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Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching in K-12 Education

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DEDICATION

To my family: You have always believed in me and seen the best in me even when I cannot see it
myself.

To my friends: You have taught me that to be loved means to be seen.

To my students: You make me laugh every day. I have the best job!

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Abstract

Students of color have been historically underserved and underrepresented in the education system due to bias. To combat said racist system, teachers need guidance on how to teach their students of color in an equitable way. Every student deserves the chance to succeed. This paper synthesized multiple researchers' findings over the effects of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching (CLRT) on students of color via qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies. The findings concluded that CLRT was beneficial to students and would increase their academic achievement via improving their mental health, engagement, behavior, and literacy. A cyclical correlation was found between all four terms; for example, if CLRT improved a student's mental health, then it would also improve their behavior in class. This was in large part due to the comfortability, self-efficacy, engagement, and interest in the class the student held after CLRT strategies were employed in the class. Despite the positive conclusions, many of the researchers stated a need for more testing on a larger scope and scale to ensure the accuracy of their results.

Keywords: Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, culturally responsive teaching, equity, race, culture, mental health, student engagement, student behavior, literacy

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching in K-12 Education

Chapter One: Introduction

George Floyd's brutal and public murder perpetrated by the very people meant to protect him, Minneapolis police, shocked the United States and specifically reminded the country's white population just how prevalent discrimination ran (Brannon, 2022, p. 18). It prompted a global investigation of how racism seeped into every corner of society which was something that people of color had never stopped saying. Through this tragedy emerged a stage for historically marginalized communities' decades of outrage for the racial injustice permeating society to be heard. The embarrassment of needing a murder to accomplish this, which similar murders, like Eric Garner, Breonna Taylor, or the countless unremembered victims of such racism did not do, further motivated society to change. Since schools reflect the communities surrounding them, the education system was one such area that attempted to remedy their past failure of directly combating racist practices and systems within them. "While citizens of all races took to the streets protesting after Floyd's murder... a flood of workshops, professional learning communities, and book groups emerged" (Brannon, 2022, p.18). Considering all people are different, the strategies used in schools need to support the varied cultures and backgrounds from those communities. Differentiated instruction encourages personalized learning for students, which is what culturally and linguistically responsive teaching (CLRT) aims to achieve through teaching strategies validating and affirming students in their differences while building bridges to social and academic expectations in school.

Importance of the Topic

Teachers serve all their students and not just the ones that look, speak, and act like them. The need for CLRT persists with the increased disparity between teacher and student

demographics. Said levels led to misunderstandings between the two groups based upon cultural differences. A report generated by the United States Department of Education in 2016, highlighted just how different the country's students and teachers were in these regards. It found that over 80%, an overwhelming majority, of teachers were white women, which greatly differed from the demographics of the student population they served (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This identified a real need for the predominantly white teaching population to utilize CLRT strategies to better connect with the predominantly non-white student population. This is not just a preferred skill for teachers to hold, but rather, it is the foundational piece of a teacher's pedagogy if any equity is meant to occur in a classroom.

The education system in the United States is embedded with systemic racism rooting from pre-civil rights segregation and discrimination. On top of dealing with personal intergenerational trauma in their families, students of color must endure the realities of a systemically racist school system. Educators must have, "an awareness of an individual's history of trauma and cultural implications of trauma, is cognizant of relational dynamics that may be a reminder of a traumatic experience" (Lee et al., 2023, p. 450-51). Educators have a responsibility to not further traumatize their students in a space that is supposed to be a safe place to grow. To do this, teachers must self-reflect on their pedagogy, practices, and internal biases (Lee et al., 2023; Ieva & Beasley, 2022). Multiple studies have found that a family of color's intergenerational trauma can be re-triggered by teachers (Lee et al., 2023; Ieva & Beasley, 2022; Lewis, 2019). Families of color can be triggered by a teacher's racism via their personal interactions, perhaps through conferences or emails/phone calls, as well as through said teacher's conscious or subconscious racist pedagogical practices (Ieva & Beasley, 2022, p. 237). Said practices may be rooted in overt or subtle racist beliefs including labeling students,

microaggressions, classroom policies, subjective grading, behavioral referrals, etc. (Ieva & Beasley, 2022, p. 238). Considering that some teachers see their students more hours in a day than their own parents, the need for anti-racist teaching interventions and CLRT strategies are imperative to lessen the continuous re-traumatization of people of color and increase the equity in schools for students of color.

Equity is not something that one can assume exists for all students and all environments. Much like the systemic racism previously mentioned, inequity is systemic and thus, difficult to identify if one whom does not suffer from said inequity is not actively looking for its corrosivity. However, inequity invades all systems, such as the education system. For example, “For culturally and linguistically diverse students, their opportunities to develop habits of mind and cognitive capacities are limited or non-existent because of educational inequality” (Hammond, 2015, p. 13). Much like no one would say to someone who was paralyzed that they just were not trying hard enough to walk, no one should say students of color are not trying hard enough in school; it is that the system makes it more difficult for them to reach their full potential. The creation of CLRT aimed to be one hand of the support system to combat the inequities students of color face within the current educational model.

Scope of Research

The scope of this research included qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies with information based upon students in public schools from kindergarten to twelfth (K-12) grade. It excluded students in non-public schools such as homeschooling programs or private schools. Additionally, it did not include studies that involved post-secondary students, pre-school students, or students outside of the United States. It also did not include studies over how CLRT affected students of color with disabilities, giftedness, and/or linguistic differences like being

an English language learner. The mentioned studies focused on students of color and historically marginalized cultures. Chapter two of this paper synthesized said studies in a literature review highlighting four themes that all showcased how CLRT strategies improved the academics of said students. Theme one showed how CLRT strategies improved the mental health of students of color which directly tied to their academic achievement. Theme two revealed how students of color were disproportionately affected by disciplinary procedures that inflated adverse behavior due to a lack of understanding. In this sense, CLRT strategies improved behavior which was directly connected to academic achievement. Theme three found student engagement increased in classrooms that used CLRT strategies. Better engagement directly linked to higher rates of learning among students of color with the assumption maintaining the rates of attention correlate to one's level of understanding. Theme four identified how literacy amongst students of color enhanced in classrooms with CLRT strategies. Understanding and comprehending what one was reading was crucial to learning content in all subjects. The following research question was formed with these themes in mind.

Research Question

The research question this paper hoped to answer was: In light of what is known about differentiated instruction, how can teachers implementing CLRT strategies increase academic achievement in K-12 students? This research connected to Concordia University's Differentiated Instruction program's essential question which was, "In light of what is known about differentiated instruction, how shall professional educators effectively teach every student?" Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching is a strategy which prioritizes teaching students which the education system traditionally ignored thus encouraging equitable learning opportunities for all students.

