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Elementary Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Behaviors That Lead to Disproportionate Referrals by Race

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Susan Johannes

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University

2023

Abstract

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Behaviors That Lead to Disproportionate

Referrals by Race

by

Susan Johannes

MA, Lee University, 2000

BS, Lee College, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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May 2023

Abstract

Disproportionate office referrals through teachers in Grades 3-5 based on their students' race are documented. At a Title I elementary school in the northeastern part of Virginia, non-White students are referred to the office for behavior issues 5% more times than their White peers. Guided by Bell's critical race theory, the purpose of this study was to examine Grade 3-5 elementary teachers' perceptions regarding types of behaviors that are leading to disproportionate numbers of office referrals for non-White students. A basic qualitative research design was employed. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 8 purposefully sampled teachers to explore teachers' perceptions about behaviors that challenge teachers' authority in the classroom, how they establish understandable classroom rules for all students, and support they need to address behavior issues proactively rather than reactively. Using open and axial coding to analyze data, four themes were identified: disrespect challenged teachers the most, a need to establish cultural norms, explanation of rules for non-English speaking students, and administrative support. These themes guided the creation of a professional training session through which positive social change could occur through relevant learning and active engagement to increase the educational community's capacity by developing more effective classroom management skills.

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Dedication

My project study journey has been long and filled with turns and moments of exhaustion but to my dad, John William Johannes, who watched over me with angel wings helped me navigate and continue to push through all difficult tasks. To my mom, Sharyn Margret Johannes, who continued to praise each phase of my journey, encouraging me to prevail. To my Aunt Carol Deutschmann, who opened my eyes to my ability to shine.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The racial gap existing between teachers and students in today's schools has had an impact on the classroom climate (Larson et al., 2018). Most classroom teachers in the United States continue to be White and middle-class females who make daily decisions about what is considered poor behavior (Cole & Warren, 2018; Wilson et al., 2020). Teachers often identify behavior as appropriate or inappropriate based on their values, beliefs, background knowledge, and relationship with the student (Yoon, 2018). Teachers are usually directly affected by student behaviors, and they determine whether to write an office referral. According to Yoon (2018), maintaining a race-neutral ideology to keep a calm classroom climate can lead to increased teacher anxiety, as some teachers struggle to respond to racial gestures, talk, or facial expressions that fall outside of their cultural ideology. Teachers who have been in the teaching field for a long time reported that more coaching, training, and information are necessary when working with diverse populations of students and their behaviors (Cadenas et al., 2020).

The local problem in this study is the disproportionate number of office referrals by race made by teachers of third to fifth grade students. These office referrals to school administrators often result in out-of-school or in-school suspension. The research site is a local Title 1 elementary school in the northeastern part of Virginia. The school is referred to as School X and has a disproportionate referral rate by race (see Table 1). For this study, the term "non-White" refers to Black and Latino students.

The referral rate for non-White students in School X has a 5 % for Latinos, and 11% for Black student referral rate higher than their White peers. Non-White students receive in-school or out of school suspension more often than their White peers, leading to taking these students away from in class instruction. Academic findings at School X as shown in Table 2 indicate that of 30 students who were suspended, 35.5% passed their standardized tests.

Table 1
Office Referrals by Race

Students' Race	Black	Latino	White
Number of Students referred by Race	154	67	23

Note. Adapted from School X Discipline Committee Database, 2018-2019.

Table 2
Suspended Students by Race

Students' Race	Black	Latino	White
Suspension Rate	18	10	9

Note. Adapted from School X Standardized Test School Data from 2018-2019.

Table 3
Standardized Test Pass Rate by Race

Students' Race	Black	Latino	White
Pass Rate on Standardized Assessments	3	1	2

Note. Adapted from School X Standardized Test School Data 2018-2019.

Table 4*Standardized Test Pass Rate by Race by Percentage*

Students' Race	Black	Latino	White
Pass Rate on Standardized Assessments	77	73	90

Note. Adapted from School X Standardized Test Data Scorecard 2018-2019.

Table 3 shows suspension rates by race among those who were suspended. Table 4 shows standardized test pass rates for math and reading.

School X has a non-White student population of 85% yet employs an instructional staff that is 76% White (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE]. According to Sari and Yuce (2020), many teachers, ranging in experience from eight years to 24 years of teaching, do not demonstrate competence in terms of cultural awareness and its influence on students' and teachers' roles. Lack of non-White representation among School X teaching staff makes it necessary for all teachers to critically reflect on their cultural conditioning, perceptions, and prior experience that may influence their reactions to students who are not of their race. Many teachers within the United States who refer to themselves as White, view non-White students' behavior as more problematic and deal with behavior more harshly when compared to White students performing the same behaviors, leading to disproportionate numbers of referrals by race (Rasheed et al., 2020; Riddle & Sinclair, 2019),

Nevarez et al. (2019) said the need for racially diverse teachers is beneficial, due to culturally diverse school staff being able to support teachers of all grade levels, as well

as administrators, teacher assistants, cafeteria workers, counselors, office staff, and other faculty members by increasing cultural awareness to lead to positive social change.

Rasheed et al. (2020); Riddle and Sinclair (2019) said matching teachers and students by race increases learning, motivation, socioemotional development, and attendance.

Matching students to teachers make it easier to build relationships due to cultural commonalities. Rasheed et al. and Riddle and Sinclair also said lack of a culturally diverse staff may intensify cultural misinterpretations of behaviors.

Supporting teachers with practical and cultural sensitivity strategies could help decrease these disproportionate office referral rates. Edelen and Bush (2020) noted culturally responsive teaching as a positive integration in classroom instruction. The benefits of intervention strategies, such as Culturally Responsive Teaching Techniques (CRTT), could assist in decreasing classroom misbehaviors (Chu, 2019; Robinson, 2019). According to Parker et al. (2017) CRTT could decrease misbehavior by increasing student engagement. Student engagement is maintained through the integration of students' culture, background knowledge, and real-life experiences into the learning opportunities creating equity and supports social justice by supporting students' academic success.

Cultural competence training is a vital skill in today's public school system as student populations become ethnically and racially diverse. Teachers need tools to be able to engage students in their learning. Cultural knowledge helps build relationships, and minimizes classroom behavior issues (Kubra & Yavuz, 2018). Cultural

understanding of values, norms, and social cues, to help prevent misinterpretation of actions or reactions by any ethnic or racial group and help decrease teacher anxiety to maintain a mindset of equity (Yoon, 2018).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The suspension rate for non-White students is, on average, two times higher than White students (Bryant & Wilson, 2020). The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights confirmed disproportionate referral rates identified within School X's school district were found to exist within School X. As shown in Table 2, student office referral by race leading to suspension was corroborated by Assistant Principal X during a discipline committee meeting. The referral documentation process involved breaking referral discipline offenses into categories. Category one consisted of minor verbal altercations with a classmate or minor classroom disruptions, such as making noises or talking without permission. Most referrals written by teachers at School X are considered category two offenses. Category two offenses consist of verbal disrespect towards teachers and willful defiance when asked to adhere to the school code of conduct. Category three offenses are any physical or threatening behavior toward staff or students. Teachers wrote no referrals at School X relating to category three.

Overrepresentation of students being referred to administrators at School X for disciplinary action leading to suspension who were identified as non-White created an urgency to identify possible factors leading to current trends within this site. These

concerns led the local county superintendent to place a multi-tiered support specialist (MTSS) system to assess School X's referral process. Understanding teachers' perceptions of classroom behavior may be necessary to explain why non-White children are referred more often than their White counterparts. This can assist administrators with creating strategies that could support teachers and minimize the current trend of disproportionate office referrals leading to suspensions. As noted in Table 3, the suspended group had a pass rate that was less than half of their White counterparts on the standardized assessment, and as shown in Table 4, this same group shows an overall pass rate that is below their White peers.

I interviewed teachers who engage in consistent and tiered school-wide discipline approaches, which involves comprehensively assigning behavioral referrals to students who violate school and district policies as schools try to maintain safe and positive learning environments. Pearman et al. (2019) noted that when factors such as school absences, socioeconomic status, and student's academic status, are considered for non-White students, few studies exist focusing on elementary schools, but instead merely focus on discipline. According to Gopalan and Nelson (2019), understanding outside factors that cannot be controlled, and those factors that can be controlled are essential to understand to provide the tools and services needed to decrease the opportunity gap that widens. Pearman et al., identified a positive correlation between discipline and academic achievement for non-White students due to the disparity in discipline as they are removed from the classroom as a reactive disciplinary measure.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine grade 3-5 elementary teachers' perceptions regarding types of behaviors that are leading to disproportionate numbers of office referrals for non-White students. Investigating teachers' reasons for writing behavior referrals may enhance and support them in terms of developing more effective classroom management skills. Their experiences and perceptions of classroom behaviors and when to write office referrals could inform the phenomena under study.

Definitions of Terms

Critical Race Theory: An examination of racially inequitable practices (Bell, 1992).

Cultural Competence: The ability to self-reflect and collaborate with people openly who are different to lessen injustice caused by racism and discrimination (Macqueen et al., 2020).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: An identified way to integrate strategies into learning objectives and instructional delivery by connecting with student cultures and real-life experiences to construct and solidify their learning (Brown et al., 2020).

Culturally Responsive Teaching Techniques: A student-centered instructional method that involves incorporating an equity-based logical approach and using cultural references to improve academic learning (Rhodes, 2017).

Educational Equity: Teaching techniques that are adapted to allow opportunity for students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups to access the school curriculum

and gain academic achievement (Nadelson et al., 2019).

Educational Opportunity Gap: Inequitable or diminished opportunities to equally learn for a particular group (Mayor & Suarez, 2019).

Microinvalidation: Unconscious verbal, behavioral, or environmental dismissiveness or awareness of value related to diversity (Edwards, 2017).

Race Neutral: Assertion that the distinction of race is removed and no longer matters (Doane, 2017).

Restorative Justice: A school wide approach that prioritizes justice, equity, accountability, dignity, and respect in place of punitive discipline practices (Gregory & Fergus, 2021).

Significance of the Study

A comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions of behaviors they encounter that are office referral-worthy leading to disproportionality by race may help teachers critically reflect prior to reacting. Understanding teachers' views of classroom disruptions is a critical first step in understanding children. Teachers over time can interpret students' feelings or reactions. According to Knupsky and Caballero (2020), teachers' perceptions of students are often misinterpreted, especially in a vulnerable or emotional moment. Knupsky and Caballero said when teachers misinterpret the actions of students due to a lack of knowing cultural norms, and cultural expectations perpetuates teachers' prior beliefs and stereotypes of students. To provide calmer and more positive learning environments, teachers need to build relationships with their students. Ilhan et al.

(2019) stated that the relationship between the student and teacher encourages positive classroom behavior, respect, and emotional commitment, leading to behavioral loyalty. Larson et al. (2018) said when a positive parent-teacher relationship exists, it creates a stronger student-teacher relationship and increases cultural understanding. Bradshaw et al. (2018) said positive relationships help students adjust and promote social competence, which leads to fewer issues with classroom behaviors. Sari and Yuce (2020) said as teachers begin to understand differences between cultures, this may prevent misunderstanding students' interactions and can positively influence actions of the students. This knowledge will allow teachers to critically examine racial inequalities that are created unconsciously and challenge them to view the whole child, including their ethnic background, socioeconomic status, and attendance, before perceiving actions as inappropriate (Adams & Glass, 2018; Alvare, 2018).

Macqueen et al. (2020) said cultural competence is vital, as it allows a way for teachers to build relationships with their culturally diverse student population. Nevarez et al. (2019) said the non-White student population that makes up today's classrooms in the United States would continue to increase into the year 2050. The projected increase of non-White student populations has created increased pressure and anxiety for teachers to maintain equity and calm classrooms. Krawczyk (2020) stated that teachers need to gain more cultural knowledge. Some White teachers may have barriers, or lack of understanding cultures outside of their own that may impede developing solid relationships with students (McKenzie, 2019). Barriers can be a lack of cultural

awareness that can lead to unintentional microinvalidations that are created due to a colorblind racial ideology (Edwards, 2017). Should teachers be culturally deficient, it may cause them to misinterpret student behaviors and lead some to write discipline referrals for non-White students, continuing disproportionate pattern of referrals by race.

