsive practice. Most notably, teacher multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs emerged as a universally significant positive predictor, impacting all dimensions of instruction, assessment, engagement, responsiveness, and climate. Similarly, teacher awareness and encouragement of family engagement proved to be a strong predictor, showing significant positive impacts in four out of the five constructs of Survey 2. Conversely, the constructs related to teacher resistance and perceived irrelevance of multicultural awareness generally demonstrated negative impacts or were not significant, particularly concerning classroom climate and teacher-student relationships. Collectively, these results indicate that teacher awareness and efficacy beliefs as well as a commitment to family integration are the primary drivers of culturally responsive behaviors in the classroom, while negative attitudes and perceived irrelevance serve as barriers to fostering a positive and inclusive classroom environment.

Demographic Comparison Among Constructs

Because of the limited number of responses I received, some of the demographic groupings did not have enough responses to conduct a comparative analysis; however, I was able to compare responses between White vs. non-White participants and public vs.

non-public school participants. I was also able to determine if teacher experience and the grade level one teaches had any impact on their responses.

I conducted an independent samples t-test comparing the mean scores of White participants and Non-White participants across the primary constructs from Surveys 1 and 2. This analysis aimed to determine if statistically significant differences existed between these two groups. Table 4.8 shows the t-test results of these two groups of participants on the Survey 1 constructs. This table includes the mean and standard deviation of each group, as well as the t-value, and the p-value for each construct.

Table 4.8

Independent Samples T-Test Comparing the Responses to Survey 1 Constructs between White and Non-White Participants

Outcome	White Mean (Std Dev)	Non-White Mean (Std Dev)	T-value (p-value)
Teacher multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs	4.26 (0.78)	4.35 (0.68)	.44 (0.66)
Teacher resistance & negative attitude toward multiculturalism	1.89 (0.56)	1.78 (0.70)	-.63 (0.53)
Perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism & responsibility	1.25 (1.11)	1.45 (1.31)	.62 (0.53)
Teacher awareness & encouragement of family engagement	3.47 (1.22)	4.0 (0.86)	2.22 (0.36)
Perceived challenges & need for role redefinition	2.87 (1.08)	3.27 (0.87)	1.42 (0.16)

Results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups for any of the variables tested. Specifically, White and Non-White participants reported similar levels of multicultural awareness relative to their respective

variability, indicating that race did not significantly influence how the teachers responded to these constructs.

Table 4.9 shows the t-test results of the same two groups of participants on the Survey 2 constructs. This table includes the same variables as the previous table.

Table 4.9

Independent Samples T-Test Comparing the Responses to Survey 2 Constructs between White and Non-White Participants

Outcome	White Mean (Std Dev)	Non-White Mean (Std Dev)	T-value (p-value)
Culturally responsive assessment and communication	3.63 (0.95)	3.86 (0.79)	-.82 (0.41)
Culturally responsive instructional design and delivery	3.86 (0.82)	3.65 (0.82)	.86 (0.39)
Culturally responsive engagement and collaboration	4.37 (0.71)	4.60 (0.40)	-1.16 (0.25)
Cultural and linguistic responsiveness	3.55 (0.96)	3.55 (0.61)	.01 (0.99)
Culturally responsive classroom climate and relationships	4.63 (0.56)	4.41 (0.73)	1.28 (0.20)

As with the previous chart, this analysis showed no statistically significant differences between the White and Non-White groups for any of these constructs. The slight variations in means are likely due to the overall variability of the items, rather than a meaningful difference based on race.

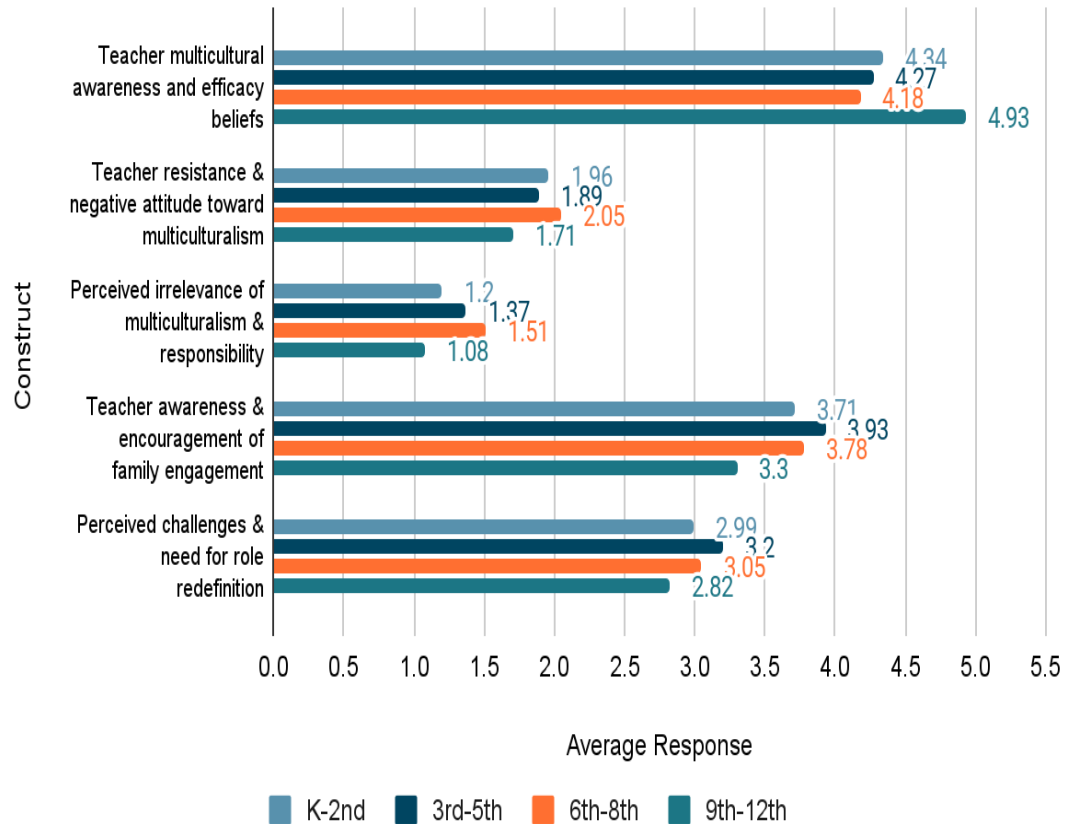
Additionally, I conducted an independent samples t-test comparing the mean scores of public school and non-public school participants across the primary constructs from Surveys 1 and 2. This analysis aimed to determine if statistically significant differences existed between these two groups. The analysis found a significant difference

in the responses between the two groups for two constructs in Survey 1 and for one construct in Survey 2. For perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism and responsibility, public school teachers reported a mean of 1.36 ($SD = 1.17$), while non-public school teachers reported an average score of 0.83 ($SD = 0.86$). Additionally public school teachers reported lower teacher awareness and encouragement of family engagement ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.20$) than their non-public teacher counterparts ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.86$). Finally, for the Survey 2 construct regarding cultural and linguistic responsiveness, public school teachers had an average response of 3.50 ($SD = 0.95$), and non-public school teachers responded with a higher average score of 3.88 ($SD = 0.70$). Aside from these three specific areas, no other statistically significant differences were observed between public and non-public school participants. This result indicates a high degree of group equivalence across the majority of the constructs.

I also conducted an independent samples t-test comparing the groups of teachers who reported teaching different grades of students and their average responses for both Survey 1 and Survey 2 constructs. Figure 4.11 shows the average responses to Survey 1 constructs. The constructs are listed along the vertical axis, and the average responses are listed along the horizontal axis. The results are grouped into four categories by grade level taught (K-2nd, 3rd-5th, 6th-8th, and 9th-12th), with each group represented by a different color.

Figure 4.11

Average Response to Survey 1 Constructs for Each Grade Level



An analysis of the constructs by grade level taught revealed that while the majority of scores remained statistically similar, significant differences emerged regarding teacher resistance and negative attitude toward multiculturalism. Table 4.10 shows the t-value and p-value for each grade level taught in relation to the Survey 1 constructs.

