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**TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CULTURALLY
RESPONSIVE PRACTICES**

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for
the Degree Doctor of Education in the Graduate School
of Texas Southern University

By

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2023

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

By

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Texas Southern University, 2023

Professor Ingrid Haynes-Traylor, Advisor

Over the years, research regarding racial disproportionalities in the assignment of disciplinary consequences has been evaluated. Evaluation of the ever-increasing Black-White achievement gap has been at the forefront of educational research for decades. Gaining a better understanding of why this gap persists not only benefits schools but students as well. By enforcing certain policies, Black students are frequently removed from the educational environment due to subjective disciplinary infractions and perceived negative behaviors. Negative stereotypes often perpetuate teacher perceptions and expectations; as a result, minority students, especially Black students, are at the receiving end of those lowered expectations. Teachers must understand the intersectionality of their cultural identities and the methods they employ to teach their diverse learners. There is a significant amount of research on the importance of utilizing culturally responsive strategies in the classroom but lacks focus on how teachers believe these strategies affect Black boys in the classroom. This research provides insight into the role teachers' perceptions of the implementation of culturally responsive practices has in the classroom and on African American males in the classroom.

The purpose of this study was to examine the predictable relationship between demographic factors and teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive practices. More specifically, this research deals with the predictability of the demographic factors of gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience on the three components of culturally responsive practices (cultural awareness, habits of using culturally responsive practices, and the impact of culturally responsive practices on African American middle school aged boys).

Keywords: *cultural awareness, culturally responsive practices, pedagogy*

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Deuce Gregory. My love for you guided this research. When your teachers look at you, I want them to see what I see. I want them to recognize everything that you are capable of and; that you are strong, intelligent, and amazing.

I also dedicate this to my incredible village! I literally wouldn't have made it this far without the love and support of my family; my amazing mother who made sure that we knew how intelligent we were, my awesome and dedicated Sister who has always pushed me to be the best version of me, and my mini-me, who I've been trying to be great for since the day she arrived.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am so grateful for the wonderful professors I've had at Texas Southern University. I want to begin by thanking Dr. Ingrid Haynes-Traylor for forcing me to pursue this degree. Since 2015, when I started my master's journey, she has been pushing me to walk into my greatness. I am beyond thankful that God put her in my life.

Dr. Ronnie Davis, thank you for always being there to listen and guide me. I truly don't know what I would have done without you for the past 5 years. Every time I called you, you provided just what I needed to get to the other side of the hump.

Dr. Delilah Davis-Gonzales, thank you for being a part of my committee and for being such a valuable part of my educational journey. I appreciate the knowledge that I gleaned from you over the years.

Dr. Viveca Grant, thank you for being a member of this committee. I truly appreciate your insight into the research and your recommendations for my future endeavors.

To my dear friend Marlena Robinson, I couldn't have done this without you. Every step of the way, you pushed me and I appreciate that love and support! Even after you finished, you still were in my corner rooting for me and reminding me that I could do it. I value the friendship that we've developed over the past 5 years. We officially did it, friend!!!

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, research regarding racial disproportionalities in the assignment of disciplinary consequences has been evaluated. Substantial data shows the biases and racial disparities that affect African American students in education (Loman et al., 2014). Many of these implicit biases are caused by negative teacher perceptions and stereotypes of minority students' capabilities (Hafen et al., 2015). African American students are negatively affected by these disparities, with boys being the primary victims of these inequities in both academics and discipline. As the educational landscape continues to change, it is of grave importance that the way teachers educate students changes as well. To foster inclusion, many teachers disregard the differences their students bring to the classroom. This form of colorblind racism is ultimately damaging to the millions of minority students sitting in classrooms across the nation. While the United States experiences so many detrimental and deadly acts, especially those that target minorities, such as the tragic Buffalo, NY supermarket shooting that left 10 Black people dead, it is now more important than ever to make sure that all students feel represented and see themselves in the curriculum.

Evaluation of the ever-increasing Black-White achievement gap has been at the forefront of educational research for decades. Gaining a better understanding of why this gap persists not only benefits schools but students as well. This gap represents the significant inequities affecting students of color and the continued negative educational outcomes expected of these students. Exclusionary discipline is one of the root causes of poor educational outcomes for Black students. By enforcing certain policies, Black

students are frequently removed from the educational environment due to subjective disciplinary infractions and perceived negative behaviors. Negative stereotypes often perpetuate teacher perceptions and expectations; as a result, minority students, especially Black students, are at the receiving end of those lowered expectations. The American education system has not been designed for Black children. Not only are minority children not afforded the same quality of education as their White counterparts, particularly those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, but they also are not fortunate enough to see themselves – their culture, race, or ethnicity – represented in the curriculum they are taught. This lack of representation leads to students' disinterest in learning and perceived misbehavior by teachers during lessons. While 21st-century classrooms set out to be “student-centered”, teachers still harness an extreme amount of control of student behavior. Fenning and Rose (2007) acknowledge that students who do not fit the “social and behavioral norms of the school” are at the receiving end of harsh labels such as “dangerous” or “troublemakers.” Behaviors that White students would not be punished for, Black students receive harsh punishments like removal from the educational environment. These exclusionary practices aid in the perpetual increase of the Black-White achievement gap.

Equity is not a revolutionary idea. Providing equitable education to all students does not simply look like giving students the same instruction or expectations in the classroom but providing differentiation for the whole child. If differentiated instruction is the universal expectation, then equity should be as well. Equitable instruction simply means providing students with everything they need to be successful, including positive expectations from their teachers. Much of the research only highlights part of the problem

without effectively acknowledging the role teacher expectations have on student outcomes (Hafen et al., 2015). Pringle et al. (2010) asserted that teacher expectations have a significant influence on students' overall academic success. In addition, African American students often correlate their teachers' expectations to their feelings toward them, such as if the teachers are caring and take the time to build relationships (Pringle et al., 2010). Unfortunately, teacher expectations of students' achievement and capabilities are only one piece of the puzzle.

Additionally, there is a significant amount of research on the importance of utilizing culturally responsive strategies in the classroom but lacks focus on how teachers believe these strategies affect Black boys in the classroom. But what is culturally responsive teaching and how do these fundamental changes in practice benefit all students and their teachers? Students' "funds of knowledge" or the inherent views and ideals they bring with them to school tend to be very different than the dominant culture embedded in school curricula. Research highlights the many benefits of the incorporation of culturally responsive teaching practices and the effect of their use on the performance of students of color (Lambeth & Smith, 2016). With such a large push and emphasis on "social-emotional learning", it is important to understand the role culturally responsive teaching plays in the classroom, academically and behaviorally, as well as in conjunction with social and emotional learning.

Teachers must understand the intersectionality of their cultural identities and the methods they employ to teach their diverse learners. Culturally responsive educators take the initiative to reflect on their instructional practices and understand how their implementation of these strategies aids in the success of their Black male students.

Understanding how demographic factors of teachers impact teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive practices including cultural awareness, habits of using culturally responsive practices, and the impact of culturally responsive practices on African American males may affect Black students academically and behaviorally. This research provides insight into the role teachers' perceptions of the implementation of culturally responsive practices have in the classroom and on African American males in the classroom. Specifically, this study aims to address the role the demographic factors – gender, race, and years of teaching experience – play on teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive practices.

Statement of the Problem

There is substantial research to support the use of culturally responsive practices and its benefits for both teachers and students (Lambeth & Smith, 2016; Fitchett et al., 2012; Ebersole et al., 2016), however, the present body of research into teachers' perceptions of its benefits is seemingly limited. Class structures and demographics are as dynamic as the changing world, however, teaching practices remain static. As educational “buzz words” shift, there lacks a fundamental understanding of the necessity of the incorporation of the many cultures represented in the classroom. The current literature on the need for, implementation of, and perceived impact of culturally responsive pedagogy is scarce and warrants further study. Similarly, the research and literature surrounding the perceived impact of culturally responsive teaching are also limited.

The problem related to this study is how teachers' perceptions of using culturally responsive practices in their classrooms impact Black boys academically and behaviorally. Specifically, this study aims to address the predictability of demographic

factors on teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive practices. Despite the increase of minority students in classrooms across the country, the demographic of teachers remains predominantly White and middle-class (Bonner et al., 2018; Davis & Jeffery, 2021; Ramsay-Jordan, 2020). As a result, these teachers lack a fundamental understanding of their students, often do not possess high expectations of minority students, disproportionately refer Black students to special education programs, and simply do not know how to relate to their diverse learners (Williams et al., 2020). Educational researchers continue publishing literature that identifies these disparities but fails to analyze the role teachers believe they play in the educational outcomes of their Black male students.

This study expands on the research into how African American males can be positively impacted through a supporting educational foundation (Arredondo et al., 2017; Cartledge & Simmons-Reed, 2014) by investigating whether teachers believe culturally responsive practices have a direct effect on student outcomes (Bennet & Cramer, 2015). In providing an opportunity for educators to reflect on their culturally relevant instructional practices, the study analyzes the possible impact these practices have on Black boys. Specifically, this study serves to analyze the relationship between gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience on cultural awareness, habits of using culturally responsive practices, and the impact culturally responsive practices have on African American middle school males. Furthermore, this study strives to expound upon the current body of research into how teachers' perceptions and expectations of their Black male students shape their educational outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the predictable relationship between demographic factors and teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive practices. More specifically, this research deals with the predictability of the demographic factors of gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience on the three components of culturally responsive practices (cultural awareness, habits of using culturally responsive practices, and the impact of culturally responsive practices on African American middle school aged boys).

The following research questions were answered in this investigation:

RQ1: Do demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) have any predictive power on teachers' perceptions regarding the cultural awareness component of culturally responsive practices?

RQ2: Do demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) have any predictive power on teachers' perceptions regarding the habits of using culturally responsive teaching component of culturally responsive practices?

RQ3: Do demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) have any predictive power on teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of culturally responsive teaching on African American middle school-aged boys' component of culturally responsive practices?

Significance of the Study

This research analyzes the perceived impact of culturally responsive practices. A study of this nature serves to provide evidence to school districts, school administration,

teachers, and policymakers of the effectiveness of implementing culturally responsive pedagogical practices into their school systems. According to Abacioglu et al. (2020), students tend to be more engaged and receptive to learning when their teachers exhibit responsiveness to their needs. This study focuses not only on the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices but the perceived effectiveness of their use in the classroom. In this way, the aforementioned decision-making entities can increase the implementation of culturally responsive practices to assist students in being successful in school and life.