Research Questions

In this study, I addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: What do teachers at this research site perceive as behaviors that challenge teachers' authority in the classroom?

RQ2: What do teachers do to establish understandable classroom rules for all students?

RQ3: What support do teachers at this research site perceive as needed to assist with classroom behaviors proactively rather than reactively?

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this qualitative study, which involved using a constructivist paradigm, was to understand the phenomenon of disproportionate rate of discipline referrals by race. According to Ates et al. (2018), the constructivist model involves the notion that a person's perspective is their truth, and truth is relative. Using a constructivist approach, I investigated upper elementary teachers at School X to gain their perceptions of student behaviors that lead to discipline referrals and administrators' perceptions of why teachers disproportionately refer non-White students to administrators due to behavior issues. The literature review was the platform for understanding trending patterns involving disproportionate referral rates by race. I address the importance of

decreasing disproportionate referral rates by race leading to suspension, causes for disproportionate referral rates by race, and strategies for preservice and current teachers to decrease opportunities for classroom behavior issues.

Databases searched in this literature review were ERIC, ProQuest, PsyArticles, SocINDEX, U. S. Department of Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, and SAGE Journals. The following search terms were used to find articles: *disproportionate office referrals, suspension by race, educational equity, classroom management, culturally responsive teaching techniques, racial bias, restorative justice, opportunity gap, racial equity, elementary teachers' perception of discipline, and suspension by race.*

A total of 220 articles were reviewed for their relevance to this study.

Conceptual Framework

Bell's critical race theory (CRT) is the framework for this study. According to Bell (1992), CRT is an instrument for analyzing racially inequitable practices. According to Alvare (2018), the dominant culture oversees rules based on their perspectives. Joseph et al. (2021) said CRT involves conceptualizing discipline trends, showing how discipline can become racialized and does not lead to upholding social justice. Mekawi et al. (2020) said the dominant culture may maintain a colorblind ideology to limit guilt and provide a socially acceptable way to maintain the status quo. Teachers need to critically reflect on their power and privilege to identify ways that social constructs, such as a race-neutral stance often led to microinvalidations, unintentional biases, and invalidating one's race

(Amiot et al., 2019). Bell's CRT offers a foundation to critically evaluate reform efforts and is a way to understand how teachers' beliefs about race and culture within their personal lives are transferred to their school environments (Fergus, 2021). Using this framework supports my desire to understand the phenomenon occurring within School X, examine a unit of teachers and render results to answer research questions in this study, as well as facilitate an understanding of the phenomenon. Piekkari and Welch (2018) identified that a qualitative study is an empirical inquiry in its naturalistic context into a phenomenon. A case study is not justified for this research because the unit under study is not bound by time or place. According to Harwati (2019), the qualitative study design is used to generate patterns and themes to find answers to support research questions instead of establishing a rate of recurrence of a phenomenon or rating data using an ordinal scale of measurement. Context-specific data collection methods, such as semistructured and open-ended interviews, were used to identify themes in interviews that provided the ability to capture in-depth comprehensive views in real time.

Bell (1992) said schools operate from a White perspective. According to Trinidad (2018), non-White students' cultural values might cause conflicts with dominant White culture rules. This perspective may make it difficult for teachers to understand or judge non-White students' actions. Using CRT, a critical evaluation of school policy and teachers' perceptions can be explored to identify if continued support is needed, as Hamdan and Sintos (2022) identified the need to strengthen teachers cultural competencies skills and knowledge continue to be top priority. Less than one in three

teachers had received ongoing professional development involving how to understand cultural similarities and differences (Sari & Yuce, 2020). Identifying factors which create barriers for teachers already in the teaching field allows for research-based strategies to guide teachers to be proactive behavior managers (Larson et al., 2018).

Disproportionate Discipline by Race

The National Center for Educational Statistics (2019) said as the minority population increases, the White student population would become the minority, accounting for 46% of the student population. The Virginia Government State Council of Higher Education identified that in the year 2019 those enrolling in teacher education programs continue to remain primarily White and female, which necessitates understanding the racially and ethnically diverse students they teach (Chu, 2019; Gopalan, 2019; Green, 2019); and Vaughan (2019). Miller and Harris (2018) said teacher education programs had remained relatively the same over the past decade by providing little training relating to the development of teachers' cultural awareness and understanding of the culturally diverse student population they are expected to teach. Teachers' lack of cultural awareness may play a part in the disproportionate referral gap between non-White students and their White peers trending in districts across the country. According to Williams et al. (2018), teacher candidates could be exposing non-White students to biased discipline due to being ill-prepared in terms of culturally responsive classroom management techniques. Despite disproportionate referral rates leading to suspension for non-White students compared to their White peers, there is little

consensus regarding its cause, especially at the elementary level.

Non-White students are suspended at higher rates than White students (Hirschfield, 2018). According to Wilson et al. (2020), to fully understand inequities in terms of discipline referrals, understanding reasons for suspension is required. Corrective actions coming from some teachers may be based on their cultural norms and values, creating a deficit-based beliefs in terms of what misbehavior looks like when viewed via cultural practices of teachers (Cole & Warren, 2018; Miller & Harris, 2018). These deficits are due to According to Alvare (2018), as some White teachers' culture plays into White privilege, which often prevents self-reflection and awareness of microaggressions or implicit biases because they are unaware of expectations based on norms outside of their own culture.

Muniz (2019) said less than one-third of teachers receive ongoing support to develop cultural understanding. Teachers must become culturally competent and sensitive to students' cultural diversity, as culture relates to more than how students learn (Larson et al., 2018), it also provides an avenue for relationship building. Culture guides students' mannerisms, actions, and reactions to classroom expectations involving tone, body language, and personal space, which are nuances teachers need to be aware of, so objectivity is used rather than subjectivity when assessing student behavior (Williams et al., 2018). Muniz (2019) identified the need for teachers to understand their students' culture so teachers can objectively look at the behavior and situation of the whole child, rather than subjectively basing their response on their personal expectations.

Garcia et al. (2020) said understanding culture can be used to develop lessons that can assist in terms of minimizing behavior in the classroom due to the negative impact exclusionary discipline can have on students being removed from class as identified by Exclusionary discipline may inhibit emotional development and magnify student stress (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Howard, 2020). When a teacher removes a student from class, it inhibits in-class instruction and decreases students' level of trust in teachers and the school system (Gahungu, 2018; Sandwick et al., 2019).

Disproportionate Disciplinary Referrals in Schools

Reform of school discipline policies is needed. Policies must shift from punitive towards preventative or intervention-based methods for dealing with classroom behaviors to lessen the opportunity gap and increase equity in terms of learning opportunities (Schlesinger & Schmits-Earley, 2021).

Bryant and Wilson (2020) said discipline should be identical for identical behavior, no matter if it is a White student or non-White student doing the behavior. However, this is not the case, as non-White students are consistently overrepresented in terms of exclusionary discipline practices (Gregory et al., 2019). A more in-depth look into this trend is needed within each school to see the variables causing the disproportionate referral rate, as no two schools are alike, rather than basing the trend across districts.

Baule (2020) said disparities between White and non-White students in school discipline, is found within the public school system, and this trend has continued over the

past four decades. Bottiani and Bradshaw (2017) said White students receive discipline referrals for more objective offenses. Trinidad (2018) said one factor explaining the continued trend may be collision of cultural norms. Non-White cultural norms may conflict with cultural norms valued by the school. Schlesinger and Schmits-Earley (2021) said schools within the United States, often attempt to change punitive and exclusionary forms of discipline to prevention and intervention forms of discipline. However, as Schlesinger and Schmits-Earley noted, the reform effort is not creating desired results. The colorblind ideology is eroding the equity process in terms of school discipline.

Policies to Create Equity in Discipline

Educators in the US as early as the 1880s with more than 800,000 immigrants faced issues involving race and equity (Bonner et al., 2018). Although the United States Constitution guarantees that “all individuals have the right to an equal and free public education, no matter their race, color, sex, or national origin,” an opportunity gap has been created due to disproportionate referral rates leading to suspension for non-White students. In 1954, the case of *Brown v. Kansas City Board of Education*, along with the signing in 1965 of President Johnson’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) established federal funds designated to fight the war on poverty; however, fair, and equal treatment of all students remained an issue in public education in terms of disciplinary matters. The ESEA was one of several attempts made by state and federal governments to create equity in education. However, another obstacle that hindered student learning was identified in the 1970s as the opportunity gap. The opportunity gap exists due to the

removal of students from learning environments due to discipline practices resulting in both in and out of school suspension (Morgan & Wright, 2018), as non-White students miss more instructional days than their White peers.

In 2016, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); he was committed to equity and gave states more control over assessments and their data usage by taking into consideration significant factors that may disrupt assessment outcomes (Chu, 2019). Education that provides equitable learning and social opportunities for all students needed evaluating, as the disproportionate discipline referral rate is negatively impacting the opportunity gap. Being removed from class due to behaviors is a significant factor recognized by the ESSA and disproportionate exclusionary disciplinary practices continued to trend in public schools (Zervas, 2017), making the opportunity for learning less available and the academic gap greater between non-White students and their White peers. Disproportionate discipline for Non-White students leading to suspensions had increased by 200% since 1975, while White student suspensions increased by 12% (Bottiani & Bradshaw, 2017; Gion et al., 2018).

Cultural Deficiencies of Preservice Teachers

Alvare (2018) said preservice teachers' multicultural courses simplify and avoid challenging aspects of cultural diversity, and teacher education programs need radical changes, as many White teacher candidates are considered culturally deficient. The deficiency comes from lack of preservice cultural courses which promote perspectives and practices to address inequity in the classroom. According to LaForett and DeMarco

(2019), inequality is enhanced when students are removed from the classroom due to discipline issues because they are no longer receiving classroom instruction. Chitiyo et al. (2020) said lack of equity in the classroom leads to problematic behavior which interferes with practical learning.

Cultural deficit-thinking is not new to the educational paradigm. Schweitzer and Hughes (2019) said cultural deficit-thinking occurs when teachers base their reason for lack of student achievement on cultural factors, relating to the family unit relying on older siblings to watch younger siblings, lack parental support, transient, low socio-economic status or cultural background believing that a specific culture may not value education, rather than students' actual learning ability. Alvare (2018) said teacher education programs need to develop teachers' critical consciousness in terms of promoting equity, as many preservice teachers may misunderstand culture.

Fitchett et al. (2020) said 80% of the teaching force remains White, while White students make up only 50% of the school population. Smith et al. (2018) said many students enrolling in teacher programs tend to remain primarily White. Many preservice teachers are less confident in terms of communicating with non-White students than they are communicating with students of their own culture and need more practical experience dealing with students of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Krawczyk (2020) said adult students who enrolled in teaching courses continue to remain primarily White and identified the imperativeness for teachers to obtain more cultural knowledge, as teachers become culturally competent, relationship building with students becomes easier,

integrating their cultural identities into the instruction assists in learning engagement, and supports a sense of belonging.

According to Anyon et al. (2018), communication is a critical factor in relationship building between the teacher and students and parents of a different culture. It is beneficial for enhancing a classroom climate that allows preservice teachers to become familiar with mannerisms and styles of speech of non-dominant cultures. Allowing preservice teachers to interact with a culturally diverse classroom increases cultural understanding. Adams and Glass (2018) suggested allowing preservice teachers to have more practical experience working with culturally diverse students to assist in greater understanding of the cultural dynamics to help prevent misinterpretation of their actions., rather than taking courses relating to culturally diverse population they will encounter in their own classroom. Alvare (2018) said many preservice courses are not addressing inequity issues but tend to focus on nonthreatening cultural issues, avoiding the challenging aspects of diversity when it comes to understanding learning needs and building relationships with students. Chitiyo et al. (2020) said preservice teacher courses must align with needs of teachers who have culturally diverse classrooms, especially in terms of dealing with behaviors which impede effective learning.