Table 4.10*Summary of T-Test Results for Comparing Grade Level Differences in Survey 1**Constructs*

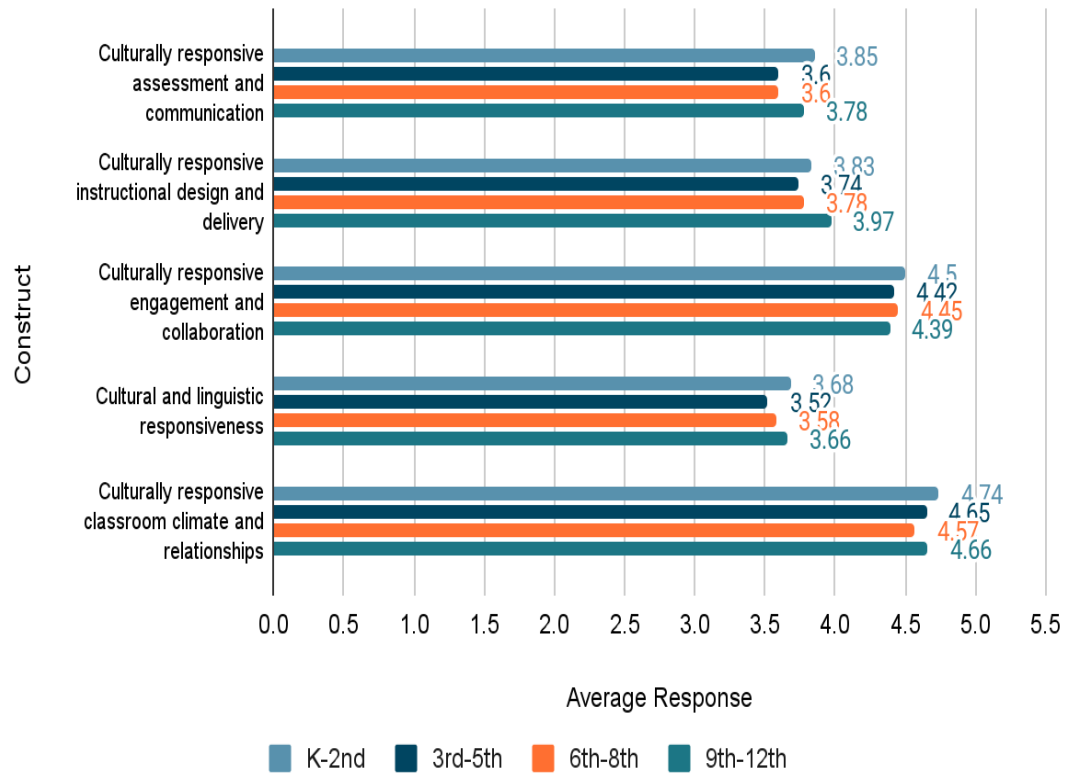
Construct	K-2nd T-value (p-value)	3rd-5th T-value (p-value)	6th-8th T-value (p-value)	9th-12th T-value (p-value)
Teacher multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs	-.54 (0.59)	-.011 (1.0)	.87 (0.39)	-1.46 (0.15)
Teacher resistance & negative attitude toward multiculturalism	-.67 (0.50)	-.08 (0.94)	-2.04 (0.04)	2.28 (0.03)
Perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism & responsibility	.39 (0.70)	-.43 (0.67)	-1.41 (0.16)	1.62 (0.11)
Teacher awareness & encouragement of family engagement	-.82 (0.41)	-1.99 (0.05)	-1.58 (0.12)	1.83 (0.07)
Perceived challenges & need for role redefinition	-.30 (0.77)	-1.56 (0.12)	-.91 (0.36)	.93 (0.36)

Significant differences were observed for teachers in the 6th-8th grade category and the 9th-12th grade category. The mean response for 6th-8th grade teachers was significantly higher, indicating less resistance, while the mean response for the 9th-12th grade teachers was significantly lower, demonstrating more resistance toward multiculturalism. For teacher awareness and encouragement of family engagement, there were also significant differences for the 3rd-5th grade teachers, and the 9th-12th grade teachers showed marginal significance. In the area of family engagement, the 3rd-5th grade teachers had a higher mean, indicating that they are more supportive of family engagement, while the mean response for the 9th-12th grade teachers was lower, demonstrating more resistance toward family engagement. For the other three constructs, the responses were not significantly different between groups of teachers.

Figure 4.12 shows the average responses to Survey 2 constructs. This figure is set up the same as Figure 4.11.

Figure 4.12

Average Response to Survey 2 Constructs for Each Grade Level



The analysis of the Survey 2 constructs based on the grade level taught revealed no statistically significant differences across any of the five constructs for K-2nd, 3rd-5th, 6th-8th, or 9th-12th grade educators. Table 4.11 shows the t-value and p-value for each grade level taught in relation to the Survey 1 constructs.

Table 4.11*Summary of T-Test Results for Comparing Grade Level Differences in Survey 1**Constructs*

Construct	K-2nd T-value (p-value)	3rd-5th T-value (p-value)	6th-8th T-value (p-value)	9th-12th T-value (p-value)
Culturally responsive assessment and communication	-1.16 (0.13)	.29 (0.39)	.51 (0.31)	-1.11 (0.14)
Culturally responsive instructional design and delivery	-0.003 (0.50)	.52 (0.30)	.49 (0.31)	-1.50 (0.07)
Culturally responsive engagement and collaboration	-.82 (0.21)	-.17 (0.43)	-.60 (0.27)	.82 (0.47)
Cultural and linguistic responsiveness	-.71 (0.24)	.17 (0.43)	-.24 (0.41)	-.96 (0.17)
Culturally responsive classroom climate and relationships	-1.61 (0.06)	-.46 (0.32)	.44 (0.33)	-.85 (0.2)

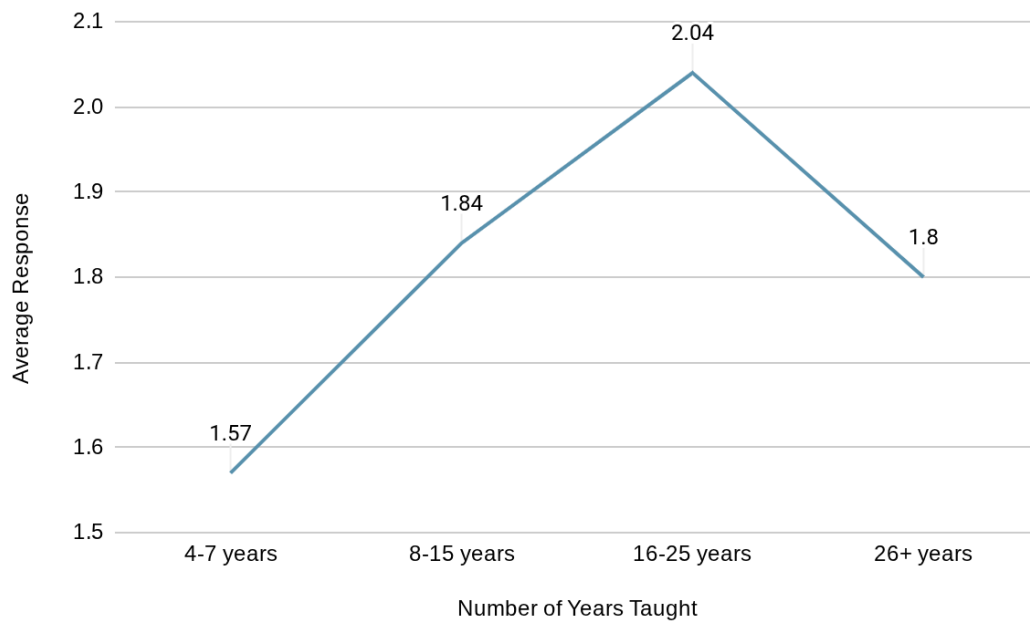
While the construct of culturally responsive classroom climate and relationships approached significance for K-2nd grade teachers, there was generally a high degree of consensus across all grade levels regarding the additional constructs. This high level of agreement suggests that grade level taught did not appear to be a determining factor in how participants perceived their culturally responsive teaching practices.

Additionally, I conducted a one-way ANOVA test of the constructs for Surveys 1 and 2 to determine if the scores differed significantly based on participants' years of teaching experience. I eliminated the teachers who had 1-3 years of experience because there were too few responses and considered the teachers with 4-7 years, 8-15 years, 16-25 years, and 26+ years of experience. There were significant differences between groups for one construct in Survey 1 and two constructs in Survey 2. Figure 4.13 shows the average responses for the Survey 1 construct of teacher resistance and negative attitude

toward multiculturalism. The number of years is listed along the horizontal axis, while the average response is listed on the vertical.