Definition of Terms

CLRT, as stated previously, stands for “culturally and linguistically responsive teaching.” It is defined as teaching with strategies promoting equitable learning for students of color and English Language Learners (ELL). It emphasizes the importance of validating and affirming cultural practices and norms within the variety of student cultures while also building and bridging said practices and norms with the school’s own culture and expectations (Hollie, 2018, p. 54).

CRT stands for “culturally responsive teaching” and is often used interchangeably with CLRT in studies. It is noted that this term, while leaving out “linguistically” in its definition, does include numerous linguistically diverse students since they most likely came from a different cultural background. Both CLRT and CRT utilize differentiation practices. It is the “process of using familiar cultural information and processes to scaffold learning. Emphasizes communal orientation. Focused on relationships, cognitive scaffolding, and critical social awareness” (Hammond, 2015, pg. 156).

Race is the “socially constructed story of human geography and denotable phenotypes or variations among peoples. It has nothing to do with our behaviors culturally” (Hollie, 2018, p. 231). Thus, racism is discrimination against someone based on their presumed race usually indicated by skin color and physical characteristics associated with said race, created by society.

Equity is defined as everyone receiving what they need versus equality which treats everyone the same even if what was given was not enough to cause everyone to be on the same playing field. Equity is more sympathetic to the belief of unfair treatment existing for those without the same abilities, characteristics, backgrounds, etc. as people with privilege. Further expanding on this definition, education equity is, “the condition of justice, fairness and inclusion

in our systems of education...The pursuit of educational equity recognizes the historical conditions and barriers that have prevented opportunity and success in learning for students” (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018).

Culture is defined as one’s values, perspectives, opinions, and actions that are observed and followed by a general population usually linked to race, nationality, ethnicity, etc. In other words, it is, “a set of guidelines, both explicit and implicit, that individuals inherit as members of a particular group that tells them how to view the world, how to experience it emotionally, and how to behave in it; it is learned behavior” (Hollie, 2018, p. 229). It is the undercurrent running through one’s life influencing what each person does or thinks.

Summary

Educators should be aware of and understand the current trajectory of pedagogy aiming to help their culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. This paper attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of CLRT/CRT in a classroom so educators can prepare to implement best practice into their classrooms to help the greatest number of students succeed. Bias and discrimination do not solely exist in overt violence, such as in the case of George Floyd. They are systemic issues and thus, systematically oppress students of different cultures, especially students of color, in every aspect of school: the very place where they are meant to be safe and supported. The following literature review synthesized relevant qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies that evaluated the benefits of CLRT regarding improving the engagement, mental health, behavior, literacy and overall academic achievement of students from different cultures. With this knowledge, educators will be able to ensure their classrooms are a safer and more equitable place for all their students in consideration of their cultural, racial, and/or linguistic background.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The following chapter laid out current literature regarding CLRT and its efficacy in increasing academic achievement for students of color. While student success is individually defined, the overall identification of success in the education system is academic success. The understanding behind differentiated instruction was that all students learn differently and thus, all students need instruction that responds to their varied needs. As stated previously, culture influences how one responds to the world around them; academic achievement can be influenced by culture. For example, a student never looks their teacher in the eye because they were taught that that was a sign of disrespect to their elders. The teacher takes the avoidance of eye contact as a sign of disrespect and sends the student to the office causing said student to miss instruction, which leads to a poor understanding of the topic being covered that day. Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching attempts to bridge that gap so that student-and-teacher relationships do not harm the student's academic achievement or their future. The effects of consistent CLRT instruction in the classroom was synthesized in a variety of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method, peer-reviewed studies surrounding how mental health, behavior, engagement/attention, and literacy compounded to affect a student's learning/academic success as seen in the article tracking matrix in the appendix. The first section of this literature review covered how the presence of CLRT in a student's class can influence their mental health, poor or otherwise, which can alter their academics. The second section connected a student's engagement in a class through CLRT with their academic success. The third section found CLRT can influence a student's behavior in class which can affect their academics. The fourth section identified how CLRT affects a student's literacy which will influence their academics. The sections displayed a circular effect to these four themes. A student's poor literacy could affect

their confidence/mental health which in turn could affect their behavior and engagement. A student's poor engagement could affect their literacy, which could affect their confidence/mental health, and could alter their behavior. A student's poor mental health could show up in school as poor behavior which could affect engagement and thus, literacy. The following section showed that CLRT is the metaphorical stop sign to prevent these avenues from snowballing.

Mental Well-Being and CLRT

If one experiences racism or discrimination in a classroom, then they will not do as well as they academically can due to the potential mental health hit that can come from prejudiced instruction. This is without also considering how students of color are negatively affected by intergenerational trauma. Researchers found that, "Symptoms of RBTSI have been likened to those experienced by survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault to include rage, depression, devaluation of the self, alcohol use, and health complications" (Lee et. al, 2022, p. 449). As a reminder, these are symptoms children will face not because they have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault, but rather, because they were born into a lineage with race-based intergenerational trauma. In other words, what other people experience from horrific events is what they have had to shoulder since birth due to the trauma their ancestors endured. Other researchers have similar findings where they claim students respond to the trauma externally, internally, or both. Internally, this can include, "internalized oppression, anxiety, negative self-talk, low self esteem, less motivation" and externally, it may result in verbal confrontations and negative behaviors, along with disengagement (Ieva & Beasley, 2022, p. 237). Both pieces of literature found negative effects of trauma in the form of mental turmoil affecting one's physical health. Both physical and mental struggles can externally be expressed

via undesirable behaviors that may disrupt the classroom to where teachers would have to intervene.

The following paragraph included examples of how these behaviors can result in more mental illness. If a student of color's intergenerational trauma causes them to be disengaged in class, then they will most likely do worse academically due to them missing out on lessons (Garcia & Chun, 2016; Byrd, 2016). In a grade-obsessed academic environment, academics are hailed as the marker of future success or not. It is not a far leap to assume that these students would think worse of themselves due to the bad grades. Another situation was if the systemically racist school system triggered a student suffering from race-based intergenerational trauma, resulting in the student yelling at the teacher. If the educator was not well-versed in CLRT/anti-racist teaching, they would most likely give the student a behavioral referral. This would further the disciplinary discrepancy between students of color and white students while also causing said student to miss out on class (Larson et al., 2018; Gaias et al., 2019). In both situations, the student would end up mentally suffering more, which would further hurt their academics. No one is going to be focused on anything but the threat when triggered (Ieva & Beasley, 2022; Lee et al., 2022). The following studies identified data supporting the claim that CLRT increased the mental well-being and thus, academic achievement of students of color. Cholewa et al. (2014), Wiggan & Watson (2016), and Chun & Dickson (2011) identified the connection between CLRT and self-confidence with the understanding that the better confidence one has the better mental health they may have. Goodwin and Long (2022) looked at the correlation between CLRT and feelings of discrimination in a school. They assumed CLRT decreased ignorance and thus discrimination. Howard (2022) found that CLRT was present in caring and supportive teaching atmospheres. These environments encouraged students to do better academically.