Preservice teachers need real-world opportunities with non-White students to fully understand how culture is an integral part of how students learning and how actions can be misinterpreted as behavior (Kubra & Yavuz, 2018). Sari and Yuce (2020) identified that teachers have more discipline problems dealing with culturally diverse

students. Sari and Yuce suggested that the increased discipline problems create the need for preservice teachers to gain greater practical experience with diverse student populations. Working with a diverse population while under advisement of the mentoring teacher can assist in the understanding of the similarities and differences between cultures to prevent misunderstanding and misjudgment of classroom behaviors as inappropriate. Alvare (2018) supported Sari and Yuce and suggested that teachers develop critical consciousness to promote equity. LaForett and DeMarco (2019) identified the need for teachers to become culturally competent and committed to racial equity, as these can decrease the discipline disparity that leads to suspension for non-White students. Preservice teachers need more exposure and practice with classroom management strategies (Williams et al., 2018), and Ankomah (2020) asserts that the instructors involved in the teacher education programs must support and provide practical tools for teachers to navigate the challenges that come with adjusting to the needs of non-White students. Samuel (2018) identified that there is often a disconnect between teachers and the students they teach, and Borrero (2018) maintained that the disconnect comes from teachers having generalized assumptions about non-White students. According to LaForett and DeMarco (2019), educating teachers on how to self-reflect on culture, becoming self-aware of possible unconscious bias, and being open and committed to social justice is a critical step towards equity. By decreasing the misinterpretation of actions taken by non-White students and addressing these specific factors during preservice training is ideal; however, they are minimally supported (Lucey & White,

2017).

Understanding how culture plays a role in students' perception regarding authority, a student's reaction to situations, and how students interact with peers and adults are critical issues that Lehman (2017) identified many preservice teachers in the United States lack. Macqueen et al. (2020) noted that understanding students' cultural differences is vital in today's educational systems, and Krawczyk (2020) stated that is necessary to keep pace with the demographic shift occurring in society. Ankomah (2020) argued that a greater emphasis is needed on social justice, equity, and diversity courses in teacher programs to create more significant teacher competencies in diversity. Krawczyk also identified that culturally diverse students bring a different set of norms to the classroom. Teachers need to understand the variations of cultural norms and utilize strategies to decrease the discipline disparity. Teachers who understand that cultural differences exist and need to be embraced, rather than maintaining a cultural blindness can decrease inequity (Oberlechner, 2019).

Preservice teachers' perceptions of knowing that there is a cultural difference, yet treating all students the same, maintain an inequity mindset. Oberlechner (2019) related that some teachers maintain an unchanged perception about students' actions and react to these situations based on prior experiences, and view student behaviors through their own cultural lens. Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018) along with Howard (2020) maintained that culturally competent teachers view students through an asset-based lens, they view the whole child, including the cultural aspects. As stated by Borrero (2018),

preschool teachers need to transition into the classroom with the ability to harness students' cultural assets to keep students engaged in the learning process. Student engagement in their learning minimizes the opportunity for harmful disruptions (Ergin, 2019). Cultural understanding is critical, not only because there may be a lack of cultural competence among some preservice-service teachers, but for the novice teachers who find classroom management issues as one of the most challenging and increase in difficulty when linked with cultural differences (Kubra & Yavuz, 2018). Research supports the need for proactive behavior management practices (Chitiyo et al., 2020), and Keyes (2019) stated the need for classroom management that provided equal and consistent enforcement that encouraged all students' positive behavior and classroom engagement which can enhance a supportive learning environment.

Unintentional Biases of Teachers of the Dominant Culture

Alvare (2018) recognized that the dominant culture is the gatekeeper of rules based on the dominant culture's cultural perspective. The dominant culture's perspective may view the nondominated cultures' speech or mannerisms as disrespectful or inappropriate (Bottiani & Bradshaw, 2017), leading teachers to react subjectively rather than objectively towards behaviors. McBain (2018) revealed that some teachers might hold unintentional biases or unconsciously use microaggression because there is a deficit in the teacher-student relationship (Yen et al., 2018). Gregory et al. (2019) supported the idea that a racial disparity in discipline exists. Identifying causal factors for the disparity is critical from a civil rights perspective to ensure all students have equitable access to

schooling. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (2021), students' have the constitutional right is to receive a free and equal public education. According to LaForett and DeMarco (2019), the equal part of being educated is jeopardized as non-White students are disproportionately removed from the classroom due to discipline issues resulting in suspension. The removal of students is creating racial inequity issues. Jacobsen et al. (2019) recognized that teachers are quick to use disciplinary practices that lead to a suspension for minor offenses, which creates stress for students, and aggressively acting out for some students is a way of coping with this stress. However, Gregory et al. (2019) suggested that schools move away from punitive discipline and replace restorative justice practices, such as positive behavioral intervention strategies. Gregory and Fergus (2021) identified that training teachers in culturally responsive classroom management is part of proactive intervention. Ergin (2019) supports Gregory and Fergus, by recognizing that increasing teachers' classroom management skills are a way to reduce discipline issues and increase equitable and supportive learning environments.

Diversity in the Teaching Profession

Lehman (2017) identified that the teaching community remains less diverse than the student population, and most teachers tend to be female White, middle-class, and monolingual (Adams & Glass, 2018; Lucey & White, 2017; Muniz, 2019). According to Carothers et al. (2019), the teacher shortage within the United States results in placing many less qualified teachers in schools with high minority and disadvantaged student

populations. Fitchett et al. (2020) identified that although 17% of teachers hired are African American, 42% are placed in low-income, high minority schools. Research supports the idea that teachers tend to choose schools where race and ethnicity match their own cultural background. However, according to Billingham (2019), if a teacher encounters limited availability of teaching positions, they may not have a choice of placement that matches their cultural background. The mismatch of the teacher to student, according to Fitchett et al., results in higher teacher stress, making it more likely that those teachers will leave the teaching profession.

Diversity in the teaching profession is supported by research, as Hughes et al. (2020) identified. Hughes et al. stated that teacher diversity provides greater racial and ethnic understanding, which is beneficial in how students are disciplined. Nevarez et al. (2019) supported the need for diverse teachers to act as cultural translators, especially when socialized within a diverse community because they hold added knowledge of the students they teach. Ingersoll et al. (2018) identified that a diverse teacher/student match allows for building a relationship with minimal effort. Relationships are essential as Keyes (2019) stated, that relationships motivate positive classroom behavior and engagement in the learning process.

Greater teacher diversity promotes understanding and may indirectly be associated with decreased discipline referrals (Hughes et al., 2020). Alsbury et al. (2018) agreed with Hughes that collaboration and conversation among colleagues of different ethnicities could clarify culture that is different from the teacher's own culture. Green

(2019) supported the findings by Alsbury et al., that a racially diverse teaching staff positively benefits students and colleagues when all staff members remain culturally sensitive to prevent cross-cultural confusion.

Teachers' and students' cross-cultural interactions may result in misunderstandings between the two parties when there is a cultural mismatch. Cross-cultural confusion occurs when the recipient's understanding of the communication is misunderstood based on the recipient's past experiences and the context. As Predmore et al. (2017) identified, culture generally influences the teaching of context, making a clear understanding as to how to communicate lessons which support the reality of having more racially or ethnically diverse teachers. Teachers of different ethnicities or races hold valuable knowledge from a personal standpoint. According to Sharp et al. (2019), teachers hold those students not of their culture to a lower standard than those who share the teacher's culture. The benefits of student and teacher race pairing lead to higher engagement in learning and increased socioemotional skills (Rasheed et al., 2020; Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). According to Trumbull et al. (2020), there has been an emphasis on enhancing equitable learning opportunities. However, more needs to be studied around classroom management, which is connected to personal beliefs and cultural values, making the need for diversity in the teaching staff ideal.

Impact of Zero Tolerance Policies on Exclusionary Discipline Practices

The number of referred students to school administrators, then suspended from school, increased when zero-tolerance policies were enacted in the 1990s as way to

remove imminent threats (Moreno & Scaletta, 2018). However, educational research on the zero-tolerance policy has exacerbated the phenomenon identified as racial and unequal disciplinary practices (Wilson et al., 2020). According to Moreno and Scaletta, the zero-tolerance policy quickly shifted to include minor offenses such as disrespecting authority, defiance, and inappropriate attire, resulting in referrals written by classroom teachers based on subjective rather than objective when viewing the behavior. Wilson et al. identified that teachers' decisions regarding discipline are vital at the classroom level. Moreno and Scaletta stated that teachers must exhaust all intervention possibilities before referring students to the office. Office referrals, which may result in administrators using exclusionary discipline practices, do not work, and removing students is problematic and devastating (Alnaim, 2018).

As exclusionary discipline became used more often due to the perception that the creation of the zero-tolerance policy was in response to school shootings (Alnaim, 2018), the zero-tolerance policy quickly merged into a viable solution for a minor infraction. However, according to Gahungu (2018), the zero-tolerance policy is inconsistent and applied unfairly. The adverse effects of utilizing the zero-tolerance policy as a measure to remove students for minor offenses created a negative impact on academic achievement. The academic gap between non-White students and their White peers may exacerbate race-based achievement gap (Gopalan & Nelson, 2019), as the non-White students remained suspended more often, negating social justice (Joseph et al., 2021).

Strategies to Improve Student Behaviors

Jacobsen et al. (2019) identified that students socialize to school norms and develop emotional skills while in school and with peers during grades K-5. According to Sari and Yuce (2020), school relationships are especially critical for school children making those suspended, according to Anyon et al. (2018), in need of support to adjust adequately. Using character development activities, small group interventions, and social and emotional learning practices that support students' development of social and emotional competencies to behavior (Gregory & Fergus, 2021) is a positive step in an approach to alternative discipline choices. Bottiani and Bradshaw (2017) showed that exclusionary practices impede the emotional and social development of students suspended from school, making the school experience a stressful time for students.

Teachers need to focus on building relationships with students to assist in diminishing misconduct (Bradshaw et al., 2018). Hwang (2018) said building a positive teacher-student relationship helps decrease behaviors, supports trust, increases communication, and helps students adjust and promote social competence. Relationship-building is an essential part of maintaining a positive classroom climate. A positive classroom where the relationship between student and teachers exists, and teachers show empathy and cultural competence as a strategy to promote positive classroom behaviors (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Howard, 2020). Larson et al. (2018) stated that understanding students' culture and building a relationship with them leads to maintaining a positive classroom climate. Williams et al. (2018) noted years of teaching

experience are less critical than the ability to understand students' culture. Yen et al. (2018) noted that a positive relationship between teachers and students is more critical than the number of times communication occurred with parents.

When teachers build a cultural understanding of their students, they are building relationships with them. Kubra and Yavuz (2018) identified that when teachers regularly communicate with their students, the teachers' actions are more regulated. This allows the teacher to objectively reflect on the non-White student's mannerisms and determine if a behavior is inappropriate and whether an office referral is needed to address the situation.

Teachers can use their students' cultural awareness to help engage them in the learning process by incorporating culturally relevant material into academic instruction, known as culturally relevant teaching. According to Talpade and Talpade (2020), culturally relevant pedagogy is the identification of students' history and culture and the integration of those factors into classroom instruction for non-White students to use as references that assist in academic achievement. Using culturally relevant pedagogy is one way to manage student behaviors. Williams et al. (2018) identified that using subject matter that is culturally appropriate creates a positive and safe learning climate while reducing in-class behavior opportunities. Culturally relevant strategies as this increase the teachers' view of culturally diverse students as an asset to the learning environment (Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey, 2018; Howard, 2020). Culturally relevant teaching strategies enable the teacher to draw the students into the learning process,

decreasing behavior opportunities and increasing the students' feeling of being valued (Krawczyk, 2020).