Research into the perceived implications of culturally responsive practices and their effects on the academic and behavioral outcomes of African American middle school boys is limited. Specifically, a study of this nature intends to address the identified research questions at length. This study intends to expand upon the current research into culturally responsive teaching and the many benefits of utilizing culturally responsive practices in the classroom, especially with African American middle school boys. Furthermore, this study sought to identify ways to resolve disproportionalities affecting Black students effectively and proactively by providing equitable solutions and reflections on the continued use of culturally responsive teaching. Though the terms African American and Black are utilized in this study synonymously, it is important to note that the term “Black” refers specifically to the social construct of race, whereas African American refers to the cultural and ethnic background of specific minority groups.

Theoretical Framework

The current study was based on multiple theories including the critical race theory in education and culturally responsive teaching theory. Since race has been attributed to several inequities in education, it is important to lead with and understand how race has played a major role in the educational landscape. Moreover, as the focus of this research is on culturally responsive teaching, the necessity to integrate this theory into the study is vital. Utilizing this important information, researchers and stakeholders will be able to examine the interconnectivity of culture and the role it plays in teaching and learning.

Critical Race Theory

The Critical Race Theory in education provides the framework for assessing racial factors and the role they play in discipline. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) are credited with applying the tenets of critical race theory to education. This theory can be used to highlight social inequities that plague people of color in the American school system. Critical race theory provides a better understanding of the implication race has in the day-to-day lives of students of color, namely, African American males.

Ladson-Billings (1998) detailed the school curriculum as being a “culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script” (p.18). Furthermore, Ladson-Billings suggested that this “master-scripting” of the curriculum erases diversity and provides erroneous information, all while labeling Black males as “at-risk” or overly referring them to special education programs. Traditional school settings do not encourage the rambunctious nature of boys, especially that of Black boys, causing the issuance of harsher disciplinary consequences and lowered teacher

expectations of their academic abilities. Through the lens of Critical Race Theory, disproportionalities in education can be better identified.

With Critical Race Theory (CRT) being at the forefront of so many arguments and discussions about education today, it is necessary to evaluate the intersectionality between racial disparities and CRT. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) identifies race as a “powerful social construct.” This construct is at the core of the Critical Race Theory, which highlights racism, inequality, the lived experiences of people of color, and whiteness as a perpetuation of inequality (Lac, 2017). The attack on CRT in education is primarily due to the presumption that allowing CRT to be used in classrooms causes discrimination against Whites (Sawchuck, 2021). That faulty logic and lack of knowledge perpetuates a lack of equity for non-White students and in turn discrimination against the many minority students who fill classrooms in America.

Unfortunately, there is still the idea that “White is right”, which focuses on Whiteness as superior and anything or anyone who is not as inferior (Andrews et al., 2019). According to Donnor (2021), the idea of “Negrophobia” or White fear, which is explained as the idea that if Blacks receive equitable academic access, they “will prove themselves intellectually equal,” therefore lessening the “property value in their whiteness” (p. 261). Researchers of CRT in education focus on policies that preserve racism at an institutional and systemic level with the goal being eradication of such policies and practices to provide equitable opportunities for minority students (Sawchuck, 2021).

Additionally, this idea is further highlighted in discussions about and debates against affirmative action, and the notion that Whites are missing out on opportunities to

attend certain colleges and receive certain job positions (Diangelo, 2018). The longstanding practices of bias and discrimination against non-White individuals emphasize the need for policies such as affirmative action to protect equitable opportunities for minorities (Darling-Hammond, 1998). In the same way, the refusal to acknowledge the privilege that Whites have in this country has sparked objection to CRT in schools, with claims that schools are teaching that “White people are inherently privileged, while Black and other people of color are inherently oppressed and victimized” (Sawchuck, 2021). Combining these ideas sets the precedent for how, and more importantly why Black students are treated the way they are in school. Understanding this foundation helps to guide the necessary changes that must take place to improve educational outcomes for students of color.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory

Culturally responsive teaching is important in shaping the educational futures of all learners because it embraces the idea that culture is in everything humans do, and therefore should be organically embedded within all structures and systems of life. According to Gay (2000), “culture determines how we think, believe and behave, and these, in turn, affect how we teach and learn” (p. 9). Additionally, the culturally responsive teacher must understand that this racially polarized society influences both how they teach and how their students learn, and subsequently, how they must build capacity and understanding of their students and the funds of knowledge they bring to school (Hammond, 2015). Research explains that when strategies and techniques are simply adopted without theory to support them, many problems are merely reproduced rather than solved (Shevailier & McKenzie, 2012). Therefore, it is important for

educators to not only implement best practices but also to understand “why” these techniques work through self-reflection and discussion. Culturally responsive teaching is a prevailing strategy for making sure all students are provided with the tools necessary to be successful in school and life (Hammond, 2015). Furthermore, this shift in instructional practice helps students better connect with school and enrich instruction.

Gay (2000) outlined culturally responsive teaching as being based on five premises: 1) Everyone’s culture matters; 2) Conventional methods of improving educational outcomes for children of color have proved to be unsuccessful; 3) Good intentions have little value if not backed by action; 4) Cultural diversity and difference is an asset; and 5) Standardized test scores and class assignment grades do not provide an explanation of why students are not performing satisfactorily. Culture is at the forefront of everything, especially in education. Culturally responsive teaching refers to classroom instruction that aims to identify the many differences of all students in the classroom and utilize those differences to make valuable connections to the content being taught. Over the years, the incorporation of culturally responsive teaching has moved away from African American students and has shifted focus toward English Learners and students from Hispanic backgrounds. The reality is that the Hispanic population in K-12 schools has increased significantly however, AA students still make up a large percentage of the student body. Furthermore, AA students continue to underperform all other races of students across the P-12 continuum, in turn causing the already massive achievement gap to continue to increase. Students and teachers alike bring their respective cultures with them to school, so it is a wonder why so many educators are dismissive of the intersectionality that exists between the home lives and experiences of minority students

and their performance in the classroom. Teachers who view their students through a deficit lens set lower expectations. Culturally responsive teachers adjust their lessons and instruction to meet the needs of the students in their classes.

According to Hammond (2015), culturally responsive teaching has been viewed as a method of remediating behavioral issues while not truly understanding or considering students' cultures. Culturally responsive teaching is more than merely doing cultural activities in the classroom and requires a complete shift in thinking. A participant in a study conducted by Ebersole et al. (2015) explains as such: "perspective vs. activity is like being vs. doing, laughing with you vs. at you; teaching as a calling vs. teaching as a job; wanting vs. having to". The culturally responsive teacher understands how their students' (and their own) cultures shape the knowledge they are obtaining through school while also being a medium to help students understand what and how they are learning (Hammond, 2015). Though there are strategies that can and should be implemented, these practices should be studied, internalized, and reflected upon to effectively and proactively be used to encourage and value students' cultures and learning.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated in this investigation:

H₁: There is a statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions of the cultural awareness component of culturally responsive practices.

H₂: There is a statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience)

and teachers' perceptions of the habits of using culturally responsive teaching component of culturally responsive practices.

H₃: There is a statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions of the impact of culturally responsive teaching on African American middle school-aged boys component of culturally responsive practices?

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made regarding this study:

1. It is assumed that all middle school teachers have received culturally responsive sustaining pedagogy training.
2. Culturally responsive teaching strategies are significant predictors of academic and behavioral modification for African American middle school boys.
3. It is assumed that all middle school teachers have high expectations of their African American male students.
4. It is assumed that all middle school administration has received and provided culturally responsive sustaining pedagogy training.
5. It is assumed that the demographic factors of gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience have a significant predictable impact on middle school teachers' use of culturally responsive teaching.

Limitations

The following are potential limitations of the study:

1. This study will be limited to middle school teachers in one district in Southeast Texas.
2. This study will be limited to middle school teachers with at least one African American male student.
3. This study will be limited to middle school teachers who integrate culturally responsive teaching into their classroom instruction.

Operational Definition of Variables

The following variables and terms were used throughout this study by the researcher. These terms have been operationally defined to provide clarity and understanding to this research investigation.

1. **Achievement Gap:** The disproportionalities in academic achievement between Black middle school students and their non-Black peers
2. **African American/Black:** Referring to middle school students of African descent including those with Hispanic origins
3. **Culturally Responsive Practices:** Instructional practices that recognize the importance of including cultural references in all facets of learning
4. **Cultural Awareness:** Referring to middle school teachers' knowledge and understanding of different cultures
5. **Critical Race Theory:** A way of analyzing education as it pertains to race and power

6. **Equity:** The practice of providing all middle school students with the tools they individually need to be successful.
7. **Habits of Using Culturally Responsive Practices:** How often and to what extent culturally responsive practices are utilized in the middle school classroom environment
8. **Impact of Culturally Responsive Practices on African American Males:** Perceived positive or negative influence culturally responsive practices have on middle school-aged African American boys both academically and behaviorally
9. **Middle School Students:** Students who are in sixth through eighth grade.
10. **Pedagogy:** Skills or methods related to teaching
11. **Teacher Perceptions:** The views middle school educators possess about the effectiveness of instructional strategies.

Organization of the Study

This study examined teachers' perceptions of the use of culturally responsive practices and their impact on African American middle school boys in an effort to help Black male students be successful in all aspects of school. Chapter 1 consists of the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research hypotheses, assumptions, limitations, operational definitions of terms and variables, and the organization of the study. Chapter 2 includes a well-developed review of pertinent and related literature which includes a thorough review of racial disparities, cultural awareness, culturally responsive practices, teachers' perceptions of African American students, and teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive practices. Chapter

3 provides an in-depth analysis of the design of the study. The type of design, population, sampling procedures, instrumentation, validity and reliability of the instrument, data-collection procedures, independent and dependent variables, null hypotheses, and statistical analysis are all included in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 consists of the analysis of the data, the discussion of the results, and the data presented in tabular form. Lastly, Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings, conclusions, discussions, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to identify teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of their use of culturally responsive practices. Chapter 2 consists of a well-developed review of relevant literature. Chapter 2 is divided into five main areas. First, the chapter begins with a discussion of the racial disparities in education affecting African American males, including the historical perspective and exclusionary discipline. The second section of this review includes a look at the cultural awareness of educators. Thirdly, this chapter provides insight into culturally responsive practices and their benefits in education. Next, the literature addresses teachers' perceptions of their African American students. Finally, this chapter culminates in a review of teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive practices.

As the body of research on race relations in the United States grows, it is pertinent to understand how education and minority students are impacted by race. Race is a significant part of everyone's daily life. There is substantial research addressing the numerous racial disparities plaguing the American education system. This data highlights academic and disciplinary disproportionalities that occur between African American students and their White counterparts (Loman et al., 2014). Additionally, during these racially polarized times, it is necessary to evaluate what is working in the classroom for minority students and what is not to make sure all students receive equitable educational outcomes. Race plays a major role in the way people, especially children, process the world around them. Research suggests that children use race in various ways such as through characterization and categorization in younger years, to socialization and group

membership in adolescence (Sullivan et. al., 2022). Additionally, Sullivan et. al. (2022) asserts that because of the impact of race, adults must engage in intentional conversations about race with children. Too often, however, adults, particularly those concerned with appearing racist, avoid conversations about race, both with other adults as well as children. As students embark upon middle school, their awareness of social issues and injustice becomes heightened. In conjunction with news stories involving police brutality and the deaths of unarmed Black men, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the removal of Critical Race Theory in schools, Black students and their families are hyper-aware and focused on the inequities plaguing them both in life and education (Okoroji & Oka, 2021).