Cholewa et al. (2014), concerned with this, specifically wanted to look at the mental health of students of color and how they were impacted from a consistent pedagogical change via CLRT. This qualitative study employed a data analysis based on video observations of an urban, Title I, fifth-grade class. They used a video analysis software to code each video three times to look for CLRT in the teacher's speech, their nonverbal actions, and the class's overall response to both. The data analysis concluded the mental health of students of color improved with CLRT methods. Specifically, the "zest, empowerment, connection, clarity, and self-worth, that improve psychological wellbeing" were present with CLRT, in this case (Cholewa et al., 2014, p. 573). However, a stated limitation of this study was that the teacher was a woman of color, meaning the results of this study could have been influenced by her connecting to her students of color via their shared background instead of CLRT strategies (Cholewa et al., 2014, p. 592). A counterargument to this limitation was that a teacher's race cannot improve a student's mental health by itself. While being a woman of color most likely encouraged connection with her students of color, it was not the sole reason for this improvement because otherwise it would imply that any person of color's presence at any point of a student's life regardless of connection and interactions with said students would improve their mental health. Another stated limitation was the length of this study. It only looked at one teacher's classroom for four days in the beginning of a school year (Cholewa et al., 2014, p. 591). Thus, the conclusions of said study were promising, but needed a larger and longer study to further strengthen its findings.

Goodwin and Long (2022) added to these findings in a quantitative study researching the correlation between CRT practices in elementary school student's classrooms and their parents' perceptions of their students' mental well-being. 131 parents of elementary school students in the United States were included in this study and all the students were students of color (Goodwin

and Long, 2022, p. 781). Each parent surveyed over their perception of CRT used in their child's classroom, their child's mental wellness, their child's academic achievement, and the level of discrimination in their child's classroom. A data analysis was done using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 software to find students within a classroom which used CLRT, "were positively associated with children's prosocial behaviors and significantly moderated the relationship between discrimination and mental health, including internalizing behaviors" (Goodwin and Long, 2022, p. 781). A limitation to this study was the researchers relied upon the observations of parents that were highly biased in their observations of their own children. A counterargument to this limitation was these parents saw their children longer than their teachers did over the course of their lives and knew what typical behavior and mental wellness looked like for each of them. Another limitation was the parents were biased when they evaluated their own understanding of what CLRT was or was not in a classroom. Additionally, the researchers did not hear from the students themselves (Goodwin and Long, 2022, p. 793).

Wiggin & Watson's (2016) qualitative case study over one private American high school involved 100% of its student body of 100 students and their educators, who all identified as African American. They self-identified as having "a unique school culture that is rooted in African-centered education" including CLRT strategies within said education (Wiggin & Watson, 2016, p. 776). This school was also chosen due to its academic excellence with their students scoring 30% higher in math and reading than most public schools in the country (National Assessment of Education Progress, 2015 as cited in Wiggin & Watson, 2016, p. 777). Volunteered participants of the study included 15 students, four teachers, and one administrator; data from the participants collected interviews of the subjects, observations by the researchers, and written self-reflections from the students (Wiggin & Watson, 2016, p. 778-779). All data

was first given to the participants to confirm their consent and the accuracy of reported qualitative data the observers had for each individual. The data found “Students reported increased ‘self-esteem,’ ‘confidence,’ and ‘pride... Moreover, beyond self-esteem, the student achievement evidences that this is academically beneficial” (Wiggan & Watson, 2016, p. 789-790). This supported the claim of CLRT strategies improving not only the overall mental well-being of a student of color, but also their academics, as well. Limitations to this study were that the school was private and thus, had smaller class sizes, and the students who went to the school had working class parents. A counterargument to these limitations was that smaller class sizes or working-class parents would not help if a student were struggling so much with mental health that they were not engaged in class, doing any work, or connecting with their community.

In a similar qualitative study, Chun & Dickson (2011) linked self-confidence to mental health and mental health to academic performance. Their goal was to research their hypothesis where parental involvement and CRT encouraged a sense of school belonging, which, in turn, increased academic performance due to confidence (Chun & Dickson, 2011, p. 1582). All the 478 participants were self-identified Hispanic middle school students at a school on the U.S./Mexico border. Students were surveyed using the Student Measure of Culturally Responsive Teaching Scale (SMCRT), the Parental Involvement in Schooling Scale, The Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSM), School Ability Self-Concept Index, and a self-report of grades in each student’s English, Math, and Science classes (Chun & Dickson, 2011, p. 1586-1588). Regarding CLRT, students in the study reported their enjoyment of said pedagogy through its use of “using various instruction methods, incorporating the importance of cultural diversity and pluralism during instruction, and affirming the value for languages other than English contributed to Hispanic students’ feeling connected with others and

feeling capable of performing better in their school settings” (Chun & Dickson, 2011, p. 1590). Their comfortability and confidence were highlighted. The CLRT in the classroom made the students feel at ease implying a decrease in negative feelings associated with poor mental health. Additionally, the study found that student confidence in their academics was the key ingredient to success. The “effects of parental involvement, culturally responsive teaching, and sense of school belonging on academic grades were significant only when they were connected with academic self-efficacy. Furthermore, academic self-efficacy was the only pathway that directly led to better academic performance” (Chun & Dickenson, 2011, p. 1591). Academic grades only increased from CLRT when confidence increased. The CLRT helped this confidence grow. Limitations to this study included: self-reported data from students could have been inaccurate due to social pressures despite the anonymous reporting, previous student grades were not included before CLRT implementation where including them would have strengthened or weakened the hypothesis, and the study occurred in schools where the Hispanic population was larger than the national average. This could have influenced the comfortability of said students more than CLRT and parental involvement did (Chun & Dickson, 2011, p. 1591-1592).