Jacobsen et al. (2019) identified the need for teachers to have constant supportive resources to use culturally responsive strategies for learning and equity. Katz-Amey (2019) identified the importance of having a calm classroom climate conducive to learning. A calm classroom enhances a supportive and caring climate that could buffer the negativity many students face (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Howard, 2020).

Race-Neutral Ideology and Racism

Racial disparities in discipline can have adverse effects on students. According to Garcia et al. (2020), some teachers preconceived assumptions about race and those teachers who maintain a race-neutral mindset perpetuate the racial discipline disparities. Macqueen et al. (2020) stated that cultural differences need to be acknowledged. Cole and Warren (2018) noted that teachers' experience at school largely influences a student's sense of self. Joseph et al. (2021) noted that maintaining a colorblind stance marginalizes students of color. Bottiani and Bradshaw (2017) identified that adjustment problems and a lack of belonging are adverse effects of the lack of acknowledgment of a student's race. According to Vaughan (2019), the dismissiveness of one's race may decrease the sense of oneself.

Hughes et al. (2020) suggested that the teachers' culture may directly affect the disproportionate referral rate for non-White students. Cole and Warren (2018)

acknowledged that some White teachers' lack of understanding their racial positioning might play a part in the teachers' view of appropriate behavior based on the unconscious perspective of their cultural values and norms. Bonifacio et al. (2018) identified that teachers should not maintain a "colorblind" attitude. Teachers who view students as the same due to a colorblind ideology are associated with microinvalidations and microinsults because race plays a part in students' actions and learning. Alvare (2018) emphasized that a large body of literature supports the idea that within schools, patterns exist that maintain and perpetuate racial inequality. Sandwick et al. (2019) identified several studies that support the claim that a persistent racial bias is ingrained in the discipline response, as many non-White students are disciplined more subjectively for minor infractions than their White peers. Data by the U.S. Department of Education (2017) reported that approximately 2.7 million K-12 non-White students received one or more out-of-school suspensions within a school year. Gage et al. (2021) reported that 2.5% of those suspended were White students compared to 10% non-White students.

The cultural practice of the White majority tends to employ a "colorblind or race-neutral" ideology. Gopalan and Nelson (2019), Gregory et al. (2019), Hirschfield (2018), Ilhan et al. (2019) and Nese et al. (2020) confirmed that non-White students tend to feel alienated and misunderstood, especially when suspended, either in or out of school, creating lower academics and fueling the reasons for students to continue acting out inappropriately in class.

However, according to Alvare (2018), a teacher who maintains a colorblind or

race-neutral ideology is a way to proclaim that they are not racially biased. Edwards (2017) supported Alvarez's assertion that teachers' claims of being colorblind are a way to negate racial differences. However, these attempts at remaining race-neutral may not project equity but may hide unintentional racial biases and devalue diversity by ignoring the racial differences of students (Bonifacio et al., 2018; Cole & Warren, 2018; Edwards, 2017). Clemans (2019) identified that the dominant group's values and cultural practices in the United States public school system continue to minimize cultural differences. According to Haar (2020), the dominant culture is White teachers, representing 82% of the teaching population. The demographics that Haar noted are like those of the local site of this study. Haar maintained teachers need to thoroughly examine how White dominance and privilege directly or indirectly relates to teachers' classroom practices. Gregory and Fergus (2021) identified that maintaining a colorblind ideology ignores cultural differences. If teachers uphold the race-neutral policy, anything falling outside the White cultural norm or frame of reference, according to Gopalan and Nelson (2019), gives way to misinterpretation of non-White students' behavior as non-conforming inappropriate school behavior.

Sleeter (2017) supported the importance of challenging the dominant ideology that serves to normalize inequality. According to Garcia et al. (2020), the ideology supports the claim that color-neutral racial attitudes may affect how some teachers teach non-White students, making it necessary for these teachers to assess their attitudes about race. Clemans (2019) maintained that curious, genuine teachers who are open to listening

to their students, could lose the race-neutral or colorblind stance and embrace diversity. Gregory and Fergus (2021) supported the nonuse of race-neutral or colorblind attitudes, as this lends itself to teachers reacting harshly to behaviors that do not fall into their cultural frame of reference norms and values. Jacobsen et al. (2019) affirm that students at the elementary level are still being socialized and learning social norms. When confronted with teachers' colorblind ideology, Cobb (2017) identified that race-blind talk denies students' identity and is a form of microinvalidation.

Color blindness, as stated by Doane (2017), is a way for teachers to deny racism exists and allows teachers to present themselves as nonracist. Maintaining the race-neutral ideology relates to the economic, academic, or social barriers that once existed are no longer there to inhibit growth. However, teachers need to be cognizant of students' socio-cultural and economic backgrounds prejudices, and culturally conditioned perspectives (Oberlechner, 2019). Perceptions made on the action or inaction of non-White students play a significant role in the teachers' ability to manage their classrooms (Williams et al., 2018). When teachers maintain a colorblind or race-neutral attitude, it may devalue the students' culture, associated with microinvalidations and microinsults (Bonifacio et al., 2018). According to Cobb (2017), a race-blind or colorblind ideology is a teacher's way of refusing to acknowledge that they may be operating within the realm of racism rather than denying race as a factor in school discipline. The authors note that when teachers identify a student's culture within the social context of their actions, that cultural variance may dictate behavior (McIntosh et al., 2018). This knowledge will allow

teachers to understand the importance of critically reflecting on racial inequities that often exist on an unconscious level (Alvare, 2018). Allowing professional growth, cultural connections, and relationships to be built may be the catalyst to support teachers in developing techniques (Ilhan et al., 2019) that ensure equity.

Implications

Schools across the United States face a critical and widespread issue of disproportionate discipline by race (Ergin, 2019). This study aimed to use the data obtained from this research to understand teachers' perceptions of what constitutes poor behaviors requiring an office referral. The narrative created through the semistructured interviews led to the creation of a project (see Appendix A) in the form of professional development. The project will be over 3 days (see Appendix B), supporting the identified areas of need. The need and design of professional training on effective culturally responsive classroom management is a necessary and effective tool that can support teachers (Gregory & Fergus, 2021). Keser and Yavus (2018) supported the need for teachers to receive classroom management training, especially for teachers who find it more difficult with culturally diverse students and for teachers who may lack multicultural competence. This training supports this study's purpose and may address teachers' implicit biases and provide ways to enhance socio-cultural relationships to reduce misinterpretation of students' actions or reactions to obtain a classroom climate conducive to learning. Williams et al. (2018) identified that teachers, through experience with the subject matter and job-embedded coaching, can learn to use pedagogy to manage

students' behavior, reducing the need for discipline referrals and maintaining a commitment to social justice.

Summary

The office referral process in elementary schools has gained attention across the United States because of the disproportionality occurring by race. Understanding the phenomenon is critical because the issue of equity is being questioned by Civil Rights groups as the opportunity gaps are increasing for an already marginalized group of students when classroom removal due to behavior results.

I aimed to explore and understand eight elementary teachers' perceptions of poor classroom behaviors that lead to office referrals. I explored how and why the disproportionate referral rates by race occurred within School X. Obtaining a deep understanding of the phenomenon was necessary so strategies could be implemented that would provide the skill sets necessary to create engaging lessons, build relationships with students of a different culture, so all teachers from School X could increase equity, and decrease the opportunity gap.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The research design chosen for this study was a basic qualitative design. This research design is context-specific and can render a more comprehensive view of patterns identified through coding and written narratives (Saldana, 2016), than a generalized context across the district. I used a naturalist paradigm. A naturalist paradigm provides the context the phenomenon is occurring within (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), because it is taking place within the natural setting. Interpretation of these findings will provide context-specific means to address the local problem. Data analysis was used to address research questions concerning teachers' and administrators' perceptions of behaviors which led to office referrals. Results may also provide information on skills some elementary teachers in grade 3-5 may need to address classroom behaviors and offer administrators ideas for professional development that teachers may need to understand how student culture may play a role in their behavior, learning, and relationship building.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

A basic qualitative design was adopted as the approach to this study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Ravitch and Carl (2016) described the qualitative approach in research as a reflective, recursive, inductive, and systematic approach that involves exploring and describing information gathered in pursuit of answering research questions that are within the natural setting.

Qualitative research supports this study because it relies on participants' firsthand

experience with the phenomenon in its natural setting to provide information strictly related to research questions (Dwyers, 2020).

Justification of Research Design

The methodology was beneficial for this project study due to the data source being retrieved from 3-5 grade teachers specific School X within the classroom setting. Ethnography was not beneficial for this study because I was not immersed in the setting to collect observable data to understand the phenomenon. I decided a case study was also not ideal because participants were not bound by time or place, and I did not collect any observational data. Office referrals are not bound to a specific place, making the case study undesirable for this study, because within School X, behavior can occur in various settings. Action research is not an ideal design according to Busch et al. (2019) because this study is not a cyclical examination to determine the effectiveness of a process. Instead, this study is identifying 3-5 grade teachers' perceptions relating to the phenomena within School X.

Participants

Qualitative research depends on participants' lived experiences and interpretations of phenomena to provide information relating to the research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Participants were teachers who teach grades 3-5 and initiate discipline referrals and are or have been employed full time at School X.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

Participants were selected for this study based on interactions with upper

elementary students in 3-5 grades and had worked full time at School X for at least 2 years. Purposeful sampling was used to provide context-rich and relevant information relating to School X because it is based on selecting only 3-5 grade teachers, and collecting their lived experiences, which are significant and specific to research questions for this qualitative study.

Access to Participants

Participants were chosen based on their willingness and ability to participate. They were involved in semistructured interviews via Zoom, either by phone or virtually. Data collected will remain confidential, and participants were asked to sign a participant consent form.

Researcher and Participants' Working Relationship

When I worked with participants, I maintained personal subjectivity and remained vigilant in reassessing my positionality and reflexivity. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), reflexivity must be continuous and rigorous and include self-reflection to prevent researcher bias. Journal writing was also used as a reflective process, and all critical incidents or events were recorded to assist in the evaluation and assessment of any researcher bias.

The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires researchers to gain written permission to conduct studies. The 3-5 grade teacher participants from School X, were required to sign an informed consent form identifying the purpose, method, possible harm, and benefits of research. The informed consent form said no

coercion, pressure, or deceptive practices would be used at any time. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), informed consent allowed transparency and honesty to be upheld, so accountability of the contents of the consent form were made clear so all participants were aware that participation was voluntary. Thomas (2017) said participants need to know that they may opt out of research at any time to diminish any stress or anxiety the participants may have had. I maintained ethical consciousness which included awareness of participants' safety by not dehumanizing or minimizing participants' value as human beings.

Participants were not my subordinates, nor did I directly work with any participants at School X. I am not employed at School X and hold a position outside of this county, which does not create opportunities for interaction. While employed at School X, there were no common gathering places in the building where I and the participants interacted. Participants were located at opposite ends of School X, and I shared no common support specialists or students. All participant responses and data collected were kept off-site, and any identifiable information was removed. The participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms for anonymity and confidentiality.

Data Collection

Data were grounded in a hermeneutic perspective. Data collection involved individual recorded semistructured interviews (see Appendix C) conducted over the phone or online through Zoom. According to Khalil and Cowie (2020), synchronous interviews allow more flexibility than in-person interviews, due to time constraints. To

accommodate the participants, due to time and location, since some of the participants lived more than forty-five minutes to an hour from School X, the Zoom platform was the preferred method for the interview process. A Zoom link was emailed to participants, along with time slots to pick from, and they signed into the Zoom meeting using a pseudonym of their choice to uphold ethical procedures.

Data Justification

The data collection approach involved multiple perspectives. Alvare (2018) stated that the dominant culture defines the school systems, code of conduct, and acceptable behavior.