Figure 4.13

Average Response for Teacher Resistance and Negative Attitude by Number of Years Taught

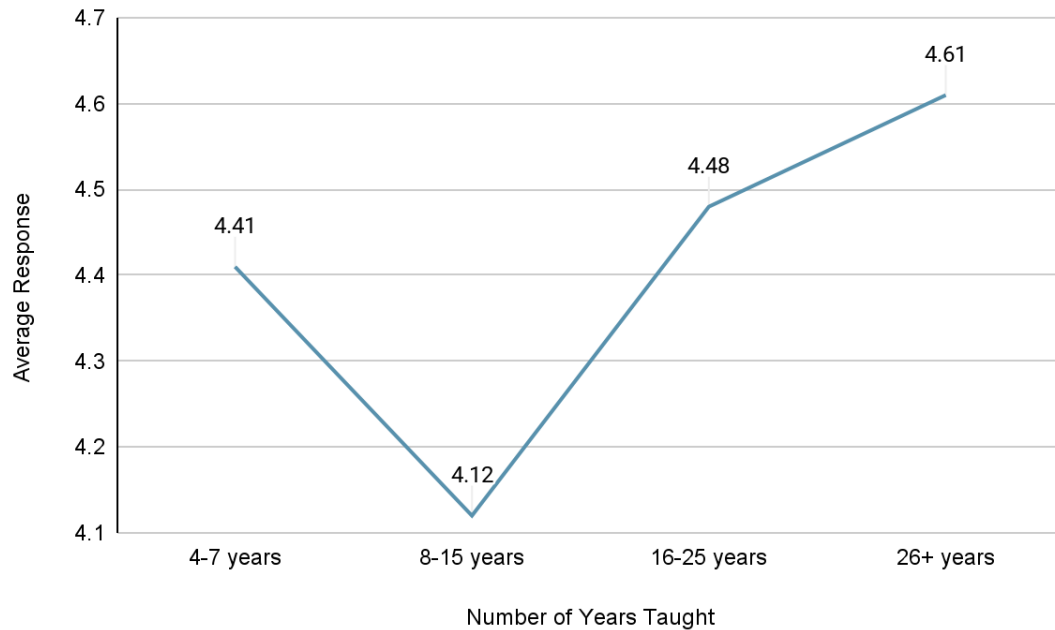


For this construct, teachers' resistance and negative attitude increases as teachers move into their mid-career (16-25 years) and then decreases slightly for the most veteran group (26+ years). Participants with 16-25 years of experience reported the highest mean resistance ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 0.74$), while those with 4-7 years of experience reported the lowest ($M = 1.57$, $SD = 0.56$).

Figure 4.14 shows the average responses for the construct of culturally responsive engagement and collaboration from Survey 2. This figure, as well as Figure 4.14, are formatted the same as the previous figure.

Figure 4.13

Average Response for Culturally Responsive Engagement and Collaboration

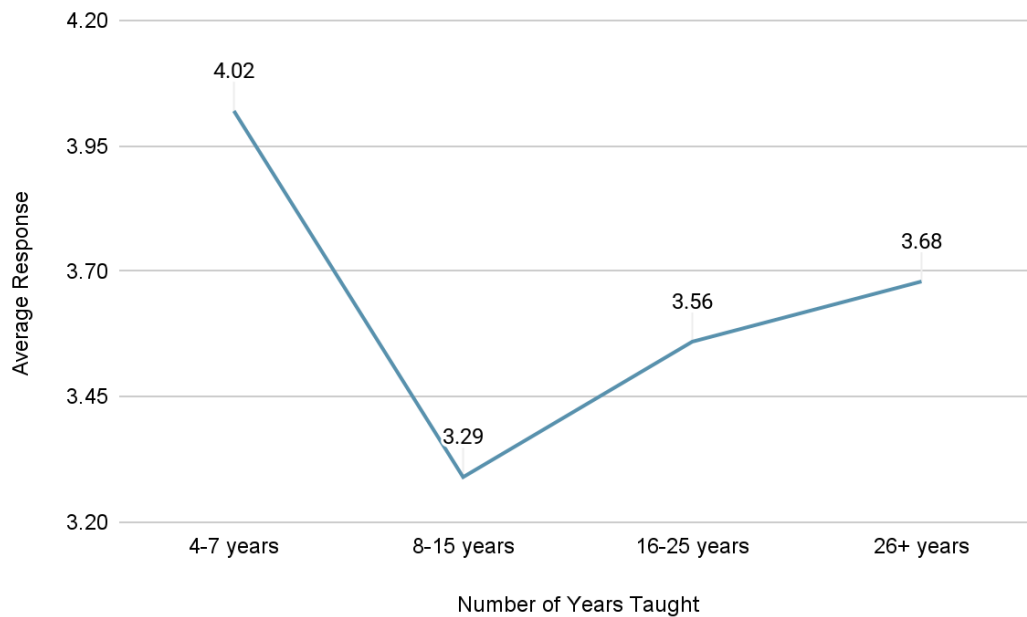


Analysis of this construct indicated generally high levels of agreement across all experience levels. The highest mean scores were reported by the most experienced teachers with 26+ years of experience ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.39$), followed closely by those with 16-25 years of experience ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.57$). A notable deviation in the data occurred within the 8-15 years of experience group, which reported the lowest mean engagement ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.94$).

Figure 4.15 shows the average responses between the various years of experience for the Survey 2 construct of cultural and linguistic responsiveness.

Figure 4.15

Average Response for Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness



In contrast to the two previous constructs, the teachers with 4-7 years of experience are leaders in cultural responsiveness, followed by a sharp decline in the mid-career stages. The data indicated a distinct downward shift in averages following the early-career stage. Teachers with 4-7 years of experience reported the highest level of responsiveness ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.70$). Teachers with 8-15 years of experience had the lowest mean score ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.88$), and the averages gradually increased for the teachers with 16-25 years ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.06$) and 26+ years of experience ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.71$).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from my study reject the null hypothesis by identifying significant predictive links between educator beliefs and classroom implementation of culturally responsive practices. Through factor analysis, I was able to organize the data into ten constructs - five measuring multicultural attitudes from Survey 1 and five

measuring instructional preparedness from Survey 2. These constructs served as the basis for the linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that teacher multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs acted as a universally positive predictor across all domains of culturally responsive practice, while teacher awareness and encouragement of family engagement also emerged as a driver of responsive practices in the classroom. On the opposite side, attitudes of resistance and perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism were found to be barriers, correlating with a decrease in classroom climate and positive relationships. Finally, I was able to make some connections using independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA to highlight how some demographic data influenced how educators perceive and utilize multiculturalism in their classrooms.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between a teacher's personal belief system and their implementation of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices. Current educational discourse increasingly emphasizes the importance of CRT to support a growing population of diverse students, but its implementation remains inconsistent and varied across schools. Many scholars point to external factors, like a lack of training or inadequate resources as the primary barriers; however, my research explores the connection between teacher beliefs and their actions in the classroom. While there is an abundance of theoretical literature suggesting that internal biases and beliefs influence instructional decisions, there is an important gap in quantitative research to substantiate this connection. My study aimed to fill that gap by examining the extent to which teachers' multicultural awareness and attitudes serve either as a bridge or a roadblock to creating inclusive classrooms.

By comparing teachers' self-reported beliefs with their daily instructional choices, my research sought to identify which, if any, specific attitudes most significantly influenced the use of culturally responsive methods. Using a quantitative research design, I specifically sought to determine the extent to which a teacher's sensitivity and awareness of cultural diversity served as a predictor of their instructional choices. Teachers self-reported data on both multicultural attitudes and daily classroom practices, allowing me to identify specific beliefs that are most influential in a teacher's choice to utilize practices that are culturally relevant or to resist inclusive methodologies.

Ultimately, this study was designed to provide data that could help schools and teacher education programs prioritize professional development that addresses the root factors of education equity.

Summary and Implications of Findings

The primary goal of this study was to investigate the relationship between teacher beliefs and their implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices. In Chapter Four, I provided a statistical analysis of the three-part survey results. In this chapter, I will synthesize these results to address the broader implications of the data in order to understand not only the current state of culturally responsive practice but also the specific barriers that must be addressed to foster a more equitable learning environment.

Initially I analyzed the constructs for Survey 1 to determine what the teachers believed about multiculturalism. The analysis of Construct 1 showed that teachers generally hold high levels of multicultural awareness and efficacy, since nearly all items averaged above a 4.0 on a 5-point scale. While a large number of teachers indicated that they “can learn a great deal from students with culturally different backgrounds,” there was a lower level of agreement regarding whether the teaching job becomes increasingly rewarding as diversity increases. These results suggest that while the majority of participants have adopted an “assets-based” mindset, there is a slight hesitation when it comes to the labor involved in that diversity. Since there was a high standard deviation for language acquisition beliefs, it shows that while many teachers embrace students whose primary language is anything other than English, a minority of people see English Language Learners as a barrier to the classroom. These findings align with Gay’s (2013) assertion that teachers’ attitudes impact instructional decisions. The low scores on

“rewarding work” and the disagreement on language acquisition reflected Nelson and Guerra’s (2014) research, which found that while teachers may express acceptance for diversity, it can be surface-level. The underlying deficit beliefs (such as viewing ELL students as a problem) often remained unchanged.