Howard (2001), despite its research being 23 years old, spoke to the core elements of CLRT maintaining longevity in supporting the intersection of a student’s mental health, engagement, and behavior. 17 African-American students, from four classrooms led by a teacher that utilized CLRT in their pedagogy within a northwestern United States public school, were interviewed individually and as a whole group regarding their experiences in the classrooms. They also were observed by the researcher. Data resulting from these two methods was analyzed by an outside source to maintain objectivity and accuracy (Howard, 2001, p. 136). Three areas of importance stood out in the results: “(1) the importance of caring teachers, (2) the establishment

of a community/family-type classroom environment, and (3) education as entertainment” (Howard, 2001, p. 136). All three areas highlighted how important enjoyment was in the classroom for these students whether it dealt with teacher-student relationships, student-student relationships, or the students’ relationships with the content. Many of the students felt more comfortable in the classroom and were able to academically succeed due to their teachers’ “methods of communication, modes of interaction, and overall cultural knowledge” (Howard, 2001, p. 145). In this way, CLRT supported their cultures to bridge the gap between who they were at home versus who they were at school. The main limitations to this study were the small sample size and sole focus on African-American students.

The breadth of literature on mental health was purposeful as it was a main driver in connecting CLRT to the rest of the themes. If a student’s brain is not doing well, then one can expect anything controlled by said brain would also not be doing well. Whether it was through an increase of self-confidence (Cholewa et al., 2014; Wiggan & Watson, 2016; Chun & Dickson, 2011), a more comfortable classroom atmosphere creating a sense of ease (Howard, 2001), or a decrease in discrimination (Goodwin & Long, 2022), CLRT was noted to make a student’s mental health improve. Academics are informed by a student’s ability and said ability was found to be affected by their mental state inside and outside the classroom indicative of their behavior, engagement, and quality of knowledge.

Student Engagement and CLRT

Student engagement is the rate a student is focused on and comprehending information presented during class. A poor engagement level may result in missing information and/or misunderstanding vital lessons. While a motivated student may have the intrinsic motivation to engage regardless of content or classroom environment, typically, students with adverse

experiences with school would not have said intrinsic motivation at no main fault of their own. Namely, it is difficult to focus on a topic if said topic was either delivered in a way that was not aligned with one's culture and/or if the topic was discussed in an uncomfortable classroom environment. Especially, if this was something that had occurred in the past (Larson et al., 2018; Anyichie et al., 2023; Capper, 2022). Anyichie et al. (2023) and Capper (2022) discussed how CLRT increased student interest in the lessons because they related to them more in both content and manner of delivery. Garcia and Chun (2016) noted the connection between mental health and engagement by claiming CLRT strategies increased a student's confidence in the content. Byrd (2016) built on this by connecting engagement and mental health via a student's comfortability in the classroom with their peers/teachers due to the CLRT strategies utilized by said teacher.

Anyichie et al. (2023) conducted a mixed-methods study to find out if CLRT practices influenced diverse students' engagement in the classroom. The inspiration for this study was the understanding students with diverse cultures were more likely to suffer academically due to a lack of representation in the content therefore resulting in a lack of connection to the content and a lack of motivation to learn said content (Anyichie et al., 2023). The researchers' methodology was to compare results of two case studies whose participants included one fourth grade and one fifth grade classroom. The lead researcher had a previous connection with the school district making this a convenience sampling. However, the two classrooms (teachers and students) involved in the case study were on a volunteer basis. As such, 25 out of the 31 students in the fifth-grade class participated and 18 out of the 31 students in the fourth-grade class participated. The data collection included qualitative research via observations of both classrooms, field notes, teacher documents, and student work samples. The researchers also used quantitative data by

having the students reflect on their engagement via Experience Sampling and Reflection Forms (ESRF) (Anyichie et al., 2023). A limitation of this study in relation to the research question of this paper was that the engagement of an elementary student was different than the engagement of an older student. A counterargument to this claim was that both are students, both are children, and systemic racism, which, at its core, was what lead to student-teacher demographic disparities does not discriminate via age. Another limitation of this study was the small pool of participants. More testing with a larger sample size would need to be done to validify said results. An additional limitation was that the two teacher participants volunteered to be in this case study. While both teachers stated they had no prior CLRT training, the reason for them volunteering could be they, consciously or subconsciously, already felt as though their students were engaged. Conclusions from these methods found the following: students were more engaged when they had cultural responsiveness integrated into complex tasks, students were more engaged when the content directly related to them and their culture, and teachers had an easier time integrating CLRT-type strategies into their classroom with a CLRT framework to guide them (Anyichie et al., 2023). This supports the idea CLRT increased engagement and thus, academic achievement.

Capper (2022) further reinforced this through their study which questioned if including culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural literature would increase a student of color's engagement in class. This qualitative research conducted in three English classrooms within an alternative school setting had 28 high school volunteered participants. Of the 28 students, 85% of them were students of color. Data was collected via a survey, student interviews, and teacher observations. They were then analyzed by the researchers to conclude that including both culturally responsive pedagogy and multicultural literature increased a student's engagement and

interest in class (Capper, 2022, p. 402). Presumably, the students' buy-in was due to perceived relevancy to their lives. A limitation to this study was the researcher taught these students thus potentially impacting what the students told them in the qualitative research due to the pressure, subconscious or not, to please their teacher. This also could influence the researcher's observations.

Garcia & Chun (2016) looked at the link between a student's self-efficacy, meaning their confidence in themselves academically, and CRT in a qualitative study. Participants included 110 students of color; specifically, 84% were Latino, and all were from a city on the U.S.-Mexico border (Garcia & Chun, 2016, p. 177). Students were surveyed on their perception of teacher expectations and CRT in their classroom. They also were asked about their own generational status, perceived self-efficacy, and grades. All these findings were self-reported. Data analysis found a positive association between high expectations from teachers and their students' performance along with a positive association between CRT in the classroom and a student's engagement/confidence in themselves. It identified "that utilizing diverse teaching methods is a proximal process that likely helps Latino students engage in their learning and leads to positive beliefs about their academic performance" (Garcia & Chun, 2016, p. 181). Cultural responsiveness engaged students of color, which, in turn increased their confidence in their capability of academic performance. It is difficult to do well on something that one believes it will end in failure. Engaging in a lesson led to this confidence since students knew they did not miss out on anything in the lesson. Self-efficacy also encouraged student agency to take ownership over their learning. Hopefully, this confidence bled over into other classrooms they will take even if said classrooms might not utilize CLRT. Limitations to this study were that it had a smaller sample size, relied on self-reported data from students that might have been

inaccurate due to social pressure, did not include classroom observations or teacher reports which might have been more objective, and included only data from volunteered participants which might have provided data that did not reflect the broader population (Garcia & Chun, 2016, p. 182).