Many researchers have identified different ways to reduce these disproportionalities such as through culturally responsive interventions (Aston et al., 2017; Banks & Obiakor, 2015; Bennett & Cramer, 2015; Betters-Bubon et al., 2016). Research indicates that school-wide discipline policies play a major role in the removal of minority students from the classroom, which in turn creates further disparities in academics. To reduce the achievement and discipline gaps in education among African American students and their White counterparts, the effective and proactive implementation of these strategies by campus personnel is dire. This review of literature will further examine schooling for African American students through a historical lens while evaluating the present use of culturally responsive teaching and its effectiveness in education.

Racial Disparities

Much of the body of research about African American students highlights the various inequities and racial disparities between Black and White students (Arredondo et al., 2017; Cartledge & Simmons-Reed, 2014; Chatmon & Gray, 2015; Loman et al., 2014). Racial disparities date back as far as slavery and segregation. Though race is merely identified as the physical characteristics a person exhibits, specifically skin color, as noted by Gloria Ladson-Billings, it is still used as a “powerful social construct” (1998). Racial disparities are defined as the social disadvantages and disproportionalities that plague people of color in the United States (Blaidsdell, 2005). Throughout the history of the American education system, Black students’ educational experiences have been marred by racism and inequality. The ideal of “separate but equal” with the racial segregation of schools in the South created generational equity gaps between Black and White students, and though the Supreme Court ruled against this unlawful and unconstitutional practice in 1954, many schools remained segregated well into the 1960s. Through desegregation, there became a skewed assumption that equal opportunity would magically appear and that any persistent achievement gap was due to a lack of effort on the part of Black students even though minority students still primarily attended schools that mostly housed minority students and received less funding (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Fergus (2017) adds that Black students were considered “inferior”, which consequently resulted in the continued views of Black students through a deficit lens. Similarly, Fitchett et al. (2012) explained that the misconceptions teachers have about their students’ backgrounds further result in deficit thinking. Additionally, Ramsay-Jordan (2020) asserts that these perceptions have caused Black students to be limited in

their access to rigorous curriculum and continue to shape the deliberate inequitable educational experiences that prevail. Furthermore, Williams et al. (2020) explains that teachers who employ negative stereotypes of their minority students also have lowered educational expectations and aid in decreased academic success.

In addition to desegregation in the South, many Black educators lost their jobs because of their inferior views of them and were forced out of classrooms which gave rise to the predominance of White women in the field of education (Tillman, 2004). Many of the disproportionalities in education today are caused by the unfortunate reality that most students in the United States hail from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds, while the majority of educators are middle-class White women (Bonner et al., 2018). Before segregation, Black educators were pillars of the community, pushing Black students to excel and be able to compete with their White counterparts (Tillman, 2004). Unfortunately, these educators who understood the challenges their students would face were snatched away causing Black students to be dropped into a system that no longer pushed for their excellence or valued their lived experiences. According to Bonner et al. (2018), White teachers' lack of cultural competency results in educational inequities and disparities. Fitchett et al. (2012) mimicked that sentiment by explaining how student engagement and motivation are negatively impacted because teachers fail to acknowledge and leverage minority students' culture. Furthermore, Fergus (2017) suggested that White educators have opposing lived experiences to that of many of their students. Pre-service and first-year teachers often have a difficult time connecting with their students from culturally diverse backgrounds due to their lack of exposure to diversity. Research suggests that these teachers often have more trouble teaching students

who do not look like them (Lambeth & Smith, 2016). Furthermore, Ramsay-Jordan (2020) posited that the influence of negative depictions of Blacks in the media shapes the outlook and biases of these teachers leading to detrimental impacts on student learning.

Alternatively, many White educators seek to work with children of Color. These teachers with their self-perceived well-intentioned desire to teach minority students in impoverished communities. Aronson (2017) identified “White Saviors” as individuals with a desire to “save” marginalized populations. With respect to education, these individuals believe that minority students would benefit from the knowledge and experience that they bring to the classroom, without considering the students’ own experiences. Aronson (2017) continued by addressing the misguided “notions of ‘good whites’ in urban classrooms...who will save students of Color from failing”. These teachers unfortunately have skewed views of education and lack a deep understanding of discrimination and exclusionary discipline practices (Rodick & Marshall, 2022). Lambeth and Smith (2016) also assert that though these teachers may have good intentions, they fail to understand how the lens through which they view the world is drastically different from that of their students and how this leads to bias in their instructional practices.

All of these individuals lack the capacity to understand their students and lack the empathy and compassion necessary to work with children who do not look like them. Fitchett et al. (2012) emphasized that pre-service teachers are often missing many of the skills necessary to teach culturally diverse learners. Furthermore, these teachers lack a fundamental understanding of their students, do not possess high expectations of their minority students, disproportionately refer Black students to special education programs, and lack the necessary knowledge to relate to their diverse learners’ unique needs

(Abacioglu et al., 2020; Bonner et al., 2018; Hafen et al., 2015; Siwatu et al., 2017).

Students bring a wide variety of cultural diversity to the classroom. This lack of cultural competence and knowledge often leads to misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Black students' behaviors (Scott & Moss-Bouldin, 2014). Many of these issues have led Black male students to be more harshly punished than any other race or class of student in the U.S. (McKown, 2013). The overuse of exclusionary disciplinary practices, such as suspension and expulsion, removes Black students from necessary and beneficial learning environments. Additionally, this removal often contributes to the academic disparities prevalent between Black and White students (Siwatu et al., 2017). According to Morris and Perry (2016), exclusionary discipline such as suspension does not reduce undesirable behaviors but perpetuates lower academic achievement. Teachers must have a basic understanding of the various cultures represented in their classrooms and how these cultures shape behaviors.

Exclusionary Discipline

Exclusionary discipline plagued the American education system, with Black boys representing a staggering percentage of these referrals. Practices that remove students from the classroom are of grave concern in urban schools. The policies that allow these practices to remain in place continue to cause an increasing gap in both discipline and academics. Kunesh and Noltemeyer (2019) asserted that the overrepresentation of Black students exists across states, communities, and grade levels, starting as early as Pre-K. They go on to further acknowledge how these disproportionalities are perpetuated by teachers, who are more likely to assign office referrals to Black students than White.

Additionally, Fergus (2017) cited Black students as being among the largest population receiving both in-school and out-of-school suspension.

Zero-tolerance policies are at the forefront of exclusionary discipline, and a major case of the overrepresentation of Black students who are subject to exclusionary disciplinary practices. According to Heilbrun et al. (2015), zero-tolerance policies are identified as disciplinary practices that require a “mandatory sanction for student disciplinary infractions without regard for the severity of the misconduct”. In other words, under these policies, students receive some form of consequence no matter the violation. These punitive school-wide policies are often open to interpretation and minority students fall victim to the subjective interpretations of their behaviors. The premise of zero tolerance policies is that by removing serious offenders, the overall climate of the class and school will improve, as well as the idea of harsh punishment as a deterrent to students from committing certain offenses (Heilbrun et al., 2015). Unfortunately, research reflects that these policies and exclusionary disciplinary practices only result in minute changes in future behavior, and in fact have the potential to worsen students’ attitudes toward school (Morris & Perry, 2016).

Further research analyzes the link between exclusionary discipline and the school-to-prison pipeline. The repercussions of exclusionary discipline and the conscious decision to remove students from the classroom should be taken into consideration. Teachers and administrators alike must understand the roles they play in current and future student learning and students’ attitudes toward education. Educators can be a catalyst of change, positive or negative. Students who are labeled as “bad” or “disruptive” by their teachers and peers are at a higher risk of retention and may

subsequently drop out of school (Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019). Furthermore, these inequities in punishment may have a harsher outcome with higher percentages of students who have been removed from the classroom consequently ending up in juvenile facilities or prison (Wilson, 2013). Skiba et al. (2014) proceeded to acknowledge the link between exclusionary discipline and the juvenile justice system, asserting that exclusionary discipline increases the likelihood that students may be detained. Additionally, Bacher-Hicks et al. (2021) emphasized that middle school youth who attend schools that boast excessive suspension rates have a greater likelihood of being arrested as adults.

Punitive policies and practices start with administration. School and district leadership play a significant and detrimental role in the exclusion of Black students. Principals exercise the greatest discretion in disciplinary policies (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2021). Heilbrun et al. (2015) postulated that school principals' views and attitudes about school suspension as a disciplinary practice play a substantial role in its use. Skiba (2004) further documents that principals who endorsed zero-tolerance policies as their "disciplinary philosophy" were more likely to have higher suspension rates. On the contrary, school principals who placed value on preventative and restorative measures were less likely to suspend and expel students for nonviolent offenses. Moreover, Heilbrun et al. (2015) cited an analysis of school and district suspension data by Losen and Skiba (2010) that revealed

More than 28% of the middle school Black males in their sample had been suspended over the past year, compared with 10% of White males and 4% of White females. In addition, approximately one-third of the schools in their sample had 'extraordinarily high' suspension rates for at least some subgroups, suspending Black males at a rate of 33% or higher. (p.)

Culturally responsive teachers become culturally responsive administrators. In this way, there must be a mindset shift in the way teachers and principals view their students and a better understanding of how culture influences students' actions and teachers' reactions.

Teachers' Cultural Awareness

Teachers play significant roles in students' educational success. Making sure that students are provided the most equitable experience is of grave importance. For teachers to ensure their instructional practices are equitable, they must possess a level of cultural awareness, both for their own cultures as well as their students. Karatas and Oral (2019) explained the necessity for increasing cultural awareness and the many benefits associated with increasing "positive cultural values" including, helping teachers to reduce bias and prejudice, and being open to and accepting of cultures other than their own. Additionally, Karatas and Oral posited that in taking the necessary steps to acquire a better understanding of cultural diversity, teachers are better able to support cultural differences in their classes.

As teaching and views of the world change in this polarized society, teachers need to examine their cultural awareness. Teachers often have outdated and limited views of culture and diversity, especially as it pertains to their students. Culturally aware teachers have a better understanding of the diverse learners in their classes and schools, therefore aiding them in addressing their individual academic, behavioral, and social needs. Ramsay-Jordan (2020) addressed the need for teachers to examine their own cultures and beliefs to help better influence their instructional practices. Teachers' cultural awareness has a direct link to the perceptions they have of their students' educational attainment. According to Mahatmya et al. (2016), teachers who possess higher cultural awareness are

more likely to build strong positive relationships with students who are historically considered most at risk. Furthermore, having a better understanding and view of students' lived experiences and how they may differ from their teacher and their peers, allows the teacher to build deeper personal relationships with their students. Additionally, Mahatmya et al. (2016) posited the necessity for intentional teacher training about the role cultural awareness plays in the classroom. Furthermore, through culturally relevant practices such as building positive teacher-student relationships, Black students in particular are more likely to be successful (Hunter & Stinson, 2019; Brockenbrough, 2015, Ramsay-Jordan, 2020).