In general, teachers rejected negative attitudes toward multiculturalism, with a low average for items that referenced conflict or indicated that diversity was in some way unrewarding. However, there was a notable finding in the average response for the statement about the level of emphasis placed on multicultural training, suggesting that it was too high. Similarly, a large portion of teachers felt that it was not their responsibility to encourage students to have pride in their culture. This analysis shows that the average teacher is accepting of multiculturalism; however, the high standard deviation for the items in Construct 3 relieved that a segment of the teaching force perceives that culturally responsive teaching is more of a burden and a distraction from the academic core than a necessity in their teaching practice. These findings serve as an example of the Cognitive Dissonance Theory discussed in Chapter Two. Teachers often experience dissonance when confronted with training that challenges their personal or professional identities. This dissonance could lead to them viewing multicultural initiatives as an attack on their traditional teaching practices, rather than a way to enhance what they are already doing (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nelson & Guerra, 2014).

Another aspect of Survey 1 that is worth mentioning is the contrast between awareness and practice in regard to family engagement. While teachers reported a high awareness of the cultural backgrounds of their classes, very few reported inviting extended family members to conferences. This gap shows that teachers may know who is

in their classroom, but they struggle to bridge the gap into their students' home communities. The low engagement with extended family members suggests that teachers generally operate within a "nuclear family" framework, failing to recognize that for many cultures the family structure is often communal. While teachers may have a strong awareness of diversity and equity, they lack the self-efficacy or agency to change their views of the traditional school structures, such as parent-teacher conferences. While the literature suggests utilizing family as a resource (Milner, 2016), the data shows that teachers generally fail to bring those cultural resources into the school setting.

The findings from the fifth construct of Survey 1 highlight the tension between teachers' awareness of systemic challenges and their willingness to transform their instruction to meet those challenges. Teachers showed a moderate level of agreement that bilingual communication is often misinterpreted as a behavior problem, but they were less likely to suggest the need to redefine their professional role to better address diversity. The large range of responses for these questions demonstrated a variance in what teachers believe in regard to role redefinition and perceived challenges. Teachers are starting to recognize systemic issues (like internal biases regarding discipline), but they are hesitant to accept that the solution requires a fundamental change in their own professional identity. The fact that many of the responses for this construct were fairly neutral suggest that teachers may be resistant to the social justice and advocate aspects prevalent in critical race theory, relying on more traditional roles of teachers. These results relate to teacher agency, as seen in the literature review. For teachers to be change agents, they must be willing to transform their identities (Tao & Gao, 2016). Unfortunately, as Ukpokodu (2011) suggested, teachers often feel unprepared or

overwhelmed when confronted with the need to shift from traditional instruction to culturally responsive teaching.

Similarly to Survey 1, I also analyzed the constructs of Survey 2, which focused on teachers' self-reported ability and comfort levels regarding practical classroom strategies. Teachers reported a moderately high level of comfort in assessment and parent communication, with the highest comfort level found in "structuring classroom-based meetings that are comfortable for parents." However, the technical aspects of assessment, such as designing assessments for and accurately assessing culturally diverse students, received lower ratings and showed the highest variability of scores across the entire scale. These results suggest that teachers feel competent with communication but are less confident in the mechanics of culturally responsive assessments. The wide range of responses reflects that some teachers lack proficiency while others report a total mastery in assessing diverse learners, suggesting a lack of consistency in assessment training or a lack of comfort in applying these tools in their classrooms. As noted in the literature review, assessment is often the most rigid part of a school system, and there is very little professional development dedicated to helping teachers write culturally responsive assessments (Kozlowski, 2017). It also connects to Gay's (2010) argument that without specific training in how culture impacts performance, teachers may unintentionally use assessments that do not reflect a student's true ability.

With the highest minimum score in the survey, teachers felt very capable of matching their instructional methods to students' learning needs; however, they were less comfortable in assessing their materials for multicultural strengths and weaknesses. This information suggests that teachers are confident in their ability to differentiate, but they

feel less capable of critically evaluating their instructional materials and curriculum for cultural relevance. They are comfortable with how they teach but do not necessarily feel they have control over what they teach. In the literature review, Ladson-Billings (2006) highlighted the need to develop general pedagogical efficacy in culturally responsive teaching strategies, as teachers often confuse good teaching with culturally responsive teaching. Because the curriculum is generally culturally biased, it is essential for teachers to understand how to view it through a critical lens (Juutilainen et al., 2018).

Overall, teachers felt extreme comfort in “encouraging students to share ideas” and “maintaining caring relationships,” as those strategies had the highest overall means in the study. That being said, while teachers felt comfortable building relationships, their comfort dropped significantly when asked about creating a safe environment that was specifically designed for culturally diverse students. Teachers are highly relational, which is reflected in these results, but their inability to create environments with their diverse students in mind may suggest a potential for implicit bias. Teachers may believe they are being nice to all students, but they may lack the skills to be able to address the unique needs of students of color. This data indicates that some teachers may not feel comfortable navigating the uniqueness of diversity in their classrooms. As noted by Hammond (2015), kindness is not the same as instructional equity. The inability of some teachers to create safe spaces specifically designed for diverse students relates back to DiAngelo’s (2018) concepts of discomfort when addressing race directly.

The results for cultural and linguistic responsiveness displayed a full range on the Likert scale, while the means were fairly consistent. The average teacher felt comfortable including home languages and culture, but there is a divide between those who

implement these culturally responsive strategies and those who do not. These results reflect the English-only beliefs that were found in Survey 1. While teachers expressed the intent to be responsive, the actual usage of these strategies may not be consistent. As discussed in the literature, there is a wide variance in teachers who operate under the beliefs that home language is something to be overcome, rather than a bridge to making connections to students and families (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023).

The linear regression analysis identified teacher multicultural awareness and efficacy beliefs as a significant positive predictor for every dimension of culturally responsive practice. This connection was most notable in the impact on classroom climate and relationships. Similarly, awareness and encouragement of family engagement was a positive predictor in most of the dimensions for Survey 2, most significantly on cultural and linguistic responsiveness. These results demonstrate that a teacher's internal belief system acts as a driving force for their outward behavior. When a teacher views diversity as an asset rather than a challenge, they are more motivated to create a positive learning environment. Furthermore, the link between family engagement and linguistic responsiveness suggests that when a teacher builds the gap between home and school, they incorporate students' actual lived experiences and native languages. This relationship validates the core of Ladson-Billings' (1995) pedagogy, suggesting that cultural competence and academic success are interdependent. Teachers who view families as a resource, rather than an obstacle, are more likely to center their culture in daily instruction. It also reflects Gay's (2015) assertion that teachers must act as conduits for culture, being unafraid to cross cultural boundaries.

The analysis also revealed that as the constructs of perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism and teacher resistance increased, there was a negative impact on classroom climate and relationships. Additionally, perceived irrelevance had a negative impact on instructional design, but there was a marginal positive relationship between resistance and instructional design, suggesting that some teachers who have negative attitudes toward multiculturalism still utilize culturally relevant materials. The negative correlations suggest that when a teacher views multiculturalism as a burden, their relationship with students suffers. This is where cognitive dissonance is most visible. A teacher who feels there is too much emphasis placed on diversity may experience a discomfort in a diverse room, leading them to withdraw from building relationships with their students. The positive link between resistance and instructional design may be a result of induced-compliance (Harmon-Jones, 2012). Teachers who feel forced by the district to use diverse materials may feel resentful, even as they implement the curriculum. This resistance toward multiculturalism is an example of the white racial frame that DiAngelo (2016) referenced. Teachers who view multiculturalism as a distraction uphold the inequitable system that is inherent in the schools. They may see any challenge to the status quo as unnecessary. Teachers who find culture irrelevant are more likely to interpret cultural engagement as a behavior problem, damaging the classroom culture and their relationships with students (Elmesky & Marcucci, 2023).

Perceived challenges and need for role redefinition showed only a marginal impact on most practices, showing a slight positive relationship with assessment and engagement. It was not as strong a driver as awareness of family engagement, suggesting that simply recognizing that a role needs to change is not enough to actually change

classroom practices. For example, while teachers may agree that bilingual students are often misunderstood, they fail to take the steps to design a better assessment. This disconnect is an example of the disconnect identified in the literature review as one of the roadblocks to implementation, specifically the disconnect between what teachers learn in their professional development and what they do. As noted by Ukpokodu (2011), teachers often feel unprepared or overwhelmed by the need to shift to culturally responsive teaching practices. The data shows that even though teachers acknowledge the challenges, they are unable to become agents of change (Tao & Gao, 2016).

When considering the data from a demographic perspective, the t-test results revealed no significant differences between White and non-White participants across any of the constructs. The lack of variance between White and non-White participants indicates that for this group of teachers, school-wide culture outweighs individual racial identity. As a side note, while it may be true that my smaller sample size could have had an impact on the lack of difference between these two subgroups, it is interesting to note that in Hsiao's (2015) initial development and validation of the CRTPS, his results indicated that the scores of culturally responsive teacher preparedness were not different in terms of race and gender.