Byrd (2016) also looked at student perceptions to inform the effectiveness of CLRT on a student's overall success in the education system. Specifically, Byrd included the perceptions from 315 6-12th grade students, of which 75% were students of color, in a nationwide poll conducted by a third-party surveyor. The self-proclaimed quantitative study used the Student Measure of Culturally Responsive Teaching, the School Climate for Diversity Scale–Secondary, the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure–Revised, the Other Group Orientation scale, a Racism Awareness scale, and student self-reports of their grades to collate data (Byrd, 2016, p. 3-4). Results concluded that there was a link between CLRT in the classroom and academic achievement via improved mental health and engagement in both the class content and climate. Specifically, they found that a student's "perceptions that teachers used constructivist methods were related to interest in school, greater feelings of belonging, and other group orientation" (Byrd, 2016, p. 6). Meaning, if a student felt as though their culture was being honored and respected by the teacher, then they felt more comfortable and accepted by their peers within their classroom and engaged more. The study suggests, "Teaching methods that connect with students' real lives and interests and promote understanding of other cultures are associated with better academic outcomes" (Byrd, 2016, p. 7). "Real lives" does not just mean what they like or dislike; it means their culture, values, family, friends, homes, etc. Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching fosters daily lessons that value all those concepts when differentiating. While it can be helpful to get student input to inform data, self-reported data can be a limitation

due to its subjective nature. This along with the cross-sectional nature of the study were two limitations identified by the researcher (Byrd, 2016, p. 7).

Intrinsic motivation can be created through connection via CLRT strategies. Student engagement can be formed through both the interpersonal elements of a classroom and relevant and validating content. Larson et al. (2018), Garcia & Chun (2016), and Byrd (2016) found interpersonal elements may include teachers building confidence in students, teachers supporting their students' mental health through building a good rapport/relationship, and teachers accepting and celebrating the nuances/values of their students' cultures through their strategies. Anyichie et al. (2023) and Capper (2022) identified the connection between relevance and engagement. Many students commonly ask their teachers, "Why does this matter?" and proclaim, "This does not matter in real life." This speaks to the researchers' findings as in students were more willing to actively listen to the content if they found it meaningful and/or interesting. The CLRT relies on connecting to a student's life, which will inherently hold meaning to each child.

Student Behavior and CLRT

Students of color disproportionately face disciplinary action in schools versus their white counterparts (Larson et al., 2018; Gaias et al., 2019). Suspensions and expulsions are examples of said disciplinary action resulting in a loss of instructional time and learning. This can result in lower academic achievement which furthers the gap between students of color and white students well beyond the school gates. A lower GPA and a behavior record could mean fewer scholarships offered when applying to colleges along with less acceptances. Thus, the systemic racism of the education perpetuates the systemic racism within a community. Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching is a response to said racism and can aid teachers from different cultures than their students to decipher and celebrate cultural behaviors. The following studies

identified the need for CLRT and suggested that CLRT strategies, and cultural responsiveness, combat the disciplinary discrepancy and improve academic achievement for all students, but especially students of color, in an education system that most likely does not reflect them. The Department of Education (2016) identified the need for CLRT in the classroom via providing demographic gaps between students and teachers concerning race and gender. Larson et al. (2018) and Gaias et al. (2019) identified both the positive influence that CLRT had on proactive and reactive classroom management in encouraging positive behavior in the classroom and in doing so, increased academic achievement in students.

As previously mentioned, most teachers in the United States are not from the same culture as their students. Due to this, they do not have lived experiences regarding their students' culture and thus, behaviors. The Department of Education in the United States' (2016) wanted to discover the demographic makeup, specifically regarding race, of teachers in the United States compared to the makeup of students currently enrolled correlational quantitative study. They wanted to understand why there was a disparity between the two groups thus leading to ramification such as the disproportionate disciplinary actions students of color face (Larson et al., 2018; Gaias et al., 2019). It looked at the rate of which people of color were studying to become educators, the hiring trends of teachers of color, and the retention of teachers of color. It was presumed these researchers wanted to find out why there was such a disparity between the two populations and hypothesized the teacher pipeline was the cause of this disparity. The results of the data found student populations in United States public schools were not reflected in the teacher and principal populations teaching them. They found over 80% of teachers were white, while less than 50% of students were white (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). It was important to note that culture was not synonymous with race. For example, a teacher and student

can share the same Hispanic culture despite one of them being black and one being white. However, it is of the understanding that if two people are from different races then they most likely have different cultures due to different life experiences. Regardless, this discrepancy between teachers and students in the United States means that most students do not share cultures with their teachers. Thus, the two groups do not have the same interpretations of behaviors due to different lived experiences, expectations, norms, etc. that inform said behaviors which come from culture.

Larson et al. (2018) conducted a study analyzing how student behavior was influenced by CLRT practices and proactive management. This study started from the idea that since “most referrals that lead to exclusionary discipline practices are written by teachers for disruptive behaviors that begin in the classroom, it is argued that disproportionality and the subsequent school-to-prison pipeline begin in the classroom” (Larson et al., 2018, p. 154). The researchers began this study to see if CLRT and proactive management approaches would decrease the disproportionate rates of exclusionary discipline to increase academic achievement for students of color. This mixed-methods study included a survey, with 274 teachers within 18 different schools at both the elementary and secondary level, and observational data. A reason this district was chosen was due to the demographics of the student population, namely, that the majority were students of color. Additionally, most teachers were white women. Thus, this district reflected an average U.S. school based on both teacher and student demographics, as referenced earlier in this paper (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Both the self-reported survey and observational data found that there is a large association between CLRT and proactive behavior management with objectively positive student behavior.

Findings from the observational data included student behavior improving due to students finding more relevance to the content, thus improving engagement, teachers communicating more effectively with students, and students choosing how they show their understanding of the content (Larson et al., 2018). The observational data found CLRT practices present within these classrooms and less student behavioral disruptions. Thus, the study concluded that “the cumulative use of culturally response teaching strategies could prove promising in helping to address the exclusionary discipline crisis” (Larson et al., 2018, p. 163). A proposed limitation of this study was the need to expand the scope of questioning via the self-reported survey. Additionally, researchers found that “culture” is a difficult concept to address in a single survey as it is subjective. Therefore, they called for more testing.