Bias, Stereotypes, and the Role They Play in Education

Racial disparities are also permeated through implicit and explicit biases that are brought into the classroom (Arredondo et al., 2017). Biases lead to the differential treatment of students; therefore, teachers need to make a conscious effort to assess their biases and make appropriate and necessary changes in their teaching practices. Everyone has biases of some sort, but understanding how these biases impact teaching and learning, and making a conscious effort to not bring these biases into the classroom is dire. According to Lambeth and Smith (2016), teachers who do not accept their biases will erroneously distinguish students by their shortfalls as opposed to their many gifts. These implicit racial associations are often harder to control because they occur unconsciously (Warikoo et al., 2016). Regrettably, as a result of this predisposition, many teachers have lowered expectations of African American males and provide lower scores on subjective evaluations to them. These lowered expectations of students tend to be caused by negative teacher feelings toward their non-White students (Warikoo et al., 2016). Too

often, teachers fail to self-reflect on their biases and how these implicit associations impact their teaching practices in the classroom and subsequently contribute to growing racial inequity for minority students.

Stereotypes, both positive and negative play a major role in the educational outcomes of Black students. Acknowledgment of these stereotypes tends to result in a self-fulfilling prophecy for students who fall into the subgroup of these stereotypes. A term referred to as “stereotypic expectancies” shows the influence that “social perception” from peers and teachers has on the recipient of the stereotype, and consequently, the confirming actions displayed by the recipient (Czopp, 2010). Furthermore, Chang and Demyan (2007) asserted that racial and cultural stereotypes impact how Black students are treated by their teachers. Additionally, they expound upon this idea by pointing out the harsh treatment Black students receive based on these stereotypes, such as being given less attention or academic help than their White or Asian peers (Chang & Demyan, 2007).

As research regarding diversity in education expands, analysis of both practice and theory must as well. This necessary function of educational research allows for the continued assessment of educational outcomes. Persistent evaluation of racial bias allows educators to have a clearer understanding of their instructional practices and how they shape racial disparities. According to Blankenberger et al., (2017) racial color blindness, the “denial, distortion, and/or minimization of race and racism” is a function of racial bias and prejudice (p. 47). Clark and Zygmunt (2014) posited that teachers must be self-aware of personal ideologies such as racial color blindness to successfully remedy any possibility of prejudiced interaction with minority students. Additionally, they believe

that this self-reflection would help educators create more impartial learning experiences for all students (Clark and Zygmunt, 2014).

Culturally Responsive Practices

Culturally responsive practices are not merely strategies that are taught to “embrace” students’ cultures, such as through celebrating Cinco de Mayo or learning about Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks during Black History Month. Culturally responsive practices are how educators acknowledge their own cultures and seek to embrace the various cultures represented in their classes. Multiple strategies can be implemented to aid in reducing inequities in education. In this way, teachers will be able to enhance the educational experiences of their students by making simple culturally competent adjustments and interventions. One of the most basic undertakings a teacher can do is to embrace the various cultures of the students in their classrooms. This means accepting the funds of knowledge the students bring to class each day (Banks & Obiakor, 2015). Teachers must understand how culture influences the way students learn and process information (Hammond, 2015) as well as how their own cultures are embedded into the content and curriculum they teach. Too often, teachers dismiss the usefulness of the knowledge students bring from home to the classroom. Customs, language, and dialect are all a part of a person’s culture, and these funds of knowledge are imperative parts of the educational process for all students. These beneficial additions such as dialect have a great impact on the way students learn. If a teacher is unfamiliar with the dialect that a student speaks in, they may assume what the student is saying is incorrect. Simmons (2014) featured a vignette of how being unfamiliar with African American Vernacular English was a detriment to a high school teacher in Georgia. This

unfamiliarity or ignorance can ultimately affect the teacher's ability to accurately assess their students and in turn, widen the achievement gap between minority students and their Caucasian peers.

Culturally responsive practices may look different across schools, districts, and content areas, however at the forefront is the utilization of teachers' and students' cultures to guide instruction. For example, in schools with a large majority of students from linguistically diverse backgrounds, teachers may focus more heavily on the commonalities between English and the various languages that may be represented within a class to teach academic vocabulary. Culturally responsive teaching is just another layer of differentiated instruction. Santamaria (2009) explained that culturally responsive teaching helps to improve the "academic success" of culturally diverse students. Understanding this notion allows teachers to connect with their students in a deeper way, ethnically, culturally, and through lived experiences. Many teachers are unsure of how to organically build these types of relationships and rely heavily on the training they receive in their teacher preparation programs and professional development, but training in those areas is also limited.

Culturally Responsive Strategies

Additionally, teachers can create safe and respectful environments where all students feel welcome and are representative of the various cultures in their class. These culturally responsive teaching strategies help to build strong relationships with minority students, especially with Black students and are important for closing the "diversity gap" between minority students and their White teachers (Cartledge & Simmons-Reed, 2014). Establishing these positive teacher-student relationships will not only help students but

will also help decrease negative teacher attitudes and biases toward students. When teachers work toward building relationships with their students, it helps to build community within the classroom. Classroom communities build trust between students and teachers and improve the culture of the school, as well as the performance of Black students (Toldson, 2008).

Building relationships with students can be difficult for all teachers. According to Natesan and Kieftenbeld (2013), teachers are often hesitant to work in urban and culturally diverse school settings. Alternatively, Black teachers are more likely to be assigned to schools with higher populations of students of color (Black & Rice, 2020). Additionally, the research of Natesan and Kieftengeld (2013) posited that White teachers are less willing to teach African American students. It is no easy task for a White teacher to organically bond with their Black students. Fortunately, there are strategies to help combat this disconnect. Many schools have begun the practice of conducting home visits for students struggling academically or behaviorally. The research of Ilhan et al., (2019) showed that the observation of students in their natural environments and with parental involvement, home visits allow students and teachers to build stronger bonds and positively impact student outcomes. According to Black et al. (2018):

This appreciation of a student's background and influences on behavior allows a teacher to modify his or her approach to working with the student, thus allowing for a more meaningful relationship between teacher and student. Not only does this increased understanding of a student impact the teacher's view of the student, but it has been shown to have a positive impact on the student's classroom behavior as well. (p. 69)

As students matriculate through school, these relationships that teachers have formed with students and their families continue to be beneficial.

In addition to building relationships and classroom communities, there are several other in-class culturally relevant strategies that teachers and administrators can put into place in their classrooms and schools. Such initiatives encourage positive environments where supportive and trustworthy relationships are cultivated between Black male students and trained teachers who have a passion and purpose for their profession (Chatmon & Gray, 2015). Furthermore, districts can support educators and schools in their quest to provide equity and inclusion to all students in their care. Research suggests that it is necessary for teachers to implement culturally responsive instruction within the classroom but also for schools to implement these same practices throughout the school setting to promote equity and encourage tolerance among students. For schools to execute these practices, they must begin with administration. Best leadership practices focus on cultivating a positive environment in the school (Andersen, 2014). School leadership must also change to promote the cultural diversity of the students in the school. Socially active leaders and teachers will encourage cultural competence throughout the school.

Culturally competent educators and administrators will help to close the discipline and achievement gaps between Black and White students. Unfortunately, many educators are not truly culturally competent, though they believe their instructional practices to be without effectively recognizing their personal bias. Based on cultural background, students may exhibit similar behaviors but are viewed differently by teachers (Betters-Bubon et al., 2016). Evaluating the behaviors of minority students deepens the understanding of those students and aims to reduce the disparities of what is deemed as “undesirable.” Minority students need culturally responsive teachers who understand their behaviors and can frame them into positive outcomes (Scott & Moss-Bouldin, 2014).

Teachers' Perceptions of African American Students

As research into the way students learn grows, one thing that has been documented throughout the literature is that teachers play a major role in the outcome of students (Fox, 2016; Morris & Perry, 2016; Wiley, 2021). Teachers' perceptions and expectations of their students impact student learning, behavior, and social and emotional growth. The intersectionality of teachers' racial and ethnic backgrounds and their expectations of their students is of note in numerous research studies. According to Lambeth & Smith (2016), teachers' perceptions and expectations have helped to maintain and even increase the Black-White achievement gap. Furthermore, many educators and teacher candidates allow these misconceptions to dictate their thinking and cause them to view students through a deficit lens (Fitchett et al., 2012). Sadly, many Caucasians' view of the world is narrow. Unfortunately, many Caucasians have the luxury of growing up in places and spaces where everyone looks like them in the neighborhood. Teachers of diverse students require a greater knowledge base of not only their students but also the cultural backgrounds that are represented in their classrooms. Too often, White teachers of African American students do not possess this knowledge and therefore have negative opinions of their students' academic and behavioral capabilities. Due to these feelings, teachers may have lowered expectations of their Black students. Unfortunately, teachers' expectations and beliefs of their students play significant roles in student performance (Hafen et al., 2015). Research indicates that teachers' perceptions of their students' academic outcomes predicate students' future success (Williams et al., 2020). Additionally, teachers' bias and discrimination towards Black students also significantly impacts student outcomes, including increased mental health issues (Okoroji & Oka,

2021). According to Pringle et al. (2016), teachers' perceptions play a major role in the academic success of African American students. Fitchett et al. (2012) insisted that African American teachers often possess higher expectations of their Black students coupled with a "caregiver mentality". Additionally, Williams et al. (2020) expressed that Black teachers' expectations of Black students, especially Black boys, are much higher than that of non-Black teachers. Not only does research suggest that Black teachers possess higher expectations of their Black students, but they also display more caring and understanding toward these students. According to Brockenbrough (2015), Black teachers have more familial bonds with their Black students and understand their culture in a way that better engages their learners and their unique needs. Moreover, Black women are more mothering and express care for their Black male students while Black male teachers are perceived as disciplinarians and "fathering" which offers a different approach to the discipline of Black boys. These views help propel the achievement of African American students forward. Consequently, a large majority of students will graduate without ever having a teacher of color (Lambeth & Smith, 2016).