Public school teachers reported higher perceived irrelevance of multiculturalism compared to non-public school teachers. Conversely, non-public school teachers reported higher levels of family engagement and linguistic responsiveness. The lack of variance between White and non-White participants indicates that for this group of teachers, school-wide culture outweighs individual racial identity. As a side note, while it may be true that my smaller sample size could have had an impact on the lack of difference

between these two subgroups, it is interesting to note that in Hsiao's (2015) initial development and validation of the CRTPS, his results indicated that the scores of culturally responsive teacher preparedness were not different in terms of race and gender. The fact that public school teachers felt more strongly that multiculturalism is irrelevant may be due to the pressures of standardized testing and a more rigid curriculum. Since curriculum and assessment often reflect the dominant norms, teachers may not feel they can make adjustments toward equity because they will not be preparing their students for the state assessments. As noted by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), teachers indicated high-stakes testing as a roadblock to implementing culturally responsive teaching practices.

Grade level taught was a significant factor in teacher attitudes but not in their reported practices. High school teachers demonstrated higher resistance and lower family engagement compared to middle school and upper elementary teachers; however, the actual implementation of CRT practices at all levels remained similar. This difference at the high school level may show that teachers perceive students' culture to be less significant as they get older, leading to a resistance toward emphasizing multiculturalism in the classroom. The decline in family engagement in high school could reflect a shift toward student ownership of their learning, a natural transition that occurs as students get older. The fact that teachers' actual practices don't change regardless of their beliefs may reflect the idea that they consider culturally responsive practices to just be "good teaching," not something specific to equity. The resistance in secondary education aligns with Gay's (2018) observation that multiculturalism is often easier to implement in primary grades but harder to integrate into more subject-centered courses at the high

school level. The drop in family engagement reflects the idea that high schools are often structured to give students more control of their own learning, treating the family more as a spectator as opposed to a partner in learning (Brown et al., 2018).

The one-way ANOVA test revealed a mid-career dip in cultural responsiveness, with teachers who have 16-25 years of experience reporting the highest resistance, while early career teachers (those with 4-7 years of experience) reporting the lowest resistance. Similarly, cultural and linguistic responsiveness peaked in the early career and dropped for teachers with 8-15 years of experience. Younger teachers may enter the field fresh, with a concentration on equity as referenced in their teacher preparation programs. However, as they reach mid-career, they could be experiencing more frustration with changing mandated training and the changing political landscape, causing them to experience cognitive dissonance. This internal conflict may support the disconnect between pre-service programs and the actual implementation once teachers are more established in their classrooms (Ebersol et al., 2015). While newer teachers have a heightened awareness, the mid-career teachers may not have had as strong of a pre-service program that emphasized multiculturalism and equity. This gap in their education could cause them to experience cognitive dissonance that goes against their personal identity, strengthening their resistance rather than changing it (Festinger, 1957).

This study revealed a disconnect between teacher awareness and practical implementation of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices. While participants generally held high levels of multicultural awareness and an assets-based mindset, their transition into practice was hindered by underlying biases and a rigid educational system. Teachers felt highly competent in general tasks like “maintaining caring relationships,”

but they struggled with more specific elements of CRT, such as designing culturally responsive assessments or building connections between school and home. Furthermore, the study identified internal belief systems as a strong predictor of behavior, where teachers who viewed multiculturalism as a burden reported lower quality in classroom climate and student relationships. This resistance was more pronounced in public school settings and among mid-career teachers. High stakes testing pressures and a lack of more modern equity training may be to blame for some of this cognitive dissonance. Ultimately, the study suggested that simply recognizing systemic inequity is not enough; truly fostering an equitable learning environment requires a fundamental transformation within the teachers and the entire school system.

Limitations

While the findings of this study provided evidence regarding the relationship between teacher beliefs and culturally responsive implementation, there are some limitations that must be acknowledged. These limitations provide the necessary context for interpreting the results and considering how the data should be applied to broader educational settings. In this section, I identify the constraints of the study to ensure that I am transparent about the research outcomes.

One limitation of this study involves the relatively small sample size and the resulting lack of diversity among the participant demographics. Although the data provided enough responses to identify trends through linear regression, the limited number of responses restricted my ability to conduct comparative analysis across several key categories. For example, while I was able to compare White and non-White participants, the small number of non-White participants may not fully represent the

diverse perspectives within that group. Additionally, while the survey was distributed nationally via social media and included responses from across the United States, the final sample of 179 participants was heavily concentrated in the Midwest. This geographic concentration, combined with a participant pool that was predominantly White, restricts the ability to compare across racial and regional contexts. Furthermore, there was a significant representation of teachers who had taught 16-25 years, with very few early-career teachers. This limited the ability to generalize findings across all stages of a teaching career. Because teacher beliefs and practices can be shaped by regional professional development, especially in this heavy political climate, as well as varying levels of experience, the results I reported may not have been a universal representation of all educators nationwide.

Furthermore, the potential for voluntary response bias must be considered since I use social media as a recruitment tool for my research. Because the survey was shared within Facebook groups specifically dedicated to educators and administrators, the individuals who chose to participate may already have had strong opinions regarding multiculturalism and equity. This self-selection means that the data could overrepresent educators who are either highly committed to or highly skeptical of culturally responsive teaching practices. These strong opinions could have led them to take the survey over someone who is more neutral in their opinions about these topics. The perspectives of these more neutral teachers might be underrepresented in the final results because they were not motivated to take a voluntary survey. This potential educator bias may mean that my results did not fully capture the attitudes of the entire population of teachers.

The timing of the data collection could present another constraint when considering the heavy political climate currently surrounding educational policy, particularly in the area of equity and cultural responsiveness. As noted in the results of Survey 1, many teachers expressed mixed feelings about the emphasis placed on multicultural training, which may have been influenced by external factors such as legislative debates regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Because the survey was limited to this specific moment in time, the responses could have been shaped by these tensions between their professional and political worlds. If the survey had been conducted under different national educational guidelines, the mean levels reported for each of the constructs may have been different. These specific findings represent how teachers feel during a specific social and political environment and may not be universally applied to all contexts.

Another significant limitation of this study was the loss of qualitative data that I had intended to use to provide a deeper context for the qualitative findings. While the two Likert-scale surveys provided a clear numerical representation of teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices, I was hoping that the intended open-ended questions would help to reveal the "why" behind those numerical scores. Including these responses was important because it would have allowed for a more comprehensive look at the relationship between life experiences and classroom implementations. However, because these responses were not captured due to the survey configuration error, the study is limited to the analysis of self-reported numerical data. Therefore, while I can identify patterns in teachers' beliefs and practices, I'm unable to provide the qualitative context that supports these perspectives. Future studies could address this gap by successfully

integrating open-ended prompts or interviews to give further context to the quantitative results.

Directions for Future Research

To transform culturally responsive theory into classroom practice, school districts must move away from a one-size-fits-all diversity training toward a multi-layered professional development (PD) model. To start, schools should address the fact that teacher resistance and the irrelevance of multiculturalism are anchors that keep teachers from implementing culturally responsive practices by tackling cognitive dissonance and implicit bias. Since the data indicates that negative attitudes and colorblindness directly damage classroom climate, districts must provide safe, facilitated spaces for educators to confront their discomfort as their professional identities are challenged. This move from stereotypical thinking to critical consciousness allows districts to transform from compliance toward a genuine interest in equity. For example, in my district, we trained every teacher in equity and implicit bias, and we have continued to provide that same training to all of our new teachers each year. We do not expect that all teachers come in with the same background and knowledge, so we introduce them to our core beliefs through professional learning.

Once districts have established a safe, honest space for professional development to occur, I recommend that teacher experiences shift to the redefinition of the teachers' professional role. My findings revealed that while most teachers viewed diversity as an asset in theory, they perceive multicultural training as an additional burden rather than an element foundational to their instruction. Professional development should be restructured to provide teachers with opportunities to lead equity initiatives. By allowing

teachers to act as social justice leaders, districts can foster autonomy and collective efficacy. Teachers who are more hesitant to adopt culturally responsive practices will see real-world, peer-led examples of success, rather than top-down mandates. In my district, we have building equity leaders who meet regularly to set goals, participate in training, and share experiences that they can take back to their buildings to support their colleagues. When resistant teachers see the success that their colleagues are having with culturally responsive methods, they are more likely to participate themselves.

Furthermore, the results showed that family engagement was one of the strongest predictors, so leadership should prioritize building family relationships. School leadership should focus on training that equips teachers with knowledge to build family and community partnerships. This training should also extend into teacher preparation programs, requiring teachers to engage with community structures that go beyond the nuclear family model. By training educators to view families as partners in the learning environment, schools can bridge the cultural divide between home and school. This connection will ensure that students' cultural identities are sustained past their elementary years through high school, rather than merely acknowledged. In my district, all of our buildings participate in a celebration of learning, where teachers invite parents in to view student work and participate in fun activities throughout the building. By inviting parents and extended family members into the school, we are demonstrating our commitment to building partnerships between school and home.