Instrument

The instrument for this qualitative study was a questionnaire containing prewritten questions for the semistructured interviews. The literature review provided questions for the questionnaire. This instrument is appropriate for this qualitative study because it offers participants the flexibility to expand on their responses. According to Canals (2017), the semistructured interview process allowed for participants to expand their responses for clarification and add probes to enhance my understanding of participants' experiences concerning the topic under study.

I audio-recorded the interviews with participants' consent, and the recordings were visible to participants on the Zoom platform. The interview setting was relaxed and confidential. The time frame was set for about 1 hour unless participants felt they needed to share more relating to their lived experience encountered in the classroom regarding

the phenomenon under study. The transcribed interview data were coded to identify themes, and these themes provided the narrative to answer the research questions for this study.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed at the end of the study using a descriptive approach (Boru, 2020). I transcribed the interview data verbatim and created two columns. On the right, was a one-word datum with a descriptive code, on the left was a short paragraph of the participants' data developed deductively into a logical conclusion. According to Azungah (2018), using inductive and deductive analysis allows cross-tabulation to assess relationships among categories. An analysis was completed deductively for the initial coding of the data (Saldana, 2016).

The subsequent examination of the data allowed patterns or themes to emerge that led to the creation of categories. The inductive analysis allowed for deep reflection on the meaning of the categories. As themes evolve from the categories into a narrative, the narrative provided answers to the research questions. Saldana (2016) noted that recoding and recategorizing can refine the codes into categories or themes since “social interaction does not occur in neat, isolated units” (p.19). The emerging narrative answered the research questions and guided the direction for the project.

The data obtained from the interview questions were kept in researcher logs identified only by a code for confidentiality. All transcribed data were located on the computer, only accessible through a confidential password. Reflexivity checks and

reflective journal writing was used in the prevention of researcher bias. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), reflexivity is an ethical responsibility of the researcher. Shufutinsky (2020) stated that being self-aware and self-transparent increases validity, rigor and decreases biases in the findings. Collaboration with peers and letting a partner independently look at the data helped decrease the possibility of a discrepancy and decrease confirmation bias (Befani, 2020). Collaboration also provided greater reliability through inter-rater reliability (Thomas, 2017). I reduced the chance of bias through independent checks on my positionality.

Data Analysis Process

This qualitative study aimed to understand teachers' perceptions of the disproportionate referral rate by race at School X. An understanding of teachers' perceptual realities of their classroom experiences identified the factors that played a role in this phenomenon through one-on-one semistructured interviews.

Data Collection

Due to the COVID pandemic and logistical considerations, the participants' interviews occurred through the Zoom platform. Zoom is a virtual platform that allowed visual contact and dialogue for one-on-one semistructured interviews to be conducted effectively. Before starting the interviews, each participant gave consent to record their interview. Recording each interview allowed for a more accurate collection of their responses and supported the transcription of all data. Each interview covered 11 questions, that lasted approximately 45 minutes. Each recorded interview was

downloaded onto a password-protected electronic device and transcribed. Information was shared with participants that a coding system would be identifiers of their identity, and no one outside the study would have access. Therefore, the participants' identities would remain confidential.

Limitations

The limitations associated with this qualitative study were specific to the small sample size, which cannot be transferable to a larger population or reproduced with similar results in other schools. Kalman (2020) identified that this study's lack of data collection methods inhibits data triangulation. However, vigilance was maintained, and caution was used when interpreting the data. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), researchers need to be more vigilant in self-reflection throughout each stage of the research.

Data Analysis Results

Data Analysis Procedures

The transcribed data were first analyzed by deconstructing the data into categories looking for consistent recurring phrases (Saldana, 2016). Eryilmaz (2022), identified that rigorous deconstruction of data ensures that the findings reflect the true meaning intended by the participant. The second round of analysis used open coding with the phrases identified in the first analysis, and core categories emerged and coded for specificity. This analysis provided the findings to answer the research questions of this study. To maintain reliability, controlled judgment and reflexivity throughout the process was

maintained using a data analysis summary. (see Appendix D).

Interview Procedural Process

Administrative measures were taken to ensure credibility and reliability were protected in this qualitative study (Ozdemir et al., 2021). Credibility was captured through the open-ended semistructured interview questions, allowing each participant an opportunity to expand their thoughts to provide in-depth, thick, and rich information relative to their lived experience. Credibility and trustworthiness were obtained through reflexivity and self-reflective journaling to monitor any bias. Participants' inflection when speaking, eye contact, and body shifting when speaking on a specific topic were noted and reflected upon to gauge if a probe may have been necessary to capture greater detailed information. Then recording and transcribing the data from the various teachers of different ages, years of teaching at School X, and various reasons for leaving the profession provided reliability. The participants were offered a chance to look over the transcribed data to ensure accuracy in capturing their true intent. The review taken by participants also encapsulated a form of reliability.

Interview Findings

The data provided by each teacher, of different years of experience in the teaching field, age, and grade level taught, rendered common patterns that emerged when looking at the interviews. The patterns led to the discovery of themes perceived as acceptable expectations for student behavior within a brick-and-mortar setting. The maintenance of data credibility was upheld through a comprehensive data analysis. The process-based

evidence analysis of the interviews relating to the lived experiences of each participant identified repeated themes. Four themes were identified: (1) disrespect challenged the teachers the most, (2) need to establish cultural norms, (3) rules need to be established for non-English students, and (4) administrative support is needed.

Results for RQ1

RQ1: What do teachers at this research site perceive as behaviors that challenge the teacher' authority in the classroom?

Findings suggested that teachers found disrespect and aggressiveness towards teachers, classmates, or peers as challenging and inappropriate behavior in need of an office referral.

Regarding RQ1, the eight participants identified disrespect towards teachers as a reportable offense. Disrespect can include arguing with the teacher, not responding when spoken to, refusing to leave, or coming to the teacher when called. All participants agreed that other reportable offenses included any physical aggression or aggressive language towards anyone. Participant 008 found teasing, especially towards special needs children, to be reportable. However, all the participants found that respect had dramatically decreased since the students returned to school after the Covid shutdown. Participant 005 said, "If I had to put it down to one word, it would be respected. Unfortunately for many students, it is not being taught at home."

All participants felt that all students in Grades 3-5 should know that physical behavior, bullying of their peers, and disrespecting adults by not following or listening to

directions is unacceptable behavior at school and worthy of an office referral. Participant 003 agreed that even though all students should know school rules, “Kids today do not seem to follow the rules. Students come to school knowing school acceptable behaviors. However, many students need to be taught from the moment they walk in until the day they leave what acceptable behavior looks like.” Participant 006 identified that “kids just do not seem to care about school or people.”

Discipline challenges are among the top reasons teachers leave the profession (Ramos & Hughes, 2020), so when considering if there are benefits of removing students causing the behavior from the classroom, all the participants agreed that it does have its benefits. Three participants agreed that removing the student for behavior from the classroom would allow focus to be put back on the lesson.

Removing the student with unacceptable behavior does not mitigate the problem. According to Cruz et al. (2021), student removal from class is a deficit approach to sustaining the status quo. Removing students from class and sending them to the office for behavior increases an already marginalized group's learning and decreases the opportunity gap (Reardon et al., 2019). When the participants were asked if any negative impacts were identified by having students with behavior removed from class, five participants stated that the student would miss direct instruction. Removing students from class for behavior, a form of in-school suspension does not improve academic outcomes (Nishioka et al., 2021). The students need direct instruction, the ability to learn from their peers, and the opportunity to ask questions. Participant 005 felt that having a student

removed could create worse behavior causing the student to shut down or create emotional trauma that could last for years. Participant 007 identified that removing a student should be a last resort and should be done quietly, not in front of their peers, to avoid embarrassment. Participant 007 stated, "it is essential that the teacher removing the student, explain why." The participants all agreed that when removing a student from class, the student should thoroughly understand what action or behavior created the need for them to be removed and how their actions impacted others.

Results for RQ2

RQ2: What do teachers do to establish understandable classroom rules for all students?

Findings suggested that teachers used multiple ways to enhance understanding of classroom rules, such as a peer or translator. However, cultural barriers are complex for many teachers to understand how to communicate effectively with all students.

All the participants believed that culture played a part in how students behave and react in the school environment. Jones (2021) noted that students' culture and identity are not separate but are variables that play a significant role in the students' behavior. Participant 004 stated, "cultures have different ideas about boys and girls, which show how some boys react towards female teachers." Participant 008 stated, "I believe you have to understand it, but they are in our classroom and need to understand what is going on with us." Regarding question two, Participant 006 acknowledged that "culture plays a big part. One little boy did not even know he was supposed to sit in his seat, he had never

been to school, and now he is in 5th grade. Yes, culture impacts students.” Teachers need to be aware of student culture and think for a moment before reacting. Is it cultural, or is it disrespectful? Akman (2021) said to diminish behavior, the teacher should work to build an academic and interpersonal relationship with the student. Ramsey-Jordan (2020) stated that expectations within the walls of the educational setting are rooted in White cultural norms, making it critical to understand and build positive relationships with students (Chen et al., 2021). Participant 008 agreed that culture needs to be understood, but students should conform to our code of conduct. Participant 002 supported the identification of culture but stated, "it might be okay to behave in certain ways in their culture, but to be successful in school, they need to know what is appropriate." Cultural awareness is critical. Trumbull et al. (2020) identified that the more teachers become culturally aware, the easier classroom management and integration of culturally relevant pedagogy become, engaging students more in their learning.

When students come to school, there is often a cultural mismatch between students and teachers. There seems to be even a broader disconnection between the school and home cultures (Ramsey-Jordan, 2020)—for this reason, understanding students' culture and building relationships by changing discipline policies from punitive to restorative is critical. According to Booker (2021), restorative discipline in a constructive way to teach accountability and can be a positive approach to enhancing students' social and emotional growth.

The phenomenon at this research site was the disproportionate referral rate by

race. The participants were asked, "how were the classroom rules explained or clarified for non-English speaking students?" The participants all identified ways they established clarification for all students and parents. Regarding RQ2, for all students and non-English speaking students, Participant 002 had students role-play inappropriate and appropriate behavior. Participant 002 stated, "sometimes kids can get more understanding from just watching something. Participant 002 identified that watching peers' role-play behavior was helpful and fun. Participant 001 stated that they would get a peer who could translate. Participant 005 identified that they would also seek assistance from a peer or a teacher who could translate the rules. The rules were also clearly posted in the classroom. Regarding research question two, Participant 007 acknowledged that "sending school rules translated in the parent's home language was provided for the parents who do not speak English. All participants clarified that rules were a partnership and sent them home to all parents, translated for those who needed it, so there were no surprises regarding behavior expectations.

Not all behavior is due to a lack of language. Participant 007 identified that a student's home environment might set the mode of behavior. Participant 002 stated, "I feel like it might be a family dynamic more than culture." According to Chitiyo et al. (2020), many teachers believe that student behavior is due to a lack of discipline, family background, or the student's upbringing. Participant 003 stated that "often the parent sides with the student and will make excuses for their child's behavior." Participant 004 maintained that the relationship with parents is essential, but "parents respect teachers

less and support their child and their behavior more." Jones (2021) stated that policies and practices have significantly worked against marginalized groups. Pham et al. (2018) supported Jones' statement, identifying the critical need for parental involvement to change teachers' perceptions and negative biases they may hold by providing valuable family background and essential characteristics of their child. Participant 005 identified that "when communication is good, the teacher and parents become a problem-solving team." Participant 004 agreed that parental support is essential, and once the parent is on board, "I will pull the mom card if that curbs the behavior."

Garces-Prettel et al. (2020) supported the relationship between parents and teachers, and through open communication, behavior can be reduced. Participant 008 agreed with the need for parent relationships and believed that administration should be part of that relationship-building process. Participant 007 established that parental communication should be created prior to any negative report. Participant 007 stated: Letting parents know the positives about their child allows parents to feel this teacher seem as if they are on their side, and they are not attacking my child or picking on them because they have reached out to parents with positives, not just negative or poor behavior reports. Relationships with parents are beneficial. Participant 002 stated, "if you can see the interaction between the student and the parent, it may explain why the student is behaving the way they are." Parents, teachers, and students are all a part of the school climate, which impacts all students' success.