Research suggests that Black students become aware of the bias against them as they reach adolescence and in turn, begin to develop various coping mechanisms to handle these added stressors (Okoroji & Oka, 2021). One study found that African American students felt that their teachers had lower expectations of them than of their White peers (Pringle et al., 2016). Black boys, in particular, seem to be the primary targets of this discrimination, both direct and indirect. The unfortunate reality for African American teens is that this discrimination comes not only from their teachers but also from their peers. These lowered expectations and discrimination may cause students to

have lower academic self-esteem (Williams et al., 2020). According to Okorjoi and Oka (2021), students who feel discriminated against may choose to suffer in silence, seek out support, engage in some form of confrontation, or assimilate so they are no longer targeted. Additional research identifies that Black males recognize when their teachers care as well. A study conducted by Hunter and Stinson (2019) discusses Black boys' perceptions of a Black male teacher who showed interest in their learning, helped to create a positive and comfortable learning environment, and connected with his learners through shared experiences.

Most teachers would say that they treat all their students the same, however, stereotypes about Black males such as being overly aggressive and violent have led to the criminalization of Black students. The pervasiveness of disciplinary disproportionalities would prove this to be the case. Moreover, Monroe (2005) cited society's view of Black males as a major factor in influencing teachers' misguided beliefs of African American boys' behaviors.

Teachers' Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Practices

Research regarding culturally responsive teaching has been growing over the past few decades, however, it is important to acknowledge and recognize how teachers view and utilize culturally responsive teaching. Teachers are important for student success; therefore, teachers must use their skills and employ different strategies to make sure all students are successful. Research on teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive teaching shows that teachers believe that they value their diverse students' cultures. According to Bonner et al. (2018), teachers view their students' diversity as an asset that strengthens classroom learning. Additionally, teachers of diverse populations

acknowledge the various methods used to be inclusive of different cultures such as including multicultural literature in their class libraries, displaying photos and artifacts, and celebrating customs from around the world.

Teachers' views of educational practices are constantly changing. There are so many buzzwords in education that it is hard for classroom teachers to keep up with the changing demands of their districts and administrators. Culturally responsive teaching is no different, however much of the literature regarding this branch of multicultural education is geared toward the education and instruction of English Learners. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and students' physically reentering classrooms, educators realized they must make necessary changes to their instructional practices. Many students had regressed academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally. This regression led to the emergence of yet another buzzword, social-emotional learning (SEL). Upon further review, many of the tenets of SEL are inclusions of culturally responsive teaching, but it seems that educators are more accepting of this practice due to an aversion to any mention of culture. Gregory and Fergus (2017) addressed a major deficit of social-emotional learning as being "colorblind" and further ignoring the cultural backgrounds and experiences of non-White students. The prevalence of the integration of culturally responsive teaching and social-emotional learning is limited; however, the need is certainly there. Donahue-Keegan et al. (2019) identified why there should be an integrated approach to providing culturally responsive social-emotional learning training both for pre-service and in-service teachers. Furthermore, Gregory and Fergus (2019) asserted that to establish "equity-oriented social and emotional competencies" educators and leaders must acknowledge the necessity of integrating culture and cultural

frameworks into their teaching practices in addition to their personal and professional goals.

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Teachers often do not choose to teach in environments that are different than their own and when they choose to do so, many feel underprepared and overwhelmed (Zaffini, 2022). This is due to a lack of initial training and continuing education. Pre-service teachers often do not receive significant amounts of training to prepare them to teach diverse learners which is much of the reason they shy away from teaching at schools with large populations of students who do not look like them or come from backgrounds similar to their own (Lambeth & Smith, 2016). Most college teacher preparation programs offer at least one multicultural education class however the focus of this course usually extends beyond culture and ethnicity. It is the role of teacher educators to prepare pre-service teachers to become culturally responsive in their thoughts and practices (Ebersole et al., 2016). Fitchett et al. (2012) posited that it is necessary for teacher education programs “to integrate cultural awareness and responsiveness into instructional praxis”. In other words, teacher candidates must holistically learn about the many aspects of culture and diversity if they are to become effective and culturally responsive. Teacher preparation programs offer a unique opportunity for preservice teachers to engage in professional learning that will ultimately prepare them to teach students from a variety of different backgrounds and have a myriad of needs. Unfortunately, many of these programs do not ensure that teacher candidates are sufficiently prepared to educate students from culturally diverse backgrounds. (Moore et al., 2021). According to Moore et al. (2021), teacher preparation programs have the duty of equipping preservice teachers

with various opportunities to learn and understand culturally responsive teaching through their coursework, field experiences, and internships. Additionally, providing time for pre-service teachers to reflect and explore their own culture, cultural awareness, and bias will help in future instructional practice. Understanding the role that culture plays in personal and professional lives will help mitigate issues caused by lack of teacher preparation and racial bias. Furthermore, teacher preparation programs and teacher educators are tasked with helping preservice teachers expand their knowledge and practice of cultural diversity by pushing them toward successfully and positively applying this knowledge.

In a study conducted by Yang et al. (2020) on the cultural competence of pre-service teachers, it was revealed that cultural competence and teacher self-efficacy are directly related. Moreover, teachers who possess an “openness to experiences” are more prepared to encounter and develop relationships with students outside of their own cultural and racial backgrounds. In addition, the researchers reported that pre-service teachers who had positive views of culture and diversity were more likely to be comfortable with working with diverse student populations (Yang et al., 2020).

Additionally, researchers Kyei-Blankson and Nur-Awaleh (2018) suggested that pre-service teachers engage in experiences that expand cultural competence such as study abroad programs. They examined how pre-service educators who participated in study abroad programs that allowed them to observe and/or teach in PK-12 settings with culturally and linguistically diverse students were influenced in their future plans on working with diverse populations. The program resulted in a shift in the pre-service teachers’ views of language, culture, education, and plans on incorporating culture into instructional practice (Kyei-Blankson & Nur-Awaleh, 2018).

Moreover, teacher mentors also have a responsibility to new educators to help them become more culturally responsive, as they are in a better position to help new teachers navigate the school environment and culture. Educators tend to seek out professional development opportunities that will help them be the best teachers for themselves and their students. Learning “best practices” from expert teachers typically refers to strategies and instructional practices but becoming culturally responsive takes more than simple instruction on the “how” and focuses more on understanding and supporting the “why” and “who”.

School leadership plays an important role in setting the tone and establishing an environment that is respectful and accepting of all races, cultures, and ethnicities on their campuses, including their teachers. Encouraging teacher efficacy and reflection of experiences will help to ensure teachers can provide equitable educational opportunities to students (Callaway, 2017). Furthermore, cultural understanding improves relationship development between students and teachers. Principals have the unique ability to review all pertinent data for their campuses to identify how students are being impacted. Fergus (2017) further explained that it is the responsibility of the school leader to view their data through an equity lens to examine and understand disproportionalities and how these disparities affect their campuses. Additionally, by using this analysis, administrators can build an equitable school climate.

Patton (2011) explained the necessity of making sure that the activities conducted during culturally responsive teacher professional development should support the backgrounds of educators to help them understand their students’ cultures and lived experiences. Patton continued explaining that these professional developments must

provide opportunities for discussion of the effects of culture on learning styles and encourage teachers' cultural awareness. Professional learning opportunities provide valuable education to teachers on how to better educate and understand their culturally different students and expand on the cultural awareness necessary to teach these students.

Summary

Though the achievement gap between White and Black children has been heavily researched and has been a focus for researchers, policymakers, and district administration, not much has been done in the way of closing this gap. The unfortunate reality is that inequities in education lead to inequities in life (Morris & Perry, 2016). Research reflects that the ever-growing achievement gap is caused by multiple circumstances including the lack of funding in schools that house primarily marginalized populations, student tracking and ability grouping, curriculum offerings, and lack of teacher experience and high teacher turnover. However, Almroth et al. (2021) posited that a positive school climate breeds higher academic outcomes and higher expectations.

For generations, marginalized populations, particularly Black males, have struggled to maneuver through the educational landscape. Students of color have faced significant challenges both academically and behaviorally. As the demographic of students changes, the static demographic of educators must make the necessary changes so all students feel safe, valued, and respected. There are a host of ways to go about providing equity to all students, however, culturally responsive teaching is one example of differentiated instruction for the whole child. Culturally responsive teaching helps educators reflect on their thoughts and values to make sure all students are represented and receive positive outcomes. Culturally responsive pedagogy is not simply for English

Learners but should put precedent on all cultures. Black males make up the largest portion of students in Special Education programs, the largest number of students receiving exclusionary disciplinary consequences, and are underachieving at alarmingly high rates. With such a large percentage of U.S. educators being White middle-class women with differing cultural backgrounds and experiences from the students they teach, it is of dire importance that these educators provide appropriate instruction to make certain that all their students are guided toward success. Only then will true educational equity be achieved.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to analyze how the demographic factors of gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience influence teachers' perceptions of cultural awareness, habits of using culturally responsive practices, and the impact culturally responsive practices have on African American middle school-aged boys. This study examined how teachers' views of the use of culturally relevant practices impact Black boys academically and behaviorally in classrooms and schools. Chapter 3 was divided into nine (9) areas: (1) research design, (2) population, (3) sampling, (4) instrumentation, (5) pilot study, (6) data collection procedure, (7) independent and dependent variables, (8) null hypothesis, and (9) statistical analysis.

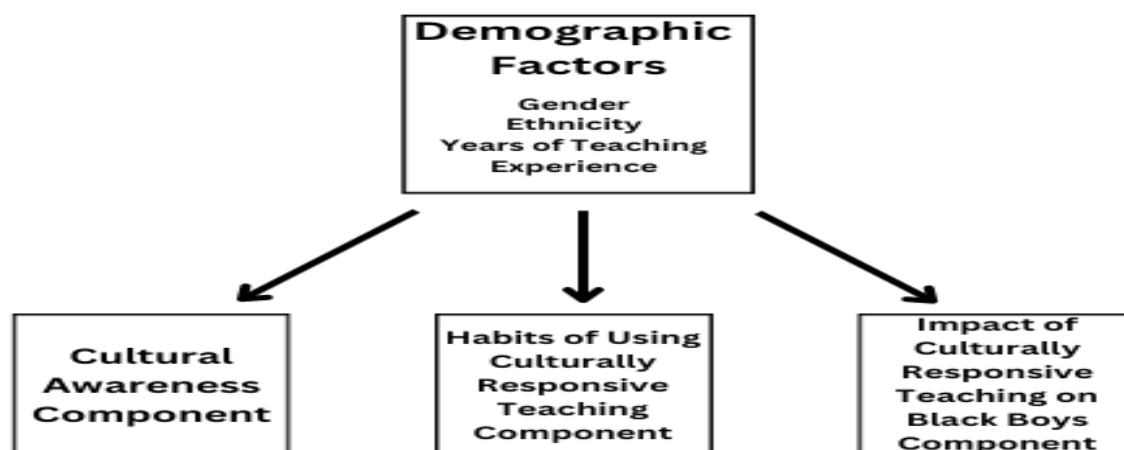
Research Design

A predictive correlational research design was employed in this quantitative study (see Figure 1). This type of research design is used to obtain data and determine if there is or is not a predictable relationship between demographic factors and measures of perceptions of culturally responsive practices. Gay et al. (2015) identified the purpose of correlational research as aiding in establishing relationships or predictions of relationships between two or more variables. Correlational research does not allow the researcher to control or manipulate variables, however, the researcher can test and analyze the degree to which the variables are related. Using the correlational research method, the survey data was analyzed to provide a better understanding of the predictable relationship between teachers' gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience and

measures of their perceptions of culturally responsive practices on African American middle school male students. A five-point Likert scale survey was used to collect information from participants on their cultural awareness, habits of using culturally responsive teaching strategies, and their beliefs of the impact culturally responsive teaching has on their Black male students.