Structurally, one recommendation I have for future research is to aim to recruit a larger and more geographically diverse participant pool to allow the results to be more generalizable of all educators. Future researchers should target a balanced representation

of teachers from urban, rural, and suburban districts across all regions of the United States, rather than relying on a convenience sample through Facebook groups. By intentionally seeking out a more racially diverse sample of teachers, future studies could more intentionally explore how different cultural backgrounds and experiences influence the various constructs I identified during my data analysis. It would also be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study that follows teachers across different stages of their careers, from early educators to more veteran teachers, to see how their beliefs and practices evolve over time as they experience different personal and professional environments as well as participate in different educational opportunities.

Based on the qualitative limitations of this study, I recommend that future research incorporate a mixed-methods approach to fully explore the development of teacher perspectives. While my study used quantitative scales to measure beliefs and practices, by including a qualitative component, such as semi-structured interviews or open-ended survey questions, it would allow researchers to capture the specific life experiences that inform the quantitative outcomes. It would be very valuable for understanding the experiences that lead to high levels of multicultural awareness and sensitivity. Additionally, a qualitative study would allow the researcher to explore the complex findings related to teacher resistance and perceived irrelevance, two of the constructs in my research. While the quantitative data identified that a significant minority of teachers feel multiculturalism is a burden or that there is too much emphasis on diversity training, the quantitative nature of my study does not explain the root causes of these sentiments. Semi-structured interviews could provide a safe, confidential space for teachers to explain their specific professional pressures or ideological misalignment

that led to these beliefs. Understanding where their resistance comes from is essential for developing interventions that inform and reshape rather than just demand compliance. By collecting qualitative data alongside the quantitative data I have already collected, future studies could effectively bridge the gap between a teacher's personal history and their instructional choices. This approach would provide an understanding of how culturally responsive teaching practices are cultivated over time and could help higher education schools design high-quality teacher preparation programs or inform school districts on effective professional development programs.

Additionally, I recommend that future studies include a direct classroom observation component to supplement self-reported data. Because my study relied solely on Likert-scale instruments, there is a potential for self-reporting bias in my data. As noted in Chapter Two, when speaking about topics like equity and inclusion, bias can manifest itself either intentionally or unintentionally. In the context of this study, teachers may have unintentionally provided socially desirable answers to align with what they may have assumed were perceived expectations of those in education. Teacher respondents may have reported behaviors and beliefs that do not fully align with their actual classroom habits. Because these topics are closely tied to a teacher's professional identity and values, it is likely that they would be susceptible to these types of biases. By following up the quantitative survey with a structured observation, researchers could move beyond subjective perceptions and verify actions within the teachers' classroom practices. This process would allow for a more objective view of a teacher's perceived usage of culturally responsive teaching practices and their actual instructional delivery, which, in turn, would provide more accurate data.

Conclusions

The purpose of my study was to investigate the quantitative relationship between teachers' internal belief systems and their implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) practices. According to the research that internal biases influence instruction, my research sought to validate these claims with quantitative data, specifically looking at how multicultural awareness and efficacy can act as a bridge or a roadblock to actions in the classroom. Specifically, my research focused on the following questions:

1. To what extent do teachers' personal belief systems relate to their implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices?
2. What beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about students and learning are most influential in shaping teachers' CRT practices?
3. How do teacher belief profiles vary across different contexts (e.g., subject area, grade level, years of experience)?

Simply put, my research proved that what a teacher believes acts as a remote control for how they actually teach. If a teacher sees a student's culture as an asset, they are far more likely to build a welcoming environment that validates each student's differences. If a teacher sees culture as a burden, they tend to stick to traditional methods and struggle to form deep connections with their students.

The strongest positive influence on teachers' actions was their multicultural awareness and efficacy. When teachers felt confident in their ability to handle diversity and indicated that they believed they could learn from their students, it acted as a bridge. These teachers moved beyond acting nice to actively change how they taught to make

sure every student felt seen and heard. The strongest negative factor that impacted how teachers taught was their perceived irrelevance of and resistance toward multiculturalism. If teachers felt that multiculturalism was pushed on them or that it was not their job to teach cultural pride or activism, it created a roadblock. These teachers likely experienced cognitive dissonance that made them pull back from building relationships with students who are different from them. They might have reported using a diverse curriculum because it is what was required of them, but the climate in their classroom suffered.

My research also showed that how a teacher views a student's family directly informs how they teach. Teachers who reported seeing families as partners were more likely to use a student's home language and culture in their lessons. Teachers who stuck to a traditional view of a family missed out on the opportunity to include them as a resource to help their students succeed. This was especially true at the high school level, where teachers were less likely to view families as an extension of the student, likely relying on the student to be more responsible for their learning. Additionally, high school teachers tend to feel pressured to deliver their content while elementary teachers feel their role is raising a well-rounded student. This perception could make high school teachers see multiculturalism and culture as something extra that would be taking away from their primary role.

While my research showed that there was no difference between how White and non-White teachers responded, public school teachers did report a higher sense that multiculturalism was irrelevant, as compared to their non-public school colleagues. It would be unfair to draw the conclusion that public school teachers care less. This difference may be because of external pressure, most notably that teachers in public

schools are likely required to follow a more rigid curriculum to prepare for state tests.

Some teachers may feel that they do not have the permission or the time to stray from this curriculum to add in content that is specific to the individual students in their classrooms.

Additionally, my research found that experience has an impact on beliefs and culturally responsive teaching practices. Newer teachers were more likely to respond positively to equity, but teachers in the middle of their careers (16-25 years) often showed the most resistance. The newer teachers may have had more multicultural awareness because they were more recently enrolled in undergraduate programs where diversity was a central piece of their education. The higher resistance from more experienced teachers could suggest that over time, the stress of the job, lack of updated training, or pressure of political influences can cause teachers to shy away from inclusive teaching. Teachers who have already established their professional identity could experience more cognitive dissonance when this identity is challenged. If new training is telling them that they need to change what they have been doing their entire career, they may be more likely to resist rather than change.

As noted in my study, teachers are human, and their outside life influences what they believe. While educational policy often focuses on providing resources or mandating a diverse curriculum, my research proves that these external tools are only as effective as a teacher's mindset. If they feel that diversity training is an attack on their identity or just one more thing on their already busy plate, they will likely resist it. If they truly believe that a student's background is a resource for learning, they will find ways to bring that into the classroom. School districts must move away from compliance-based training toward professional development that addresses the root of teacher identity. Simply being

a kind, friendly teacher is important, but for a teacher to truly implement culturally responsive teaching practices, they have to experience a shift in agency toward viewing a student's cultural and linguistic background as the foundation for their academic success.

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter



Date: September 19, 2025

Study #: IRB-FY2026-62

Study Title: The Impact of Beliefs on Culturally Responsive Teaching

Submission Type: Initial

IRB Decision: Exempt

Research Team:
Allyson Walroth
Julia Smith

Based on applicable federal regulations, the above referenced study has been determined to be Exempt, with the following categories:

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

Notes for Researcher(s):

This submission includes the following documents:

- Recruitment Document
- Date-Stamped Information Sheet V. 9/19/2025
- Survey

Letter and Consent Document:

This letter along with the IRB approved (date-stamped) consent document can be found in Cayuse in the Submission Details page under Letters and Attachments, respectively. Please make sure to use the most recent IRB approved version of the consent form in consenting participants.

Permission from Research Site(s):

Please note the following:

- This IRB exemption determination letter means that this research has met one or more of the federal criteria for exemption per 45 CFR 46.104- Exempt Research.
- Before the research is initiated, permission to conduct research at a given site must be obtained from all research locations listed in the IRB submission. You must keep copies of all such permission letters for your files.
- It is the responsibility of each researcher to follow all applicable policies and procedures of any outside institution where the research will be conducted.

Modifications:

Any changes to this exempt project must be reviewed by the IRB prior to initiation by submitting a MODIFICATION request. Do not collect data while the changes are being reviewed. Data collected during this time cannot be used in research.

Record Retention:

Exempt projects will be retained by the IRB office for three years after the last action on the project.

You are approved to start the research. Please retain a copy of this notification for your records. If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office.

Thank you.