Results for RQ3

RQ3: What do teachers from this research site perceive as the support needed to assist with classroom behaviors proactively rather than reactively?

Findings suggested that administrators needed to be visible more in classrooms and throughout the school. Being visible and building relationships with students had more of an impact on students than just knowing them because of behavior issues.

Teachers set the classroom climate; they hold their values, perceptions, and biases based on their frame of reference. However, to sustain a classroom climate conducive to learning, a teacher must proactively (Sezer, 2017) deal with behavior because management is not just about punitive events. Management is a tool to teach accountability and ownership of one's actions (Simonsen et al., 2019). Teachers need support from the administration to compensate for a teacher's stress, burnout, or defeated morale from challenging classroom behavior (Ramos & Hughes, 2020) which creates negative job satisfaction if no support is provided (Kaiser, 2021).

Regarding Research Question 3, Each participant agreed that administrative support when a student is removed from class and sent to the office, the teacher expected administrators to provide a consequence. However, most participants felt that if the student did not receive a consequence for the behavior that removed them from class, the removal became a reward. Regarding research question three, Participant 005 acknowledged that when removing a student is the only choice, it is time for the administration to step in and support the teacher. Participant 003 stated, "when I sent a

student to the office, the behavior was beyond my control, so I expect the behavior to be dealt with by the administrator.” Regarding research question three, Participant 007 was not asking for help, instead focused on proactive ways by administrators to curb the behavior. Participant 007 believed that by requesting the administration to be more visible throughout the building, dropping into classrooms, talking about good character, and getting to know the students by name, not just by behavior, that behavior would diminish.

Participant 005 and Participant 002 felt that the administration should have a reward program for good behavior. Participant 002 stated, "if you reward positive behavior, you should see more positive behavior." Participant 007 also felt it was important that a robust compact communicate school behavioral expectations, compliance rewards, and non-compliance consequences to parents and students. Both students and parents would need to sign and return the compact to the teacher. Regarding research question three, Participant 001 felt professional development in social-emotional learning would be a proactive approach. Participant 001 stated, "I think that proactively, social-emotional learning would curb the behavior, especially since the pandemic, I feel students have lost a lot of the social aspect with peers." Participant 002 felt that administrative support could come from the school counselor, who could provide services or resources for the parents to reach out to if needed or set up a meeting for the parents with the teacher and student present.

All participants felt that any student being removed from class and sent to the

office with a referral for behavior should have consequences. Supportive administrators should include consequences that would create a negative experience, so the student would not consider it a reward or a reprieve from classwork to have an in-school suspension. No participant held strong beliefs in suspending students either in school or out of school due to instructional time lost.

Discrepant Cases

The participants answered all the questions posed. However, some participants lost focus on the main point of the question but still yielded valuable information relatable to other questions. Once the data was coded and themed, there was no evidence of discrepant data. It is essential to acknowledge the varying viewpoints held by the participants on specific topics, added value to the categories and were viable contributors to the research questions relating to the purpose of this study.

Summary

Culture plays a role in students' mannerisms, actions, and behavior. Building relationships with parents and students is a proactive way to enhance positive behavior. Administrative proactive support was a strong theme identified within the data. Using rewards for positive behavior, being visible more in classrooms, and talking to students about what positive character means were recommended. Creating a solid compact for parents and students to sign acknowledging behavioral expectations in school, rewards for compliance, and punitive outcome for noncompliance to prevent misunderstanding of school expectations up front would also be a proactive approach. Findings did not support

having a student removed from class due to increased learning gaps. Removing a student from class impacted students emotionally, causing them to shut down, be traumatized, increase negative student-teacher relationships, and increased negative behavior once back in the classroom. Lastly, findings supported the building of teacher capacity involving cultural and social emotional learning and ways to build a stronger relationship between parents and teachers. Positive parental relationships could lead to a partnership to solve behavioral issues. Parents can clarify misunderstandings relating to culture and family dynamics, which many teachers may misinterpret.

This study involved determining 3-5 grade teachers' perceptions regarding behaviors that lead to disproportionate referrals by race to develop recommendations that address behavior proactively and decrease referral rate inequities by race. Data analysis revealed that disrespect towards the teacher in the form of refusal or outbursts and any physical or aggressive behavior or bullying towards peers and adults were challenging to diminish in the classroom and felt that those behaviors needed to be referred to the office for administrative consequences.

Participants in the study used several strategies, including acting the rules out and having a peer who speaks the same language support the non-English student. However, they also acknowledged having a lack of cultural understanding that may have led to possible misinterpretations of student behavior. However, their perceptions of rules did not change concerning disrespect and physical violence.

Data analysis revealed that proactive administrative support was more beneficial

than punitive. Administrators should be more visible throughout the building and use positive behavior intervention strategies with students by rewarding them for exhibiting good character and behavioral choices. They should have ongoing conversations with students about good character traits and role models. Data also revealed that administrators should provide students and parents with a behavior compact involving behavioral expectations and explanations of consequences and reward systems. Classroom walkthroughs in support of teachers and as a way of getting to know students could curb behaviors. Data also showed that professional development in terms of social emotional learning and cultural awareness would be a beneficial and proactive way to assist teachers with classroom behavior management.

Section 3: The Project

In this section, I explain why teachers, including administrators and school employees at School X who work with students, need to attend a 3-day training session based on the findings of this study. Themes derived from interviews with teachers from School X regarding their perceptions of behaviors that led to disproportionate referral rates by race, directed the professional training. In this section, I describe how findings from the data guided professional development goals, and how training may lead to positive social change for students and teachers. This section also includes a literature review relating to the problem and guided the professional training. The training will enhance teachers' knowledge of proactive behavior management and cultural understanding to inhibit reactive punitive occurrences at School X. The training enhances teachers' understanding on how to create positive parent/teacher and student/teacher relationships as a proactive measure to support classroom behavior relations and positive classroom climates conducive to learning.

Rationale

The rationale for providing a 3-day professional development training session for all teachers in grades 3-5 at School X is to increase their capacity in cultural understanding, classroom management skills, and relationship building with students and parents through rich conversations with other teachers regarding relevance of these factors in terms of their interconnectedness between cultural norms and behavior and the learning process. When non-White students at School X are not engaged in learning

through culturally relevant pedagogy and maintaining relationships with their teacher and peers, the chance of negative behaviors increases. This study was intended to increase elementary teachers in Grades 3-5 at School X, to identify their frames of reference and unconscious bias that impact delivery of their instruction as well as reactions to classroom behaviors that are barriers to building relationships. By building teachers' capacity at School X, in terms of cultural knowledge, unconscious bias, and its impact on instruction, proactive behavior management and positive social change can occur by minimizing the number of removed students from class due to behavior. Through rich dialogue via andragogy-based training, all teachers will learn to build positive student/teacher and parent/teacher relationships that create classroom communities with a climate of safety where daily social and emotional growth can occur. Teachers will evaluate the professional development at its conclusion using a survey (see Appendix E).

Literature Review

This section contains peer-reviewed scholarly articles that were published between 2019 and 2023 to support the integrity of the study. Articles were found via *ERIC*, *ProQuest*, *SAGE Journals*, *PsycINFO*, Virginia Department of Education, and *SocINDEX* using the following specific key search terms: *cultural mismatch*, *exclusionary discipline*, *restorative learning*, *teacher's classroom management skills*, *behavior in elementary school*, *parent relationship*, *social-emotional learning*, *cultural impact on behavior*, *cultural bias*, *restorative practices*, *positive intervention*, *critical race theory*, *unconscious bias*, *teachers' perception of behavior by race*,

microaggression, microinsult, and andragogy.

The problem within School X, located in the northeast part of Virginia, is disproportionate office referral rates by race. The purpose of the study was to answer research questions by identifying factors relating to the phenomenon. Through data analysis, research questions were answered. Findings supported addressing what behaviors challenged teachers' authority, disrespect and aggressiveness were considered intolerable by all participants in 3-5 grades at School X. Teachers from School X, used multiple strategies to communicate classroom rules, such as peer communication, student role playing of what good behavior should look like and using translators to clarify rules. RQ3 was addressed through strategies involving culturally relevant pedagogy, building student and teacher relationships, family relationships, using restorative justice practices to enhance accountability, dignity, and equity, and having administration be more present throughout the building and in classrooms. Findings provided the platform for a 3-day professional training session to support grade 3-5 School X teachers' professional growth involving areas of need identified within data. Disproportionate referrals by race involve addressing unconscious bias, cultural sensitivity, proactive classroom management skills, parent/teacher and student/teacher relationships, and restorative discipline practices.

Using Professional Development to Address Relevancy for Teachers

There is a crisis of teacher attrition within the county School X resides in. According to Ramos and Hughes (2020), discipline issues and teacher morale are the primary reasons teachers in the United States are leaving the teaching profession.

Retaining teachers is paramount, and critical conversations and strategies that are relevant to developing a strong understanding of the phenomenon are significant for all teachers. Anderson and Boutelier (2021) said when elementary teachers identify connections related to their lives and profession, the buy-in factor for change increases because there is value in creating change in the classroom. Buckman and Pittman (2021) said high teacher turnover, teacher shortages, and resistance to change are other barriers to buy-in. Boden et al. (2020) said when teachers have different expectations regarding change, that can also negatively affect teacher buy-in. These barriers increase the need for 3-5 grade teachers at School X to collaborate and have conversations via professional development training. Therefore, to improve professional learning, for teachers at School X, the analyze data from the interviews conducted with 3-5 grade teachers from School X provided the necessary information needed to increase the needs relating to the study.

Meeting the Active Needs of Adult Learners Using Andragogy

Learning is not passive. Passivity relating to learning process hurts the learning experience (Nagashibaevna, 2019) by limiting learning from peers. Active engagement allows for greater comprehension of instruction and alternative perspectives through the sharing process. According to Henschke (2020), andragogy is integral to human activity in face-to-face settings, making it a platform to accommodate learning needs of adults to engage skills of adult learners. Andragogy allows more conversation, and sharing making the adult learner, the subjects and not objects of learning. Therefore, when creating professional development from an andragogic standpoint, learners' self-perceptions and

self-directedness need to be challenged through dialogue which increases communication skills through rich conversations, shared experiences, and active problem-solving with their colleagues. Cockpin and Somprach (2019) advanced that professional development needs to be grounded in a learner-centered design to increase learning opportunities. A learner-centered approach uses activities that include group discussions, sharing thoughts, use of media, and assessing actual conditions teachers are a part of to improve outcomes of professional training. By creating scaffolded learning opportunities for teachers, experiences involving bias and privilege are addressed using videos and participation in a privilege walk. A privilege walk is when participants all start on the same line, and are asked questions about their upbringing, ethnicity, and profession. If the question is relevant to the participant, they take a step forward. Some participants see how privilege allowed them to move forward while others do not, leading to an increase in critical reflection and conversations to establish a more profound understanding of marginalized student populations.

Using Professional Development to Enhance Teachers' Knowledge

Creating a professional development using the data from School X to determine the problem, provided guidance and the goals for the training. However, individualism and shortsightedness based on years of teaching experience can inhibit learning and influence how things are interpreted. Recommendations for change can be relative based on years of teaching, and interpretation of guidelines for change can become individualized, according to Braun and Youngs (2020). According to Santos and Miguel

(2019), the teacher's belief is influenced by prior experience. According to Flushman et al. (2021), "teacher learning is an essential condition to create school change" (p. 82). The professional development training at School X will challenge beliefs, attitudes, and unconscious bias of 3-5 grade teachers using Bell's critical race theory. The discovery of unconscious biases and aid on how to critically reflect on those biases will be made through dialogue (see Appendix F), potentially leading to positive student interactions (Ramsey-Jordan, 2020). Bell and Busey (2021) noted that as the teaching profession continues to remain mainly white, challenging the "color-blind" ideology is needed to enhance the progress of cultural understanding within classrooms. Professional development training will enhance these changes that have been identified in the data from the 3-5 grade teachers at School X, to impose an andragogical method that activates learning potential in both a formal and informal capacity making learning a collective process (Raymer, 2020). The andragogical ideology relies on professional development to allow teachers to have opportunities to produce knowledge and share knowledge rather than receive it (Mayor & Suarez, 2019; McKenzle, 2019). Sharing knowledge fosters enhanced learning through cooperative engagement and discussions. Within the design of professional development training, knowledge for teachers on the phenomenon relevant to their lived classroom experiences is addressed through real-time data, questioning, and conversation to enhance teachers' capacity. McKenzle stated that professional development is necessary for the continued professional growth of teachers and a consistent shared message connecting with the entire teaching staff.