Figure 1

Predictive Correlational Research Design



Population and Research Setting

A sample population of middle school teachers from a district in the Southeast Texas region, specifically in the Houston metroplex, were selected to participate in the study. During the 2021-22 school year, it was reported that the target school district educates approximately 194,607 students across all grade levels, Pre-Kindergarten/Early Childhood through 12th grade. There are eight early childhood centers, 160 elementary schools, 39 middle schools, 37 high schools, and 30 combined multilevel schools housed

within this district. The demographic makeup of students served is as follows: 62.01% Hispanic, 22.19% African American, 4.45% Asian, and 9.51% White. 79.17% of the total population of the school district is considered economically disadvantaged. According to the 2020-21 Texas Academic Performance Report, the district employs a total of 24, 419 staff with 35.4% of the staff being African American, 30.3% Hispanic, 26.4% White, 0.3% American Indian, 5.9% Asian, 0.1% Pacific Islander, and 1.6% identifying as two or more races. Additionally, 26.9% of the staff is male, and 73.1% of the total staff is female.

The primary target schools are those with student populations and demographics having near or more than 50% of the student population as African American. This study is geared toward middle school teachers who are certified in any area and are considered the teacher of record from students grades 6 through 8. It is also important to note that some teachers to be included in this study will be first-year teachers with limited classroom experience. The results of this study aim to guide their instruction through reflection on their cultural awareness, preparation, and instructional practices.

Sampling Procedure

The nonprobability purposive sampling procedure was used to select the teachers participating in this study. Gay et al. (2015) identified purposive sampling as a sampling procedure “that is believed to be representative of a given population” (p.145). This sampling technique allowed the researcher to select a specific group that was able to answer the research questions. The criteria that were used by the researcher to select the middle school teachers participating in this study were as follows:

- 1) Middle school teachers in a district in Southeast Texas.

- 2) Middle school teachers with at least one African American male student.
- 3) Middle school teachers who have received culturally responsive sustaining pedagogy training.

Instrumentation

A locally devised instrument analyzing teachers' perceptions of the impact of culturally responsive practices was developed by the researcher. The teacher perception survey consisted of four parts. The four parts of the survey are detailed as follows: 1) Demographics, which include gender, race, age, grade level(s) currently teaching, prior years of teaching experience, and highest level of education obtained; 2) Seven Likert-scale questions on cultural awareness; 3) Six Likert-scale questions on habits of using culturally responsive teaching; and 4) Five Likert-scale questions and one open-ended statement on the impact of culturally responsive teaching on African American middle school aged boys. Specifically, the data collected from the perception survey was used to guide this research. Each Likert-scale question provides participants with statements that they must rate themselves on a five-point Likert scale. The five points utilized in this scale are: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) No Opinion, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly Agree.

Pilot Study

For this study, the term pilot study referred to the pre-test of the survey instrument designed by the researcher. A pilot study was conducted to collect and analyze data to check for reliability and validity before administering the survey to study participants. The pilot study was administered to seven culturally diverse middle school teachers, similar to the target population. The teachers were chosen purposively. The racial

proportions of the participants were taken into consideration. The pilot study population included four Black educators, two White educators, and one Hispanic educator, with six of the seven participants possessing a post-secondary degree.

Through discussion of the survey following the pilot study, educators provided feedback about the survey and the process to help the researcher have a better understanding of how teachers completing the perception survey would view this. Multiple participants expressed that they felt they would have been better heard about how their practices are truly impacting their African American male students if they were provided with an open-ended question/sentence stem. The statement “I believe my implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices has produced the following outcomes for my African American male students...” was added to the final survey. Additionally, based on reliability data, the statement “My race has a significant impact on my instruction and classroom management practices” negatively impacted the study and lowered the overall reliability, therefore, this statement was reworded. All recommendations provided by the pilot groups were incorporated into the final draft of the instrument.

Validity of the Instrument

According to Cobern and Adams (2020), validity is used to prove that an instrument is designed in a way that reduces respondent error. Content validity was established for this survey instrument. The researcher distributed the survey instrument to a group of judges considered to be curriculum specialists. These researchers rated each question on the instrument on a scale of zero (0) to two (2), with 0 representing “not measuring what the instrument intends to measure”, 1 representing “somewhat measures

what the instrument intends to measure”, and 2 representing “measures what the instrument intends to measure”. Content validity confirmed the appropriateness of the survey items according to the content being measured. Content validity is based on the curriculum specialists’ judgment. The researcher reviewed the judges’ results and deemed the instrument as valid for this study.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability is used to determine the stability and consistency of the instrument. Internal consistency reliability assesses how well the survey measures what it intends to measure. Using data gathered from the sample participants in the study, the researcher used Cronbach’s Alpha to establish the reliability of the survey instrument. The alpha coefficient is used to measure how well the items on the survey are internally consistent. More specifically, the alpha coefficient helps determine the internal consistency between the survey items. Based on the final analyses of the study, the items in the Teachers’ Perceptions survey appeared to have good internal consistency as measured, $\alpha = .701$.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher began by accessing the district staff directory and collecting the email addresses of middle school teachers at schools having a population of near or more than 50% African American students. Upon gathering the email addresses, participants received the survey instrument via an email link sent out by the researcher. The data collected will remain anonymous. The data was then collected and analyzed to address the four research questions. The instrument was created and distributed through SurveyMonkey and includes a copy of the consent form as well as an electronic consent statement which is required to complete the survey. The survey consisted of a

demographics section, which included gender, age, grade level currently teaching, prior years of teaching experience, and the highest level of education obtained, as detailed instructions for each of the three subsequent sections (Cultural Awareness, Habits of Using Culturally Responsive Practices, and Impact of Culturally Responsive Practices on Black Boys) included, and a total of 18 Likert scale questions and one open-ended question. The survey should take an average of 5-10 minutes to complete and upon completion, participants were directed to a final page that thanked them for their participation. Once the surveys were collected by the researcher, the data were coded by the researcher and then entered into a computerized statistical package for analysis purposes. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for this application.

Independent and Dependent Variables

The variables for the study were carefully chosen by the researcher based on a thorough review of literature. The independent variables selected were gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience. It was assumed that the independent variables impacted the measures – cultural awareness, habits of using culturally responsive practices, and impact of culturally responsive practices on African American middle school males – of the dependent variable perceptions of culturally responsive practices on African American middle school males.

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were presented for testing in this investigation:

HO₁: There is no statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience)

and teachers' perceptions of the cultural awareness component of culturally responsive practices.

HO₂: There is no statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions of the habits of using culturally responsive teaching component of culturally responsive practices.

HO₃: There is no statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions of the impact of culturally responsive teaching on African American middle school-aged boys component of culturally responsive practices.

Statistical Analysis

For this predictive correlational study, a multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data of this quantitative study. More specifically, a standard multiple regression analysis allowed the researcher to determine the predictable relationship between demographic factors and perceptions of culturally responsive practices. Multiple regression is an extension of simple linear regression. As with simple regression, a major assumption of multiple regression is that there is a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The primary purpose of regression analysis is to identify the predictable relationship of one (or more) independent variable(s) on a dependent variable. Specifically, the goal of multiple regression analysis is to make predictions about the dependent variable and determine the degree of the relationship

between the independent or predictor variables and the dependent variable; therefore, the stronger the correlation, the more predictability there is between variables.

In utilizing a standard multiple regression analysis, the researcher was able to analyze the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, therefore, addressing the degree of predictability between the demographic factors gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience on the perceptions of culturally responsive practice components cultural awareness, habits of using culturally responsive practices, and the impact of culturally responsive practices on African American middle school aged males.

Evaluation of Statistical Assumptions

The following assumptions and key terms associated with multiple regression are as follows:

1. The independent variables are fixed.
2. The independent variables are measured without error.
3. The relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable is linear.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the predictable relationship between demographic factors and teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive practices. More specifically, this research dealt with the predictability of the demographic factors of gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience on the three components of culturally responsive practices (cultural awareness, habits of using culturally responsive practices, and the impact of culturally responsive practices on African American middle school aged boys). Survey responses from 102 teachers were used for this study.

The following null hypotheses were presented for testing in this investigation:

Ho₁: There is no statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions of the cultural awareness component of culturally responsive practices.

Ho₂: There is no statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions of the habits of using culturally responsive teaching component of culturally responsive practices.

Ho₃: There is no statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions of the impact of culturally responsive teaching on

African American middle school-aged boys component of culturally responsive practices.

The chapter begins with descriptive statistics presented. After that, the research questions were answered. This is followed by additional findings and a chapter summary.

Descriptive Statistics

Initially, 108 teachers began the survey. Four participants were eliminated due to incomplete survey responses. One respondent did not answer one question so that response was estimated with the grand mean for the study. Initial regression models identified one respondent that had an outlier based on the casewise diagnostics feature in SPSS and another respondent had a large studentized deleted residual (-3.416). These six respondents were removed from the sample, so the final sample was $N = 102$.

Table 1 displays the frequency counts for selected variables. There were more females (69.6%) than males (30.4%) in the sample. Ages ranged from under 25 years old (3.9%) to 60 years old and over (13.7%) with the median age of $Mdn = 34.50$ years. Teachers in the sample taught between the fifth grade to eighth grade with 15.7% teaching more than one grade level. Years of teaching experience ranged from 0 to 5 years (34.3%) to 26 or more years (8.8%) with the median of $Mdn = 8$ years of experience. Most teachers had either a bachelor's degree (48.0%) or a master's degree (39.2%). Over half the respondents were Black/African-American (58.8%) with fewer teachers from other racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Table 1*Frequency Counts for Selected Variables*

Variable %	Category	<i>n</i>	
Gender	Male	31	30.4
	Female	71	69.6
Age ^a	Under 25	4	3.9
	25-29	18	17.6
	30-39	38	37.3
	40-59	28	27.4
	60 and over	14	13.7
Current Grade Level(s)	5th Grade	15	14.7
	6th Grade	28	27.5
	7th Grade	21	20.6
	8th Grade	22	21.6
	More than 1 grade level	16	15.7
Years of Experience ^b	0-5 years	35	34.3
	6-10 years	22	21.6
	11-15 years	16	15.7
	16-25 years	20	19.6
	26+ years	9	8.8
Highest education	BS/BA	49	48.0
	MS/MA/MEd	40	39.2
	Educational Specialist	10	9.8
	PhD/EdD	3	2.9
Race/Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	14	13.7
	Black/African American	60	58.8
	Hispanic/Latinx	11	10.8
	Asian	10	9.8
	Other	7	6.9

Note. *N* = 102.