Gaias et al. (2019) wanted to explore the connection between teachers using cultural responsiveness in their classrooms and student behavior specifically through looking at said responsive teaching in their classroom management. Classroom management is typically an avenue for teachers to state and enforce behavior expectations to inform the classroom’s culture and thus, environment for ideal student learning. In this qualitative study, the researchers studied culturally responsive classroom management as “how teachers establish and enforce expectations in an equitable manner, communicate with students in culturally consistent ways, accommodate and incorporate students' cultural and familial backgrounds, and encourage engagement and participation through building... relationships” (Bal, 2018; Brown, 2004; Vincent et al., 2011; Weinstein et al., 2004; Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003 as cited in Gaias et al., 2019). Volunteered participants included 103 middle school teachers in the same Maryland district. This study used self-reported demographic data and classroom observations, which were rated using Assessing School Settings: Interactions of Students and Teachers (ASSIST). The

observations focused on classroom management techniques, cultural responsiveness, student behaviors, and classroom characteristics (Gaias et al., 2019). Results concluded that “culturally responsive teaching practices was moderately strongly and positively correlated with the other five indicators of behavior management” (Gaias et al., 2019). In other words, when culturally responsive teaching was present, teachers knew their students better and adjusted their classroom management to this knowledge which curbed adverse behaviors. They found “teachers who are more culturally responsive are in general better able to monitor, anticipate, and respond to student needs, establish and maintain control within the classroom, and elicit students' participation in classroom activities (Brown, 2004; Monroe & Obidah, 2004 as cited in Gaias et al., 2019). Some limitations of this study included the methodology of the study being cross-sectional and as such, diverted from one dedicated purpose, the participants did not reflect the larger U.S. population of teachers, as in the participants had higher percentages of males and teachers of color than the national average, student grades and disciplinary records were not accessed during this study, and teachers may have adjusted their teaching and classroom management due to them being observed.

Culturally responsive classroom management and CLRT strategies improved both the actual behavior and perceived behavior of students of color in these studies (Gaias et al., 2019; Larson et al., 2018). Meaning students of color benefited from being in a culturally responsive classroom by feeling more accepted in the classroom, thus improving their mental health, and increasing their engagement in the content. Better engagement and mental health increased academic achievement (Anyichie et al., 2023; Capper, 2022; Goodwin and Long, 2022; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Additionally, teachers that use CLRT in their classrooms will be more likely to accept the behaviors of other cultures due to the very nature of CLRT which makes a teacher

become aware of cultural differences. The hope was a teacher that is more cognizant and accepting of behaviors will be less likely to fall into perpetuating the noted disciplinary gap between students of color and white students (Larson et al., 2018; Gaias et al., 2019). A teacher's perception of a student's action may not always be accurate without a lens of cultural responsiveness.

CLRT and Literacy

The skill of reading and writing is necessary in every job. Even if said job is mainly hands-on then one needs to know how to read emails, instructions, reports, safety manuals, etc. to effectively complete the physical task. It stands to reason students could find relevancy in their disciplinary studies through understanding it better via literacy. Literacy does not solely concern itself with English classes; each discipline develops their own literacy. For example, maps and charts may be included in a Social Studies classroom's literacy. The importance of literacy cannot be overlooked, which is why CLRT helps students increase their literacy, which leads to better understanding of content and thus, improved academic success (Walker & Hutchinson, 2021; Bui & Fagan, 2013; Kelley et al., 2015). Walker and Hutchinson (2021) discussed the connection between a teacher's instructional strategies, direct interactions with students, and attitudes towards students informed by CLRT with improved rates of literacy. Bui and Fagan (2013) along with Kelley et al., (2015) built upon this and assessed hallmark components of literacy, such as recall or word recognition, to formulate the claim of CLRT improving those elements. They hypothesized this was due to the more encouraging and understanding environment CLRT fostered consisting of a student's peers and teachers which created a higher self-confidence in each student.

Walker and Hutchinson (2021) conducted a study that examined literacy rates in black middle school males in connection with consistent CLRT strategies in the classroom. They wanted to find out if literacy rates improved or stayed the same when a student of color was in a culturally responsive classroom. The participants were 17 black eighth-grade students at an urban public charter school of which the lead researcher taught at making this a convenience sampling (Walker & Hutchinson, 2021). The researcher's methodology was qualitative via observational field notes that resulted in four themed findings. They also employed a quantitative data analysis using scores from Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) testing. MAP testing occurs three times a year and assesses a student's literacy (Walker and Hutchinson, 2021).

Researchers analyzed the standardized testing results over the course of the year and found that literacy rates amongst black male students increased by 29% compared to the year prior where no CLRT strategies took place (Walker & Hutchinson, 2021). This was supported by field notes consisting of observations and direct interactions with the students. The notes fell under four categories: instructional strategies, CRT and texts, direct interactions, and teacher mindset. All four elements of CLRT listed were essential in increasing these students' literacy rates (Walker & Hutchinson, 2021). A limitation of this study was that the lead researcher was the participants' teacher which might lead to bias since they were the researcher's students, and the study was reflecting their own teaching. Other limitations included the small sampling size and short time of the study (Walker & Hutchinson, 2021). Additionally, the students may have participated in their teacher's study due to undue influence which brought into play the ethics of this study.

Bui and Fagan (2013) similarly found a benefit of using CLRT in a classroom was how it supported literacy rates in students of color. Over a series of five lessons, researchers wanted to

see how these practices effected two fifth-grade classrooms consisting of 49 children, of which 86% were students of color (Bui & Fagan, 2013, p. 61). They used a “quasi-experimental nonequivalent group, pretest–posttest design” to assess how reading strategies using CLRT affected a student’s reading comprehension which included background knowledge on a subject along with their ability to recognize words and explain the story back to the researcher after having the story read to them (Bui & Fagan, 2013, p. 61-62). This was informally assessed using a reading inventory to reduce test anxiety. Results concluded that there was “statistically significant gains from pretest to posttest for word recognition, reading comprehension, and story retell. The medium to large effect sizes indicated that the combination of strategies had a positive and moderately strong effect on the students’ mean reading scores” (Bui & Fagan, 2013, p. 65). The identified limitations to this study included the small sample size and short length of said study as it was only five lessons long. A more accurate assessment of the results would have included a larger and longer experiment. A counterargument to this was students should improve their literacy after each lesson regardless of length as this is the goal of teaching in general. Other limitations included the absence of a control group and the knowledge that while CLRT strategies were predominantly used, they were not used in every moment of every lesson (Bui & Fagan, 2013, p. 66). Thus, there was no way of knowing which CLRT strategies or other strategies helped the students increase their reading comprehension and literacy. A counterargument to this limitation was the knowledge that there is no way to use CLRT strategies every second of the school day, so this reflected a more accurate picture of a typical classroom.