Understanding the Benefit of Collegiate Conversation Within Professional Development

Discussions and active participation are needed to disrupt the routinization the routinization of understanding or misunderstanding so that teachers can fully understand the factors creating barriers in the classroom as they relate to behavior. Teachers' perspectives must be understood, shared, and heard (Feldman, 2020). Understanding teachers' concerns does not occur through changes in school policies, and policies tend to be relative to the situation and limit teachers' learning, making it irrelevant to the teachers' situation (McKenzie, 2019). Professional development is crucial in providing full participation in the learning process, where conversation among colleagues takes place, ideas are shared, and positive social change can occur by utilizing strategies being taught.

Understanding Unconscious Bias as a Proactive Behavior Strategy

According to Ryman (2022), unconscious bias develops through physical, emotional, cultural, and consistent cognitive influence. When teachers are unaware of their unconscious bias, microaggression can occur unintentionally (see Appendix G). According to Busch et al. (2019), unconscious bias impacts teacher view of student achievement, behavior, and background. Lee (2018) identified that one should not be racist to engage in what some considered a racist system. The system Lee and Ramsey-Jordan (2020) identified is that the historically dominant groups' social policies, beliefs, and values are made normal, defined, and enforced, creating the system the school

follows. According to Howard (2020), how a teacher delivers their instruction is based on their beliefs, which can be a mismatch for students of different cultures, making the issue of unconscious bias and culture a topic of necessity for professional training. Professional training should enhance the “race-visible” classrooms according to Oberlechner (2019). Creating a race-visible classroom means understanding why the “color-blind” ideology, according to Song et al. (2021), is a way for teachers to avoid dealing with race in the classroom. The color-blind ideology invalidates cultural identities and negates equity of instructional and learning opportunities for students, as findings by Scott et al. (2017) noted the need for teachers to become secure with cultural differences to create academic equitable learning and engagement opportunities.

According to McAllister and Irvine (2000), teachers need to develop a more profound knowledge into their learner’s culture because culture can play a part in how students engage in learning. As the findings of this study provided, some teachers have limited understanding of their students’ culture. Critical race theory provides a look from the standpoint that instruction and curriculum are delivered from the dominant cultures’ perspective, as stated by Bell and Busey (2021). If teachers are not attending to the deconstruction of their lessons and instructional methods, meaningful learning experiences for the diverse learner and off task behavior are possible. As teachers become aware of how the learning is relevant to students, teachers can reflect on their assumptions and begin to identify unconscious bias. These are all essential aspects that play a part in how the teachers set the tone in the classroom, which relate to the teachers’

ethical beliefs affecting expectations about what is considered acceptable student behavior (Ozyildirim & Gumus, 2019).

Using an andragogical approach, the professional development will create a platform for teachers to discuss culture and discover various beliefs and biases that may be held by teachers. Tezcan (2021) identified dialogue places the learner into the learning process rather than being a passive recipient of knowledge. The professional training will allow an analysis of personal understanding and group understanding of the phenomenon (Feldman, 2020), and within a safe environment, it can address unconscious bias, microaggression, and cultural invalidation. Identifying and addressing these biases encourages building relationships and a community of trust. Teachers build trust when engaged in professional conversation within professional development (Nguyen, 2018; Santos & Miguel, 2019), that builds classroom management skills and instructional pedagogy relating to more equitable engagement opportunities for culturally diverse students and decreased opportunity for behaviors.

Cultural Sensitivity as a Proactive Behavior Strategy

Cultural sensitivity is a critical function of teachers building relationships with their students (Yenphech & Intanoo, 2022). Cultural sensitivity is the willingness to notice cultural differences and adjust one's teaching to make a more engaging experience for the learner. Buchanan and Song (2022) said culturally inclusive pedagogy supports equity. However, Barrios and Kohler (2020) identified that for cultural sensitivity to lead to equitable pedagogy, teachers must first come to terms with their cultural identity, and

how their culture defines their values, beliefs and can lead to cultural bias. Culturally relevant teaching (see Appendix H) identifies teachers using one lens to teach and deliver instruction, and that is through the lens of the White dominant cultural perspective (Ramsey-Jordan, 2020). Lee (2018) identified that teachers need professional training to learn from other teachers and build capacity in culturally relevant teaching, as Webber (2021) stated, to make the idea of culture less abstract and foster teachers' understanding of applicable strategies. Hernandez (2022) noted professional learning and teacher modeling of CRT assists teachers in bridging the academic gap so students can make connections in the classroom to their real-life. Student connections in learning increases focus and engagement, while decreasing opportunities for behaviors to exist, decreasing the disproportionate referrals by race.

Classroom Management Strategies as Proactive Behavior Interventions

Managing a classroom can be stressful and exhausting. Many teachers leave the profession within the first five years due to student behavioral problems and low student engagement (Elyashiy, 2019). Classroom management skills are a critical portion of the professional training because of the impact management skills have on learning and teaching and the development of students' emotional and social well-being. Cruz et al. (2021) noted that embedding CRT in the discipline policy of school systems diminishes inequity in the discipline process. Confrontation can occur when expectations conflict with cultural differences and societal expectations. Acknowledging cultural differences rather than using discipline to create conformity can lead to greater conflict in the

classroom. Learning how culture impacts behavior through training provides a platform for change, which begins with dialogue. Demir and Sad (2021) identified teacher communication that exhibits caring, willingness to listen, and even non-verbal communication, such as a smile or a nod of approval, can provide a strong positive message to students.

Teachers with a straightforward class routine, limited downtime, and efficient classroom management have little time for disruptive behavior. According to Ergin (2019), classroom management is not just about management behavior, but preventing behavior by managing momentum and a steady learning flow. Junker et al. (2021) stated that maintaining the learning flow and encouraging active participation of students is proactive behavior management. Creating opportunities to involve students in their learning, holding students accountable for the choices they make, giving them opportunities to make amends is all a part of creating positive social change by allowing students to have a voice and address those impacted by their choices and have a say in their consequence choices.

Building Relationships as a Proactive Behavior Strategy

Effective communication gives students the perception of caring (Demir & Sad, 2021). A caring demeanor builds a perception that can allow for relationship building between teacher and student. Poulou (2018) identified that teachers skilled in social and emotional learning were perceived more positively by students and had better relationships and fewer behaviors with students than teachers who were less skilled in

those areas. Maragha (2021) stated that effective communication not only assisted in building positive student and teacher relationships but created intrinsic motivation for the student. Poulou stated that it is essential to train teachers to develop relationship building skills. Building relationships was part of the study's findings and addressed in the professional developments because relationships are critical in reducing classroom behaviors. Duong et al. (2019) identified that teachers who received training in relationship-building skills had improved classroom behaviors, more student time on task, and students were motivated. Professional training is needed for teachers to learn proactive skills that are critical in creating a classroom climate conducive to building safety and trust rather than reactive punitive actions that take away from learning and inhibit relationship building.

Restorative Justice as a Form of Behavior Intervention

Reducing the opportunity for behavior to occur is the best way to create a calm learning environment. Morgan (2021) identified restorative justice (see Appendix I) as a proactive approach that removes the punitive aspect of discipline. Restorative justice is an initiative to address some of the findings during the professional development as a non-punitive classroom management strategy. Restorative justice replaces suspensions with accountability and making amends to those hurt by inappropriate behavior. Mayor and Suarez (2019) and McKenzie (2019) stated that restorative justice practices communication and encourages awareness of one's actions. Students are allowed to have a say in what consequences they should receive, according to Miller and Harris (2018),

supported accountability and acknowledgment of their behavior. When students verbalize their actions, it increases the student's social and emotional skills (Miller & Harris) due to realizing their actions, the impact their action has on others, holding themselves accountable, and establishing a consequence that fits their action.

Professional Growth Through Professional Training

An opportunity for teachers to enhance skills needed to create relationships and better understand students is obtainable within professional development training designated explicitly to those needs. The needs identified within the research findings at School X guided the creation of the professional development to heighten the skills needed for all teachers at that research site through communication, group activities, a skilled presenter, and media presentations of what successful implementation looks to address. The professional development also allowed teachers to understand behavior in greater depth. All behavior is a form of communication. Through the training, teachers can better understand what the student is trying to communicate. According to Rappaport and Minahan (2021), if the student gets the reaction from the teacher they hoped for through inappropriate behavior, the inappropriate behavior may become reinforced. Understanding what students are trying to communicate is why relationships are critical (Sousa Machado et al., 2018; Moreno & Scaletta, 2018), and teachers' capacity to understand why the behavior is occurring is crucial.

According to Alvare (2018), teachers must thoroughly examine the socio-cultural factors that shape their perceptions, reactions and how teachers internalize their

experience with race. Ramsey-Jordan (2020) stated that by identifying unconscious bias that directs instructional delivery and relationship building, a more sophisticated understanding can be created to provide equity in all areas of education. According to Sutherland et al. (2020), about 80% of teachers lack sufficient skills to develop and maintain a classroom climate of learning, respect, and community, making it necessary for professional development to provide relevant training to enhance all teachers' professional growth.

Project Description

The project will allow teachers to understand behavior better and gain the skills to discipline equitably. Equitable discipline skills will be explored within professional training (see Appendix A). The professional development will address the needs found within the data from the teachers' interviews at School X. The training will build teachers' foundational knowledge in restorative discipline strategies, social-emotional learning, and classroom management skills to decrease opportunities for classroom behaviors and suspension rates by race. This study also concluded that professional development addresses strategies to identify unconscious bias, microaggression, privilege, cultural sensitivity, and awareness as it relates to behavior.

Existing Support

There will be no cost of building space due to implementing the professional training during the teacher work week at the teachers' home school. Within the district, school leadership will provide on-going professional training throughout the year to

create schoolwide competency in the areas of need identified within the data (see Table 5).

Table 5

Supplies and Revenue Needed for Professional Development

Supplies	Number	Cost per unit	Total cost
Post-it notes	8	\$22.99	\$22.99
Ream Paper	1	\$7.99	\$7.99
Large easel Pads	8	\$195.49	\$195.49
Colored Markers	8	\$11.93	\$95.45
Chocolate Candy	24	\$3.79	\$90.96
Wint-o-green mints	5	\$4.29	\$21.45
Coffee Totes	25	\$19.99	\$499.75
Bagels/Pastries	12	\$34.29	\$411.48
Pizza	36	\$17.10	\$615.60
Taco platters	80	\$13.50	\$1,080.00
Soda 12pk	40	\$5.79	\$231.60
Total	n/a	\$337.15	\$3,272.74

Potential Barriers

The first barrier would only arise if professional development were to occur after the start of the new school year. The obstacle would be the ability to have coverage for teachers to attend the training. Due to the district's critical shortages of teachers, there is an even more critical need for substitutes in the county, and classroom coverage is seldom available. The second barrier would consist of any new hires within the county who have not received the training. The administrator would need to implement a procedure to provide the training for those teachers, whether as an online self-paced presentation of the material and provide a teacher to serve as a coach or provide coverage

so new hires can attend the 3-day training in person. The third barrier would be implementing restorative discipline that encompasses social-emotional learning, and all teachers with fidelity must carry out the positive behavioral intervention. New hires would be unable to provide the needed instructional component without the training, impeding fidelity. Therefore, the administration would need to implement a coach or mentoring teacher to guide new hires in these areas immediately due to a lack of consistency throughout the building, which will impact the effects, limit positive outcomes, and impact sustainability. The final barrier would be the lack of accountability from administrators to teachers, ensuring that all teachers follow restorative and positive discipline practices with fidelity.