^a Age: *Mdn* = 34.50 years old. ^b Experience: *Mdn* = 8 years.

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for the 18 perception statements sorted by the highest level of agreement. These ratings were based on a five-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Agree* to 5 = *Strongly Disagree*. Highest levels of agreement (lowest mean scores) were for item 11, I encourage all students to be active participants in this class ($M = 0.37$), and item 12, I create a safe and respectful classroom environment for my students ($M = 0.48$). Least agreement was for item 5, teachers at my school encourage students to have honest conversations about race ($M = 2.26$), and item 7, the school provides professional development opportunities geared toward CRT ($M = 2.20$).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Statement Sorted by Highest Agreement

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
11. I encourage all students to be active participants in class	0.37	0.54
12. I create a safe and respectful classroom environment for my students	0.48	0.59
18. Developing relationships and knowledge of my AA male student's backgrounds is important to me	0.55	0.70
10. I can design lessons to meet the needs of all my students	0.60	0.71
16. I have the same academic and behavioral goals for my AA male students	0.64	0.87
8. I am comfortable interacting with students at my school who are from different cultures	0.73	0.81
9. I can make learning meaningful by leveraging students' cultural backgrounds	0.76	0.73
13. I strive to use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds	0.84	0.66
17. My race impacts the way I approach teaching my AA male students	0.92	0.99
15. My AA male students have benefitted behaviorally from my use of CRT	0.93	0.81
14. My AA male students have benefitted academically from my use of CRT	0.98	0.82
6. I explore professional development opportunities to help promote equity in my class	1.22	0.89
2. Students are provided with opportunities to learn about people from different races	1.51	1.03
4. I feel comfortable speaking out against racism at my school	1.62	1.37

3. I have meaningful conversations with other teachers about race	1.89	1.27
1. School Administration helps advance student equity	1.96	1.13
7. My school provides professional development opportunities geared toward CRT	2.20	1.08
5. Teachers at my school encourage students to have honest conversations about race	2.26	1.02

Note. $N = 102$.

Note. Statements were based on a five-point metric: 0 = *Strongly Agree* to 4 = *Strongly Disagree*.

Table 3 displays the psychometric characteristics of the four scales. All four scale scores had Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients greater than $\alpha > .70$ which suggested all scales had adequate levels of internal reliability (Gay et al., 2015). The scale scores were based on a five-point metric: 0 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree*. The total score had a mean of $M = 2.86$. The lowest subscale score was for cultural awareness ($M = 2.19$) while the highest subscale score was for habits of using culturally responsive teaching ($M = 3.37$). All skewness and kurtosis statistics were within normal limits (± 1.0 , Mertler & Reinhart, 2017) which suggested that all scores had adequate levels of normal distribution.

Table 3*Psychometric Characteristics for the Scale Scores*

Scale Score	Items	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	Low	High	α
Total Score	18	2.86	2.83	0.49	-0.10	-0.25	1.72	4.00	.86
Cultural Awareness Score	7	2.19	2.14	0.72	0.47	-0.39	0.86	4.00	.76
Habits of Using Culturally Responsive Teaching	6	3.37	3.50	0.45	-0.39	-0.48	2.17	4.00	.74
Impact of Culturally Responsive Teaching	5	3.20	3.40	0.62	-0.78	0.29	1.40	4.00	.79

Note. $N = 102$.

Note. Scale scores were reverse-scored: 0 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree*.

Table 4 displays the Pearson correlations between five demographic variables and the four scale scores. For the 20 correlations, 12 were significant at the $p < .05$ level. Specifically, the cultural awareness score was higher for older teachers ($r = .26, p < .01$), teachers with more years of experience ($r = .28, p < .01$), and teachers with more education ($r = .23, p < .05$). The habits of using culturally responsive teaching score was higher for older teachers ($r = .26, p < .01$), teachers with more years of experience ($r = .28, p < .005$), and for Black teachers ($r = .25, p < .01$). The impact of culturally responsive teaching score was higher for older teachers ($r = .24, p < .05$), teachers with more years of experience ($r = .21, p < .05$), and for Black teachers ($r = .58, p < .001$). The total score was higher for older teachers ($r = .31, p < .005$), teachers with more years of experience ($r = .30, p < .005$), and for Black teachers ($r = .32, p < .001$).

Table 4*Pearson Correlations Between the Demographic Variables and the Scale Scores*

Demographic Variable	1	2	3	4
Gender	.09	-.07	-.09	.00
Age	.26 **	.26 **	.24 *	.31 ***
Years of Experience	.28 **	.28 ***	.21 *	.30 ***
Highest Education	.23 *	.06	.12	.19
Black	.07	.25 **	.58 ****	.32 ****

Note. $N = 102$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .005$. **** $p < .001$.

Note. Scale scores were reverse-scored: 0 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree*.

Note. 1 = Cultural Awareness Score, 2 = Habits of Using Culturally Responsive Teaching Score,

3 = Impact of Culturally Responsive Teaching, and 4 = Total Score.

Testing Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1 was, H_{01} : There is no statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions of the cultural awareness component of culturally responsive practices. To test this hypothesis, Table 5 displays the relevant predictive multiple regression model. The overall model just failed to reach significance, $F(3, 98) = 2.51$, $p = .064$, $R^2 = .071$. Inspection of the beta weights found the perception of cultural awareness score to be higher for teachers with more years of experience ($\beta = .26$, $p = .013$).

Table 5*Predictive Model for Perceptions of Cultural Awareness Based on Selected Variables*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>	VIF
Intercept	1.87	0.16		.001	
Gender ^a	0.11	0.15	.07	.466	1.04
Black ^b	-0.03	0.15	-.02	.853	1.12
Years of Experience	0.10	0.04	.26	.013	1.09

Note. $N = 102$.

Note. Full Model: $F(3, 98) = 2.51, p = .064, R^2 = .071$.

Note. This table supports Null Hypotheses 1.

Note. Scale score was reverse-scored: 0 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree*.

^a Gender: 1 = *Male*, 2 = *Female*.

^b Black: 0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*.

Null Hypothesis 2 was, H_{02} : There is no statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions of the habits of using culturally responsive teaching component of culturally responsive practices. To test this hypothesis, Table 6 displays the relevant predictive multiple regression model. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 98) = 4.75, p = .004, R^2 = .127$. Inspection of the beta weights found the habits of using culturally responsive teaching score to be higher for Black teachers ($\beta = .21, p = .041$) and also higher for teachers with more years of experience ($\beta = .23, p = .020$).

Table 6

Predictive Model for Habits of Using Culturally Responsive Teaching Based on Selected Variables

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>	VIF
Intercept	3.19	0.10		.001	
Gender ^a	-0.12	0.09	-.12	.198	1.04
Black ^b	0.19	0.09	.21	.041	1.12
Years of Experience	0.06	0.02	.23	.020	1.09

Note. $N = 102$.

Note. Full Model: $F(3, 98) = 4.75, p = .004, R^2 = .127$.

Note. This table supports Null Hypotheses 2.

Note. Scale score was reverse-scored: 0 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree*.

^a Gender: 1 = *Male*, 2 = *Female*.

^b Black: 0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*.

Null Hypothesis 3 was, RQ3: H_{03} : There is no statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions of the impact of culturally responsive teaching on African American middle school-aged boys component of culturally responsive practices. To answer this question, Table 7 displays the relevant predictive multiple regression model. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 98) = 19.98, p = .001, R^2 = .380$. Inspection of the beta weights found the impact of culturally responsive teaching score to be higher for Black teachers ($\beta = .61, p = .001$) and also higher for male teachers ($\beta = -.20, p = .014$).

Table 7

Predictive Model for Impact of Culturally Responsive Teaching Based on Selected Variables

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>	VIF
Intercept	2.90	0.11		.001	
Gender ^a	-0.27	0.11	-.20	.014	1.04
Black ^b	0.76	0.11	.61	.001	1.12
Years of Experience	0.02	0.03	.05	.574	1.09

Note. $N = 102$.

Note. Full Model: $F(3, 98) = 19.98, p = .001, R^2 = .380$.

Note. This table supports Research Question 3.

Note. Scale score was reverse-scored: 0 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree*.

^a Gender: 1 = *Male*, 2 = *Female*.

^b Black: 0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*.

Additional Findings

As additional findings, Table 8 displays the predictive model for the total score based on selected variables. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 98) = 5.99, p = .001, R^2 = .155$. Inspection of the beta weights found the total score to be higher for Black teachers ($\beta = .26, p = .009$) and also higher for teachers with more years of experience ($\beta = .23, p = .018$).

Table 8*Predictive Model for Total Score Based on Selected Variables*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>	VIF
Intercept	2.60	0.10		.001	
Gender ^a	-0.07	0.10	-.07	.479	1.04
Black ^b	0.26	0.10	.26	.009	1.12
Years of Experience	0.06	0.03	.23	.018	1.09

Note. $N = 102$.

Note. Full Model: $F(3, 98) = 5.99, p = .001, R^2 = .155$.

Note. Scale score was reverse-scored: 0 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree*.

^a Gender: 1 = *Male*, 2 = *Female*.

^b Black: 0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*.

Additionally, an open-ended statement was provided to participants to complete which stated “I believe my implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices has produced the following outcomes for my African American male students.” The common themes identified by the participants who chose to respond to this prompt were better academic and behavioral growth, increased participation, development of mutual respect, and an increase in vulnerability and comfortability in the classroom environment.

Summary of Hypotheses

In summary, this quantitative correlational study used survey data from 102 teachers to examine the predictable relationship between demographic factors and teachers’ perceptions of culturally responsive practices. Research Question 1 (prediction of the perception of cultural awareness) received partial support (see Table 4). Research Question 2 (prediction of habits of using culturally responsive teaching) was supported (see Table 5). Research Question 3 (prediction of the impact of culturally responsive

teaching) was supported (see Table 6). In the final chapter, these findings will be compared to the literature, conclusions and implications will be drawn, and a series of recommendations will be suggested.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship and predictability of selected demographics on teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive practices. Specifically, this study was concerned with the predictability of gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience on teachers' perceptions of cultural awareness, habits of using culturally responsive practices, and the impact culturally responsive practices have on African American middle school-aged boys.