The Oakland University IRB

APPENDIX B

Survey Part One: Demographic Questions

1. What do you consider to be your gender?

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Non-binary / third gender
- d. Trans
- e. Other
- f. Prefer not to say

2. What do you consider to be your race?

- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
- b. Asian
- c. Black or African American
- d. Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish
- e. White
- f. More than one race
- g. Other

3. Current teaching assignment:

- a. Northeast
- b. Midwest
- c. South
- d. West
- e. Outside the United States

4. Employer
 - a. K-12 school
 - b. Private or Charter school
 - c. University
 - d. Other
5. Role (K-12 school only):
 - a. Classroom teacher
 - b. Administrator
 - c. Instructional Coach
6. Grade Level (K-12 school only):
 - a. Elementary (K-5)
 - b. Middle School (6-8)
 - c. High School (9-12)
7. Subject (K-12 school only):
 - a. English/ELA
 - b. Math
 - c. Science
 - d. Social Studies
 - e. World Language
 - f. Other
8. Years of Experience:
 - a. 1-4
 - b. 5-9

- c. 10-14
- d. 15-19
- e. 20-24
- f. 25+

APPENDIX C

Survey Part Two: Teachers' Multicultural Attitudes Survey (TMAS)

Items will be scored on a 5-point Likert scale.

-
1. I find teaching a culturally diverse student group rewarding.
 2. Teaching methods need to be adapted to meet the needs of a culturally diverse student group.
 3. (Sometimes I think that there is too much emphasis placed on multicultural awareness and training for teachers.)
 4. Teachers have the responsibility to be aware of their students' cultural backgrounds.
 5. I frequently invite extended family members (e.g., cousins, grandparents, godparents) to attend parent-teacher conferences.
 6. (It is not the teachers' responsibility to encourage pride in one's culture.)
 7. As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher's job becomes increasingly challenging.
 8. I believe that the teacher's role needs to be redefined to address the needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds.
 9. When dealing with bilingual children, communication styles often are interpreted as behavioral problems.
 10. As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher's job becomes increasingly rewarding.
 11. I can learn a great deal from students with culturally different backgrounds.

12. (Multicultural training for teachers is not necessary.)
13. To be an effective teacher, one needs to be aware of cultural differences present in the classroom.
14. Multicultural awareness training can help me to work more effectively with a diverse student population.
15. (Students should learn to communicate in English only.)
16. (Today's curriculum gives undue importance to multiculturalism and diversity.)
17. I am aware of the diversity of cultural backgrounds in my classroom.
18. Regardless of the makeup of my classroom, it is important for students to be aware of multicultural diversity.
19. (Being multiculturally aware is not relevant for the subject I teach.)
20. (Teaching students about multicultural diversity will only create conflict in the classroom.)

Note: Items in parentheses are reverse scored.

APPENDIX D

Survey Part Three: Culturally Responsive Teaching Preparedness Scale

Items will be scored on a 5-point Likert scale.

I am able to:

1. infuse the curriculum and thematic units with the culture of students represented in the classroom.
2. assess/revise instructional materials to determine their multicultural strengths and weaknesses.
3. assess/revise instructional materials to determine their relevance to students' interests.
4. assess/revise instructional materials to determine their relevance to students' learning needs.
5. use instructional examples that are culturally familiar to students.
6. find ways to support language acquisition during instruction.
7. support culturally and linguistically diverse students' classroom work.
8. use a variety of assessment techniques to fairly evaluate student performance (self-assessment, portfolios, projects, etc.).
9. design assessments that match the culturally responsive practices used during instruction.
10. accurately assess culturally diverse students' learning needs.
11. match instructional methods to students' learning needs.
12. provide instruction that holds students' attention.

13. communicate effectively with culturally diverse students and their parents or guardians.
14. structure classroom-based meetings that are comfortable for parents.
15. actively involve families in their students' learning.
16. use different methods to communicate with students in culturally responsive ways.
17. communicate expectations of success to culturally diverse students.
18. establish culturally appropriate expectations for classroom behavior.
19. develop/maintain caring relationships with students.
20. create a warm, supporting, safe, and secure classroom environment for culturally diverse students.
21. encourage students to share ideas with each other.
22. provide students with knowledge and skills needed to function in mainstream culture.
23. have students work together on projects.

REFERENCES

- Aronson, B., & Laughter, J. (2016). The theory and practice of culturally relevant education: A synthesis of research across content areas. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(1), 163-206. DOI: 10.3102/0034654315582066
- Ayers, W. (2001). *To teach: The journey of a teacher*. Teachers College Press.
- Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (Eds.). (2019). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (10th ed.). Wiley.
- Bassey, M. O. (2016). Culturally responsive teaching: Implications for educational justice. *Education Sciences*, 6(4), p. 35. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci6040035>
- Bell, Derrick. (1980). Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-convergence dilemma. *Harvard Law Review*, 93(3), 518-533. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1340546>
- Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2015). The role of beliefs in teacher agency. *Teachers and Teaching*, 21(6), 624-640.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1044325>
- Biesta, G., & Tedder, M. (2007). Agency and learning in the lifecourse: Towards an ecological perspective. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 39(2), 132-149.
DOI:10.1080/02660830.2007.11661545
- Brown, J. C., Ring-Whalen, E. A., Roehrig, G. H., & Ellis, J. (2018). Advancing culturally responsive science education in secondary classrooms through an induction course. *International Journal of Designs for Learning*, 9(1), p. 14-33.
<https://doi.org/10.14434/ijdl.v9i1.23297>

- Bulut, A. (2025) Investigation of teachers' attitudes towards multiculturalism in educational studies. *International Journal on Studies in Education*, 7(3), p. 509-520. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijonse.1927>
- Carter, R. T., & Goodwin, A. L. (1994). Racial identity and education. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), *Review of research in education*, 22(1), 211-253. American Educational Research Association. <https://doi-org.huaryu.kl.oakland.edu/10.3102/0091732X020001291>
- Chemerinsky, E. (1996). Making sense of the affirmative action debate. *Ohio Northern University Law Review*, 22, 1159-1176. https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/faculty_scholarship/1388
- Civil, M., & Khan, L. H. (2001). Mathematics instruction developed from a garden theme. *Teaching Children Mathematics*, 7(7), 400-405.
- Clark, P., & Zygmunt, E. (2014). A close encounter with personal bias: Pedagogical implications for teacher education. *Journal of Negro Education*, 83(2), 147-161. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7709/jnegroeducation.83.2.0147>
- Cooper, C.W. (2003). The detrimental impact of teacher bias: Lessons learned from the standpoint of African American mothers. *Teacher Education Quarterly* 30(2), 101-116. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23478472>
- Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Pearson Education.

- Dee, T. S., & Penner, E. K. (2017). The causal effects of cultural relevance: Evidence from an ethnic studies curriculum. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1), 127-166. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216677002>
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2023). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York University.
- Derman-Sparks, L., & Edwards, J.O. (2020). *Anti-bias education for young children and ourselves* (2nd ed.). The National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it's so hard for White people to talk about racism*. Beacon Press.
- Dill, E., & Boykin, A. W. (2000). The comparative influence of individual, peer tutoring, and communal learning contexts on the text-recall of African American Children. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 26(1), 65-78.
- Dyches, J., Sams, B., & Thomas, D. (2022). "It's not intentional": Contradictions in culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Teacher Leadership*, 6(1), 199-233. <https://doi.org/10.46747/kfp.2016-0042>
- Ebersol, M. Kahalele-Mossman, H., & Kawakami, A. (2016). Culturally responsive teaching: Examining teachers' understandings and perspectives. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 4(2), 97-104. <https://dx.doi.org/10.11114/jets.v4i2.1136>
- Elmesky, R., & Marcucci, O. (2023). Beyond cultural mismatch theories: The role of antiblackness in school discipline and social control practices. *American*

- Educational Research Journal*, 60(4), 769-809.
- <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312231175858>
- Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency?. *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4), pp. 962-1023. <https://doi.org/10.1086/231294>
- Epstein, T., Mayorga, E., & Nelson, J. (2011). Teaching about race in an urban history class: The effects of culturally responsive teaching. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, 35(1), 2-21.
- Festinger, L. A. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford University Press.
- Festinger, L. A., & Carlsmith, J. M. (1956). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 58, pp. 203-210.
- <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0041593>
- Franco, M. P., Bottiani, J. H., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2024). Teachers' structuring of culturally responsive social relations and secondary students' experience of warm demand. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 76, 1-14.
- <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2023.102241>
- Gay, G. (2013). Teaching to and through cultural diversity. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 43(1), 48-70. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23524357>
- Gay, G. (2015). The what, why, and how of culturally responsive teaching: international mandates, challenges, and opportunities. *Multicultural Education Review*, 7(3), 123-139. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2005615X.2015.1072079>
- Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.