Kelley et al. (2015) furthered this in a qualitative study centered around 43 7th grade students in the South-West United States where most participants were students of color and,

specifically, Hispanic. The researchers wanted to know if CLRT practices increased recall and reading comprehension in students along with if self-efficacy from said practices played a part in the results. Kelley et al. stated their belief that culturally relevant texts are a part of culturally responsive pedagogy (2015, p. 302). They gave participants two sections of reading: a culturally familiar text and a culturally unfamiliar text. After reading each, the student would be assessed on their recall and comprehension of the texts using a paired sample *t* test (Kelley et al., 2015, p. 297). It is important to note that the texts did not vary in difficulty concerning reading comprehension. The researchers also had each student answer three different self-efficacy scales that measured their confidence with reading in general, reading culturally familiar texts, and reading culturally unfamiliar texts. Results implied when culturally familiar texts were used, recall and reading comprehension increased significantly. Additionally, they found self-efficacy with reading increased in the presence of culturally responsive reading. They hypothesized, “Participants performed at lower levels for the culturally unfamiliar reading task because they were not able to activate their sociocultural knowledge to use as a foundation for interpreting the story” (Kelley et al., 2015, p. 303). This builds off the belief that prior knowledge of a subject encourages self-efficacy. The CLRT pedagogy connected to this through its central focus on validating and affirming a student’s culture to build and bridge with school (Hollie, 2018). Limitations of this study included it having convenience sampling, only reflecting 7th grade students, having a small sample size, and not having knowledge of the participants’ baseline reading abilities prior to the study (Kelley et al., 2015, p. 304-305). A larger study including past scores would provide a more in-depth look at the researchers’ findings.

In a world that values and relies upon literacy to such a severe extent, its place in pedagogy cannot be overlooked. If CLRT helps students succeed academically, then CLRT

based literacy practices help students succeed in the “real world” through bolstering their ability to retain and hold onto knowledge they consume through reading. All three researchers found a correlation between the prevalence cultural responsiveness increasing a student’s reading ability (Walker & Hutchinson, 2021; Bui & Fagan, 2013; Kelley et al., 2015). If a student can read better, then they can understand the content better through consuming materials and content their teacher puts out, which can lead to better academic success. The hope of CLRT is to foster an equitable learning environment for students which validates and affirms who they are so they can have the tools to become whom they want to be; literacy, as laid out by the researchers, is one of these much-needed tools.

Review of the Proposed Problem

The Department of Education found teachers in public schools do not represent the student population they serve in terms of race and culture (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). As with any difference, without prior knowledge, ignorance is present and can have negative consequences. In this case, ignorance may lead to racism, compounding upon the already systemic racism within a community, which hurts students academically, mentally, and emotionally since it attacks the whole person. All teachers should learn about and incorporate CLRT into their practice to combat the racism inherent within a lack of lived experiences shared between people of different cultures. Considering the problem, the relevant research question was: “In light of what is known about differentiated instruction, how can teachers implementing CLRT strategies increase academic achievement in K-12 students?” Teachers need to increase the equity within their classrooms through validating and affirming their students’ cultures to better their mental health, engagement, behavior, and literacy which all lead to higher academic success.

Review of the Importance of the Topic

Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching is needed in classrooms because students should feel welcomed both interpersonally and academically regardless of their backgrounds. Considering that all students are different, it stands to reason all students need different things to succeed academically. Due to this, differentiated education via CLRT is needed to first, understand the differences, and second, work with those differences to celebrate each student's individuality. If K-12 education is meant to prepare students for their futures, then their education should be cognizant of their past and present to better support them in their journey to their successful future. Each student deserves an education that supports who they are and recognizes that not everyone can be given the same materials and succeed hence the need for equitable teaching practices such as CLRT.

Summary of Findings

The literature review in this chapter fleshed out four themes related to CLRT and its relation to academic success in K-12 education which included mental health, behavior, engagement, and literacy. Each theme collected sources that supported the idea that CLRT helps students in each of these domains which will lead to better academics. All sources focused on students of color and their specific success in these areas with the understanding that typical pedagogy often ignores cultural values and differences from these historically disenfranchised communities. In light of what is known about differentiated instruction, educators can personalize learning for their students using CLRT to equitably teach students that have experienced the effects of systemic racism within the education system. Through a series of 15 qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies, researchers identified CLRT can increase academic achievement for all students, but especially students of color. They suggested if

students had CLRT in a classroom it would make their mental health, behavior, engagement, and literacy better which would increase their understanding of their studies. They suggested a student's poor mental health would hurt their academics through a lack of focus and interest in the subject (engagement). They found poor behavior was partially due to this lack of engagement and failing mental health because of a lack of connection to the material, classroom, and teacher. This lack of engagement, poor mental health, and poor behavior can also lead to poor literacy rates which can, in turn, emphasize the same issues causing those poor literacy rates to begin with. The CLRT pedagogy made the students comfortable and engaged enough in class to pay attention to literacy instruction and increase it. Along with disrupting the disciplinary discrepancy between students of color and white students, CLRT encouraged students to be authentically themselves and succeed without conformity. In an increasingly diversified world, the education system needs to diversify itself both representatively and pedagogically to equitably support all students. Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching is an avenue to reach this success and in doing so, hopefully give students the tools they need to survive and thrive in the systemically racist world they live.

Conclusion

This chapter used 15 qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method peer-reviewed sources with primary studies to identify the ways in which CLRT supported students in their academics and thus, improved said academics. Four themes were identified to explain this theory which included: mental health, behavior, engagement, and literacy. A summary of findings was explained along with a review of the proposed problem and importance of the topic. The following chapter identified insights into what this means for education, how K-12 teachers can use this information in their classrooms, and potential areas of studies to build off present data.

Chapter Three: Discussion and Application

The prior literature review stated data that informed the research question: in light of differentiated instruction, how can teachers implementing CLRT strategies increase academic achievement in K-12 students? This chapter will analyze the data to gain insights into the role CLRT has on academics and apply the findings into practical applications for a K-12 teacher. Brainstormed considerations for future studies based upon this topic will conclude the chapter.

Insights Gained from the Research

The first insight gained from the research was mental health affects a student's academic success and CLRT strategies can make a student feel more comfortable, confident, and engaged to increase their success. Through a supportive environment which consistently and emphatically affirms one's culture, as CLRT creates, students feel comfortable and confident in being themselves. Additionally, the strategies used by teachers with CLRT are catered towards the norms, preferences, and values that are a part of these students' cultures, so they do not have to go outside of their comfort zone to learn. In this manner, CLRT helps students from constantly conforming to their, typically, as referenced earlier, white teacher's culture (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). A student's connection with their teacher and peers are also a part of this mental well-being improvement caused, in part, by CLRT. A student will feel more comfortable and confident in a place that makes it known through both words and actions that their cultures and hence families, communities, ancestors, etc., matter. This affirmation can practically conclude in a student asking for help more easily, engaging in lessons more, and relating to lessons more which all can increase their confidence and ownership of their learning.