A predictive correlational research design was employed in this study. One hundred eight (108) middle school teachers, located in the southeastern region of Texas, participated in this investigation. A survey instrument developed by the researcher was used to measure teachers' self-efficacy of the differing factors of culturally responsive teaching. The data were analyzed through Pearson r and standard multiple regression statistical models. The following null hypotheses were tested:

Ho₁: There is no statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions of the cultural awareness component of culturally responsive practices.

Ho₂: There is no statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience)

and teachers' perceptions of the habits of using culturally responsive teaching component of culturally responsive practices.

Ho₃: There is no statistically significant predictable relationship between demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions of the impact of culturally responsive teaching on African American middle school-aged boys component of culturally responsive practices.

Findings

The following findings were obtained from the results of the study. The demographic factor years of teaching experience was found to have predictive power regarding the cultural awareness component of culturally responsive practices. The study found no significant predictive power for the demographic factors gender or years of teaching experience for the cultural awareness component of culturally responsive practices. The overall model was partially supported, as the demographic factors of gender and whether or not the teacher was Black were not significant independent predictors of cultural awareness. The demographic factors ethnicity and years of teaching experience were found to have significant predictive power on teachers' perceptions regarding the habits of using culturally responsive teaching component of culturally responsive practices. Gender was not found to be an independent predictor of this component. Finally, the demographic factor ethnicity (specifically Black teachers) was found to be an independent predictor of teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of culturally responsive teaching on African American middle school males component of culturally responsive teaching. The study also found that male teachers had higher

agreement for this component. The demographic factor years of teaching experience was found to have no significant predictive power.

Discussion

A significant finding of this study was the predictive power years of experience had on the results of this study. Years of experience played a major role in both the cultural awareness teachers possess as well as the habits of utilizing culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom. Much of the research identifies racial and cultural incongruence and its negative impact on students of color, particularly Black students, however, the research reviewed for this study did not highlight how increased years of experience can be a positive indicator for increasing cultural awareness. Further explanation of this phenomenon may be due to the large percentage of African American teachers in the sample population, with Black teachers accounting for 58.8% of the total population and 65.7% of the educators surveyed having more than 5 years of teaching experience.

An additional finding in this study was the agreement found between Black teachers and their habits of utilizing culturally responsive teaching practices as well as the impact culturally responsive teaching has on Black male students. The demographic factor ethnicity was found to have significant predictive power on teachers' perceptions of the habits of utilizing culturally responsive teaching component and the impact of culturally responsive teaching on African American middle school males components of culturally responsive teaching. These findings were found to be consistent with those of Brockenbrough (2015) and Hunter and Stinson (2019). These researchers assert that Black teachers are more likely to provide positive learning environments for their Black

students and are more readily able to relate to their culture and unique academic and behavioral needs. Additionally, this study found that male teachers also had higher agreement with the impact of culturally responsive teaching on Black middle school males. This further aligns with the research of Brockenbrough (2015) and Hunter and Stinson (2019) who posit the need for Black male teachers and their positive impacts.

A noteworthy finding of this study was the revelation that gender played a minimally significant role in the perception categories. Moreover, gender had no predictive power on teachers' perceptions of cultural awareness or habits of using culturally responsive practices. These findings may be explained due to the prevalence of female participants which made up nearly 70% of the total surveyed population. This is not consistent with the research of Bonner et. al, (2018), Davis and Jeffery (2021), or Ramsay-Jordan (2020). Much of the body of research attests that the majority of teachers in the United States are White, middle-class women, however, the results of this study reflect that the majority of teachers in this urban area in the Southeastern region of Texas are primarily women of color, with White teachers only making up 13.7% of the total population.

Another notable finding was the agreement with the statements "My school provides professional development opportunities geared toward culturally responsive teaching" and "Teachers at my school encourage students to have honest conversations about race. The agreement of both statements was considerably low. These findings regarding communication with students were consistent with Sullivan et al. (2022), who explain that many non-Black educators are afraid to discuss race for fear of being viewed as racist. These findings were not consistent with Yang et. al (2020) who posits that a

major issue of self-report scales on cultural competence usually reflects socially desirable responses. These findings were also inconsistent with Arrendando et al. (2017), Lambeth and Smith (2016), Warikoo et al., (2016), Karatas and Oral (2019), who all assert the need for increasing cultural awareness and the necessity of having open and honest conversations with students about race and culture. Furthermore, findings regarding professional development offerings were not consistent with Fergus (2011), and Patton (2011) who explain the need for continuing education opportunities for teachers on the implementation of culturally relevant instructional practices and their positive impacts.

A surprising finding of this study was the correlation between the demographic variable age and all subscale scores for teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive teaching. This variable was not specifically researched however the study found that there was a statistically significant correlation between older teachers and cultural awareness, habits of using culturally responsive teaching, and the impact of culturally responsive teaching practices. Another notable finding was the correlation between education and cultural awareness. This finding is consistent with Zaffini (2022), Lambeth and Smith (2016), and Calloway (2017) who suggest additional professional development in culturally responsive teaching and more educational experiences and opportunities for both pre- and in-service educators.

Implications

The following implications are offered for consideration by local and state education agencies:

The demographic factors gender, specifically male teachers, and race and their impact on African American middle school boys suggest that district and school

administration should take under consideration increasing the number of male and Black teachers employed as there may be potential benefits for African American male students. Students must see themselves represented not only in the curriculum but also in the individuals charged with educating them. Though many states are currently limiting diversity and equity programs, offering increased opportunities to engage with diverse populations has the potential to positively impact the needs of larger and more diverse urban districts. As hiring bodies, active recruitment at Historically Black Colleges and Universities would help to improve the increase of teachers of color in the field of education.

Additionally, local and state education agencies should take into consideration the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy into their current instructional practice design and continuing education offerings. By adding these practices into their current instructional and behavioral models, they will be able to increase student engagement and positive academic outcomes while decreasing perceived problem behaviors and disciplinary issues that primarily negatively impact Black male students.

Recommendations for Further Study

To extend the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

In an attempt to provide a more in-depth analysis of the perceptions and impact of culturally responsive teaching, the researcher suggests conducting a follow-up study that includes a sample of educators across grade levels and from multiple geographic regions both in the state of Texas and across the United States. Such a study would help to identify the need for culturally responsive practices in various areas. Additionally, the researcher suggests surveying African American male students to identify their

perceptions of their teachers' cultural awareness and use of culturally responsive teaching. Based on the findings, specifically those associated with years of experience and the positive impact increased years of experience had on the overall study, the research suggests conducting a follow-up study that only includes teachers with 5 years of experience or more. Finally, the researcher also recommends extending this study to teachers' perceptions and the impact of culturally responsive teaching practices on Hispanic students, as the largest influx of students in the United States are of Hispanic descent.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the results of this study:

In general, it seemed that any regression model developed to predict teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive practices should not include the demographic factor gender. It appeared that the demographic factors gender and race/ethnicity are not significant predictors of cultural awareness. A regression model to predict teachers' perceptions of cultural awareness of culturally responsive practices should include the demographic factor years of teaching experience. Moreover, the demographic factor gender is not an independent predictor of teachers' perceptions of the habits of using culturally relevant instructional practices or the impact of culturally responsive teaching on African American middle school males. A regression model to predict teachers' perceptions regarding the habits of using culturally responsive practices should include the demographic factors race/ethnicity and years of teaching experience. Finally, any regression model developed to predict teachers' perceptions of the impact of culturally

responsive teaching on African American middle school boys should include the demographic factor race/ethnicity.

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
Office of Research

January 24, 2023

Good day, Kimberly Burks!

This is to inform you that your amendment protocol #ES066A, "Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Practices", is exempt from Texas Southern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) full committee review. Based on the information provided in the research summary and other information submitted, your research procedures meet the exemption category set forth by the federal regulation 45CFR 46.104(d)(2):

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)

The Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) number assigned to Texas Southern University is FWA00003570.

If you have questions, you may contact the Research Compliance Administrator for the Office of Research at 713-313-4301.

PLEASE NOTE: (1) All subjects must receive a copy of the informed consent document, if applicable. If you are using a consent document that requires participants' signatures, signed copies can be retained for a minimum of 3 years of 5 years for external supported projects. Signed consents from student projects will be retained by the faculty advisor. Faculty is responsible for retaining signed consents for their own projects, however, if the faculty leaves the university, access must be made available to TSU CPHS in the event of an agency audit. (2) Documents submitted to the Office of Research indicate that information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subject; and the identities of the subjects will not be obtained or published; and any disclosures of the human subjects' responses outside the research will not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation. The exempt status is based on this information. If any part of this understanding is incorrect, the PI is obligated to submit the protocol for review by the CPHS before beginning the respective research project. (3) Research investigators will promptly report to the CPHS any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects and others.

This protocol will expire March 1, 2025

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Marion Smith.

Marion Smith, PhD, Chair
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

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APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Part I – Demographics

Gender: *Check One*

- Male
- Female

Race: *Check all that apply*

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

Age: *Check One*

- Under 25
- 25-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60+

Grade Level you are currently teaching: *Check all that apply*

- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

Prior Years of Teaching Experience: *Check One*

- 0-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25
- 26 or more

Highest Level of Education You Have Completed: *Check One*

- Bachelor of Arts/Science

- Master of Arts/ Science
 Educational Specialist
 Doctor of Philosophy/Education

Part II – Perception Survey

Directions: Read each statement and choose the statement that most closely matches your perception of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices and your African American male students (Mark one answer per statement).

Cultural Awareness

1. My school administration has effectively helped me advance student equity.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. My students are provided with opportunities to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3. I have meaningful conversations with other teachers about race, even when they might be uncomfortable.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. I feel comfortable speaking out against racism and/or injustices at my school.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5. Teachers at my school	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

encourage students to have honest conversations about race and race-related topics.					
6. I often explore professional development opportunities to help promote equity in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7. My school provides professional development opportunities geared toward culturally responsive practices and helping to promote equity in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Habits of Using Culturally Responsive Teaching

1. I am comfortable interacting with students at my school who are from different cultural backgrounds than my own.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. I can make learning meaningful	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

by leveraging my students' cultural backgrounds.					
3. I can design lessons to meet the needs of all my students.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. I encourage all students to be active participants in class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5. I create a safe and respectful classroom environment for my students.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. I strive to use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Impact of Culturally Responsive Teaching on African American Boys

1. My African American male students have benefitted academically from my use of culturally responsive teaching.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. My African American male students have benefitted	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

behaviorally from my use of culturally responsive teaching.					
3. I have the same academic and behavioral goals for my African American male students as I have for all my students.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. My race impacts the way I approach teaching my African American male students.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5. Developing relationships and knowledge of my African American male students' cultural/racial backgrounds is important to me.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. Open-Ended Question: Please complete the sentence based on your instructional beliefs.	I believe my implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices has produced the following outcomes for my African American male students...				

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