- Hammond, Z. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Corwin.
- Harmon-Jones, E., (2012). Cognitive dissonance theory. In Ramachandran, V. S. (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior* (2nd ed., pp. 543-549).
<https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-375000-6.00097-5>
- Harmon-Jones, E., & Mills, J. (2019). An introduction to cognitive dissonance theory and an overview of current perspectives on the theory. In E. Harmon-Jones (Ed.) *Cognitive dissonance: Reexamining a pivotal theory in psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 3-24). American Psychological Association. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0000135-001>
- Harmon-Jones, E., Harmon-Jones, C., & Denson, T. F. (2020). A novel way of responding to dissonance evoked by belief disconfirmation: Making the wrongdoing of an opponent salient. *Social Influence*, 15(1), 34–45.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15534510.2020.1781248>
- Harris, C. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law Review* 106(8), 1713-1717.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1341787>
- Hsiao, Y. (2015). The culturally responsive teacher preparedness scale: An exploratory study. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 8(4), 241-250.
<https://doi.org/10.19030/cier.v8i4.9432>
- Izaguirre, A. (2023, January 31). *Florida Gov. DeSantis pushes ban on diversity programs in state colleges*. PBS.

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/florida-gov-desantis-pushes-ban-on-diversity-programs-in-state-colleges>

Juutilainen, M., Metsapelto, R., & Poikkeus, A. (2018). Becoming agentic teachers: Experiences of the home group approach as a resource for supporting teacher students' agency. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 76, 116-125.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.08.013>

Kaerwer, K., & Pritchett, M. (2023). Critical race theory in education: How banning its tenets undermines our best hope for equity in education. *Behavior and Social Issues*, 32, 300-313. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42822-023-00130-9>

Kahn, L. G., Lindstrom, L., & Murray, C. (2014). Factors contributing to preservice teachers' beliefs about diversity. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 41(4), 53-70.

Kempf, A. (2020). If we are going to talk about implicit race bias, we need to talk about structural racism: Moving beyond ubiquity and inevitability in teaching and learning about race. *Taboo*, 19(2), 1150132.

<https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/taboo/vol19/iss2/10>

Kintner-Duffy, V.L., Scott-Little, C., & Smith, N., (2022). "I'm going to teach them all the same way": Teachers' beliefs about, experiences of, and classroom practices with children of color. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 43(1), 127-147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2021.1902433>

Kohli, R., & Solórzano, D. G. (2012). Teachers, please learn our names!: Racial microaggressions and the K-12 classroom. *Race Ethnicity and Education*.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.674026>

- Kozlowski, S. W. J. (2017). Enhancing the effectiveness of work groups and teams: A reflection. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 13(2), 205-212.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691617697078>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally responsive pedagogy. *Theory into Practice* 34(3), 159-165.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1476635>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). Yes, but how do we do it? Practicing culturally relevant pedagogy. In J. Landsman & C. W. Lewis (Eds.), *White teachers/diverse classrooms: A guide to building inclusive schools, promoting high expectations and eliminating racism* (pp. 29–42). Stylus Publishers.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: aka the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74-84.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2022). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children* (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97, 47-68.
- Lambeth, D.T., & Smith, A.M. (2016). Teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive teacher preparation. *Journal of Negro Education*, 85(1), 46-58. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7709/jnegroeducation.85.1.0046>
- Ligocki, D. (2024). "My training did not prepare me for this.": Supporting new teachers and bridging the gap between the university and the classroom. *Critical Questions in Education*, 15(2), 117-135.

- Lopez, F., Molnar, A., Johnson, R., Patterson, Al, Ward, L., & Kumashiro, K. (2021). *Understanding the attacks on Critical Race Theory* [Policy brief]. National Education Policy Center. <http://necp.colorado.edu/publication/crt>
- Martin, A. J., & Collie, R. J. (2019). Teacher-student relationships and students' engagement in high school: Does the number of negative and positive relationships with teachers matter? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 111(5), 861-876. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000317>
- McFalls, E. L., & Cobb-Roberts, D. (2001). Reducing resistance to diversity through cognitive dissonance instruction: Implications for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education* 52(2), 164-172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487101052002007>
- Mills, C. W. (2008). Racial Liberalism. *PMLA*, 123(5), 1380-1397. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25501942>
- Milner, H. R. (2010). Culturally relevant pedagogy in a diverse urban classroom. *Urban Rev*, 43, 66-89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-009-0143-0>
- Milner, H. R. (2016). A black male teacher's culturally responsive practices. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 85(4), 417-432. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7709/jnegroeducation.85.4.0417>
- Min, M., Lee, Hongseok, L., Hodge, C., & Croxton, N. (2022). What empowers teachers to become social justice-oriented change agents? Influential factors on teacher agency toward culturally responsive teaching. *Education and Urban Society* 54(5), 560-584. <https://doi.org/10.101177/00131245211027511>

- Najarro, I. (2022). Here's how many hours a week teachers work. *EducationWeek*.
<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/heres-how-many-hours-a-week-teachers-work/2022/04>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). *Nation's Report Card: The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://loc.gov/item/lcwaN0014229/>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). Characteristics of public school teachers. *The Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education.
<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/clr/public-school-teachers>
- Nelson, S.W., & Guerra, P.L. (2014). Educator beliefs and cultural knowledge: Implications for school improvement efforts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(1), 67-95. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X13488595>
- Padila, A. M., & Lindholm, K. J. (1995). Quantitative educational research with ethnic minorities. In J.A. Banks & C.A. McGee Banks (Eds.) *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 97-113). Macmillan.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 40(3), 93-97.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12441244>
- Penner-Williams, J., Diaz, E. I., & Worthen, D. G. (2019). Sustainability of teacher growth from professional development in culturally and linguistically responsive instructional practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 86, 1-13.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102891>

- Picower, B., & Kohli, R. (2017). Introduction. In B. Picower & R. Kohli (Ed.), *Confronting racism in teacher education: Counternarratives of critical practice* (pp. 2-17). Routledge.
- Ponterotto, J. G., Baluch, S., Greig, T., & Rivera, L. (1998). *Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey (TMAS)* [Database record]. APA PsycTests.
- Priestley, M., Robinson, S., & Biesta, G. (2011). *Mapping teacher agency: An ecological approach to understanding teachers' work*. Oxford Ethnography and Education conference. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268204999>
- Priestly, M., Biesta, G., & Robinson, S., (2015). Teacher agency: What is it and why does it matter? In R. Kneyber & J. Evers (Eds.) *Flip the system: Changing education from the bottom up*. Routledge.
- Rufo, C. F. [@realchrisrufo]. (2021, March 15). *We have successfully frozen their brand*. Twitter. <https://x.com/realchrisrufo/status/1371540368714428416>
- Rychly, L., & Graves, E. (2012). Teacher characteristics for culturally responsive pedagogy. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 14(1), 44-49.
<http://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2012.646853>
- Sandoval, C., Cunningham, J., Jacobs, J., Warner, S. (2023). *Research and evidence-based best practices for preparing educators for culturally responsive teaching and leading*. WestEd.
- Schramm, H. (2026). Caring about versus caring for: The exploration of culturally responsive teaching, its impact, and future implementation. *Psychological Studies*.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12646-025-00877-8>

- Sleeter, C. E. (2008). Preparing white teachers for diverse students. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, & D. J. McIntyre (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts* (pp. 559-582).
- Southern Poverty Law Center. (2018). *Teaching hard history: American slavery*. SPLC.
- Staats, C. (2016). Understanding implicit bias: What educators should know. *American Education*, 39(4), 29-33.
- Sukamolson, S. (2007). Fundamentals of quantitative research. *Language Institute Chulalongkorn University*, 1-20.
- Tate, W. F. (1997). Critical race theory and education: History, theory, and implications. *Review of Research in Education*, 22, 195-247.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1167376>
- Tate, W. F. (2005). Race, retrenchment, and the reform of school mathematics. In E. Gustein & B. Peterson (Eds.), *Rethinking mathematics: Teaching for social justice by the numbers* (pp. 31-40). Rethinking Schools Publication.
- Tatiana, B., Kobicheva, A., Tokareva, E., & Mokhorov, D. (2022). The relationship between students' psychological security level, academic engagement and performance variables in the digital educational environment. *Educ Inf Technol (Dordr)*, 27(7), 9385-9399. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-022-11024-5>
- Tao, J., & Gao, X. (2016). Teacher agency and identity commitment in curricular reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 63, 346-355.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.01.010>

- Ukpokodu, O. (2011). How do I teach mathematics in a culturally responsive way?: Identifying empowering teaching practices. *Multicultural Education*, 19(3), 47-56.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2025, January 23). U.S. Department of Education takes action to eliminate DEI [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-takes-action-eliminate-dei>
- Woo, A., Lawrence, R.A., Doan, S., & Kaufman, J.H. (2022). A snapshot of anti-bias education in U.S. K-12 schools: Findings from the 2021 American instructional resources survey. *RAND*, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.7249/RRA134-12>
- Young, J., & Young, J. (2023). Before we let go!: Operationalizing culturally informed education. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 25(2), 96-111. <http://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2023.2212719>