The second insight found was a student's engagement affects their academic achievement and CLRT strategies can help a student's engagement improve. The more a student pays

attention to a lesson, pays attention to their teachers/peers, and participates in activities within class, then the more content they will learn. If a classroom is culturally relevant to them in both content and manner, which CLRT provides, then they will be more interested in that content. Additionally, connected to the mental well-being insight, once a student is engaged more, then they will learn the content better, which will increase their confidence thus contributing towards their mental health, which will increase engagement yet again.

The third concluded insight was adverse student behaviors affect a student's academics due to the lack of engagement/absences from the classroom because of said behavior. Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching can reduce these behaviors and provide more opportunities for learning because of a student's renewed interest and physical presence in the classroom. Additionally, CLRT helps teachers become more aware of their students' cultural behaviors so there is less chance of misunderstandings that could result in behavioral referrals/disciplinary action that hurts the trust between students and teachers. In this manner, classroom management can be culturally responsive too. A student will feel more comfortable in a classroom that has a teacher who can anticipate their needs and communicate in a way they can connect to. In this manner, teachers can prevent behavioral problems present in class. Everyone makes mistakes and as such behaviors cannot be ignored without negative consequences on the classroom's atmosphere.

The fourth insight implied a student's academics improved when their literacy increased which can occur from CLRT in the classroom. Closely tied to the engagement insight, CLRT helps reading comprehension and recall increase. This is due to their interest in the subjects used to teach literacy and connection to the manner of delivery which literacy instruction follows using CLRT strategies.

Applications

The above insights are only relevant to improving the state of education when it is applied. Thus, this section will highlight some practical solutions in implementing CLRT in schools to see the aforementioned benefits in students. The most essential step to application is training. There are many teachers in the workforce who have never heard of CLRT let alone understand how to correctly implement it, so students benefit. To thoroughly achieve this, administrators can put on PD days to encourage full site implementation. Otherwise, another option would be to have book studies throughout the year with books like *Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning: classroom practices for student success* (Hollie, 2018). Either avenue would give teachers the materials to learn a shared definition of CLRT along with multiple CLRT strategies to apply to their classroom in a way which feels authentic to them. To assess understanding of said strategies, teachers can be observed by administrators to ensure that CLRT is being implemented correctly. The more CLRT is consistently used across the school the wider spread the benefits of it will be felt by students.

It would be remiss to explain applications of CLRT without stating the need for each teacher to look inward and assess racism within themselves. When participating in a systemically racist institution, one is implicit in its racism regardless of one's cognizance. Therefore, teachers, especially white teachers, need to analyze how they might be consciously or subconsciously be perpetuating harmful stereotypes, prejudices, and practices which sustain the racism within their classrooms. The buy-in that students hold when entrusting teachers who use CLRT can be broken in an instant if racism is perceived and/or observed. Racism and CLRT cannot coexist. To accomplish this, teachers can

Finally, another relevant application is for each teacher to get to know their students. Specifically, teachers should be aware of their demographic information aka their race, ethnicity, culture, religion etc. which could all inform their preferences in learning. However, they also should get to know them on a personal level. Valuing student voice is essential in CLRT. There is no way teachers can support a student's culture if they do not know who their students are to begin with. In building upon dismantling personal racism, and understanding must be made that there is no single story when it comes to race. Teachers should not assume that just because a student is a certain race, ethnicity, or culture, they will always enjoy learning a specific way like many of their peers from the same demographics as them. This is where getting to know each student as an individual and without assumptions is necessary in CLRT. It encourages using strategies that both validate many cultures instead of just one. In doing so, most likely, teachers will connect with students that subscribe to what the assumptions say about their culture and with students of whom the assumptions do not apply.

Future Studies

As with all research, future studies need to be done to validate conclusions, further discoveries, and build upon knowledge that may be outdated and/or irrelevant. A stated limitation of most studies included in the literature review was that the sample size was small. Future studies should test the current knowledge with a larger sample size across different demographics. Specifically, the correlation between rural, urban, public, or charter schools and CLRT effects were not centralized. Including all types of school across the United States would strengthen the findings' validity due to the other concerns that are brought up when dealing with different environmental settings that could affect learning. If CLRT still has an impact despite potential socioeconomic, safety, or truancy concerns, then the findings would be solidified.

Another suggestion for further studies would be to ensure that all research used the same definition and understanding of CLRT. Many of the studies in the literature review included studies that did not use the “CLRT” acronym and instead said “cultural responsiveness” or “culturally responsive teaching.” While assumptions of similarities can be made based upon the description of each term within the context of the studies, it would strengthen results by ensuring all studies had teachers with the same understanding of CLRT.

A final suggestion for further studies would be to look at how CLRT affects graduation rates and long-term success for students of color outside of the academic sphere. School is meant to prepare students for their future careers and livelihoods. Considering the reparations people of color deserve, equity calls for CLRT to help students of color minimize some barriers to graduate from K-12 education. The goal is for them to succeed in post-secondary life. It would be encouraging to teachers, students, and parents questioning the validity of CLRT to see long-term benefits to the practice.

Conclusion

This CLRT is a solution to increasing academic achievement in K-12 students of color. This chapter identified implications to this research along with applications for teachers beginning the journey of CLRT implementation in the K-12 school system. It also suggested further study topics that would expand the current literature present on CLRT. This included mentioning limitations of these studies.

Cultural responsiveness can improve a student’s mental health, behavior, engagement, and literacy. The need for this is essential due to the obstacles students face in the pursuit of their education such as a systemically racist school system, disciplinary practices often targeting students of color (Larson et al., 2018; Gaias et al., 2019), generational race-based trauma (Lee et

al., 2023), and a lack of representation from their mostly white teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). These obstacles compound with the other struggles all students face like interpersonal conflicts, time management, and extracurriculars to make school an undesirable place. If teachers want to successfully connect with their students from different cultures, CLRT is a way to accomplish that goal. Equity through CLRT instruction is a formidable weapon to dismantling systemically racist educational systems that perpetuate violence, both physical and mental, against students of color. It is the education system's responsibility to educate themselves on this and CLRT is one way to learn.

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