Proposal for Implementation and Timeline

The proposed timeline to avoid teachers' coverage would be the teacher work week. The first-week teachers are back for the start of the new school year and would ensure that all teachers are in attendance. The timeline is three full-day training sessions. After the initial training, the implementation of portions of the professional development could be broken into days as needed for refreshers throughout the year. If the district decides to implement a specific strategy of restorative discipline, there are resources to purchase for teachers, so there are consistent expectations.

Roles and Responsibilities

My role as a researcher takes on the position of facilitator of all professional development activities and professional supporter based on the learning needs identified

within the findings of the data obtained from School X. The data obtained from the interviews and presenting the findings to all teachers in a comprehensible interactive andragogical format to enhance comprehensible knowledge and professional growth falls as my responsibility as researcher and facilitator. Teaching teachers how to obtain responsibility for maintaining fidelity of self-reflection on personal bias, creating time for social-emotional instruction, and upholding the protocol for restorative justice in discipline falls upon the professional development facilitator. It is the responsibility of the researcher's responsibility to ensure that students' cultural identities are understood, and to identify social and emotional impact to ensure a community of belonging is being created.

Project Evaluation Plan

Professional development is an essential aspect of teachers' professional growth. According to Denny and Ellard (2022), evaluations can be a critical tool to assess the effectiveness of the training. The survey (Appendix C) used was a summative questionnaire using a 4-point Likert scale (1: strongly agree, 2: agree, 3: disagree, (4: strongly disagree) based on the following essential questions, (1) the training improve my self-efficacy, knowledge, and development in the critical reflection of unconscious bias, personal values, and privilege, (2) the training improved my self-efficacy and knowledge of the importance of cultural awareness, (3) the training improved my self-efficacy, knowledge, and development in social-emotional learning, (4) the training provided knowledge in proactive discipline, (5) the training provided knowledge and reflective

practices on the impact of exclusionary discipline practices, and (6) the training fostered knowledge sharing. These questions, and space provided for participants to share additional information and assess the outcomes' alignment with the professional development goals. An evaluation by questionnaire is appropriate for professional development because the training is relative to the teachers' learning and the change in teachers' mindset created through the training.

Implications of the Project

The project implications have multiple long-lasting positive impacts. The first would be the positive impact on the school climate. A positive school climate enhances teachers' work satisfaction, which impacts students emotionally and positively affects students' academic potential and creates a calm and safe environment conducive to learning (Oliver et al., 2019). The second implication provided by the project is that when teacher satisfaction is high and student learning is high, it will allow students to grow socially and emotionally. Social-emotional learning links to restorative justice, which contributes to students learning to become accountable for their choices, make amends, and become productive global citizens. Allowing students to learn from mistakes, students learn to become good citizens (Mercanoglu, 2021) and carry those traits into the community. The marginalized group of students most impacted by exclusionary discipline practices will gain more equality in their learning, a greater sense of belonging by teachers, increased cultural awareness provided through professional development, and the factor culture plays on learning and behavior. Within School X, positive social

change will occur through a stronger, more intentional focus on students' social-emotional learning, increasing students' sense of belonging and safety, and providing a nurturing environment to provide a greater intellectual capacity for students to prepare all students to be productive socially and emotionally balanced global citizens.

Conclusion

This section contained information about my project, a professional development session, as well as a literature review supporting this project type based on data obtained from School X. Knowledge and practical experiences garnered from the project relating to real life will lead to social change. Social change will benefit students and teachers by providing proactive management and teaching strategies to improve the learning environment and decrease the opportunity gap due to a decrease in disproportionate office referrals.

Section 4: Reflection and Conclusions

In this chapter, I reflect on the project's significance and importance in terms of the potential to create positive social change within School X. I assess the project's strengths and limitations and analyze implications for subsequent work and how this project can be used to create ongoing minicourses to assist teachers throughout the school year as their energy begins to wane.

Project Strengths and Limitations

A strength of the project was that research-based training was specifically designed to meet the needs of teachers within School X to directly by providing strategies to address the problem within this school. The relevancy of this project based on data of teachers' perception of challenging behaviors, obtained from teacher interviews at this research site made learning potential and buy-in greater. Elementary teachers' professional growth in terms of addressing unconscious bias and microaggression were enhanced through dialogue. Cultural relevance was addressed, creating greater capacity for elementary teachers in terms of understanding cultural variables that impact learning, behavior, and building relationships. Using restorative justice was a strength for teachers involved by building awareness of students' positive actions instead of focusing on inappropriate actions. Restorative justice impacted the climate of School X positively by acknowledging positive behavior and allowing negative behavior to be a learning experience. Restorative justice emphasized teachers' position as role models for students in terms of communication, social and emotional behavior, and accountability for

personal actions.

As elementary teachers engaged in the professional training, it allowed them to see colleagues' perceptions and how differing perspectives can impede personal growth, but when an open mindset is achieved, it allows connections with students to be built. Using the project to guide elementary teachers' understanding of what schoolwide positive behavioral intervention strategies were and create consistency of behavioral expectations for students from kindergarten to 5th grade allowed a sense of common expectations among classrooms and teachers from School X. Consistency of positive intervention strategies would solidify expectations throughout School X if every teacher supported, upheld, and followed policies associated with positive interventions with fidelity in order to decrease disproportionate referral rates by race.

Each student is different, and teachers may need to adjust their restorative justice practices to meet varying needs of students. If a student commits an inappropriate action, making amends to those impacted by those actions may not be enough, and in fact, that student may need social and emotional training apart from what the teacher can provide in their classroom. Time commitment for restorative justice may also be impacted by state mandated teaching time requirements per subject. Critical reflection of teachers involving biases cannot be enforced but needs to happen for them to learn and adapt their reactive stances towards behaviors, increase direct instruction opportunities for students, and apply culturally relevant pedagogy to engage students and decrease opportunities for them to misbehave.

Recommendation for Alternative Approaches

My goal in this project was to enhance elementary teachers' knowledge of factors impacting student behaviors by race. An alternative approach would be to conduct a book study. These practices would keep them engaged in the process of building teacher capacity in cultural knowledge and management skills. Within the book study, there would be collective conversations allowing teachers of varying years of teaching experience to critically reflect and see situations outside of their own frame of reference. Without shared experiences and open dialogue with colleagues relating to culture and classroom management, personal perceptions and bias remain clouded by personal experience.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

While at Walden, I identified various writing styles, their purpose, and how to accommodate my writing to meet my audience. The academic writing style purpose is to inform, and through my research of peer-reviewed scholarly articles, it has contributed to the attainment of knowledge and updated expertise in my area of study. I have learned how to embed scholarly articles into my writing, understand data, examine strengths of a study, and look thoroughly at limitations of the study as well as gaps in literature. Throughout my experience at Walden and during my exhaustive examination of peer-reviewed scholarly articles, my ability to eliminate bias and use selective and more precise word choices to express scholarly thoughts has improved. I can critically analyze and question scholarly articles in terms of its relatability to my project. I have been

humbled in terms of my ability to write and gained appreciation for scholarly works and professors at Walden who have enhanced my capacity as a Walden student to refine my writing skills through critical feedback and guidance, leading to constant improvement.

The project has fulfilled my vision for change within School X. For 23 years, I had been an elementary teacher, witnessing firsthand inequities taking place within the discipline. This project allows me to share a vision of hope through changing teachers' mindsets, classroom climates through restorative justice, and school climates via positive behavioral intervention strategies. The project has the potential to enhance grade 3-5 teachers' professional growth and communication skills through dialoguing and communicating openly with colleagues with varying years of teaching experience. These changes will impact non-White students in terms of decreasing opportunity gaps, addressing social emotional learning time with peers, and decreasing inequities involving office referral rates by race. This project could be used throughout the county to support other schools who need understanding of possible factors that may be causing negative behaviors of non-White students as demographics continue to change within this district.

This project has allowed me to be a vehicle of positive social change by focusing on teachers, schools, and most importantly, students. Being a committed agent of change, I feel compelled to be a proactive participant in the school to assist in the navigation of restorative practices and positive behavioral strategies that involve cultural understanding. These values can promote students' sense of self as they thrive academically and enter the world as successful global citizens.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

I believe the professional development session I created could be a powerful teaching tool that can enhance grade 3-5 teachers' competency in terms of self-reflection and unconscious bias based on prior experiences and the ability to understand how unknowingly these biases impact their behavioral expectations as they relate to non-White students. I identified the importance of having an open mindset in terms of its impact on teachers' willingness to change. Data collection for this project expanded my ability to use reflexivity to step outside of my assumptions involving behavior referrals for non-White students and using a scholarly mindset to analyze data without prejudice and bias and identify factors as perceived by teachers related to the phenomenon.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Further Research

The implications of this project study in creating positive social change occur on both the micro and macro level. The micro level is the positive social change occurring within the classroom made by teachers deliberate delivery of restorative justice and culturally relevant pedagogy to create greater student engagement in the learning process and inhibit inappropriate behavior. Using restorative justice, understanding the students' culture, and positive behavioral intervention strategies, the teacher looks at the whole child and ways to create a positive nurturing relationship that inhibits inappropriate behaviors. The macro level social change occurs within the school climate as implementing the positive behavioral intervention strategies is used schoolwide to reward rather than punish students. Therefore, decreasing the marginalized student office referral

rate. Students are being looked after by all teachers and rewarded by all teachers who see them doing positive behaviors making the school a positive place to be.

The direction for further research on this topic could be a mixed method approach. A mixed method approach would garner a more complete picture of the research site. The qualitative portion of the study could survey teachers to get a more accurate baseline on teachers' understanding of unconscious bias, culturally relevant teaching, and restorative justice. The quantitative portion of the study could correlate positive behavioral intervention methods to students' positive behavior and the impact on disproportionate referral rates by race. The identified needs could guide the professional development training. Teachers could choose which one applied directly to their needs to make a greater positive change in their classroom and educational attainment of their students.

Conclusion

This study intended to address the disproportionate referral rate by race of an already marginalized group. By identifying factors leading to this phenomenon, strategies were taught to teachers to offer support in positively relating to students and allowing students to learn and grow socially and emotionally in a caring environment. Using restorative justice practices and positive behavioral intervention strategies to decrease the need for discipline referrals can happen, allowing students to grow academically and learn socially acceptable behaviors. By providing examples and through mistakes, self-monitor and take accountability for their actions and understand their impact on those

around them. When a culture of positive change happens, it creates a movement in the right direction impacting those who will be the leaders of tomorrow.

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Appendix A: Capstone Project

CULTURE AND EQUITY IN DISCIPLINE

Understanding behavior through
cultural competence

Purpose

The professional development on cultural awareness, biases, restorative justice in discipline, and parent/teacher and student/teacher relationships were identified as an area of need to increase teachers' understanding of how race and cultural norms can influence a student's action and reaction to norms that are different their own cultural reference. This workshop will last for three days and will be designed to increase teachers' knowledge of cultural differences, how to reflect/identify any unconscious biases, classroom management strategies and how to build relationships with parents and students.

DAY 1

INTRODUCTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- **Expectations of Instructor**
 - Attending workshop on time
 - Maintain an open mind
- **Overview of Workshop**
 - Presentation of the goals and purpose
 - Introduction of resources

GOALS

After a three-part professional training, teachers will be able to:

1. improve their understanding of what **cultural diversity** means.
2. understand that colorblind, or raceneutral ideology creates inequity.
3. develop competency in classroom management.
4. Incorporate Restorative Justice practices of discipline strategies.
5. be able to self reflect on personal biases and unconscious biases.
6. Understand the critical value of positive student and parent relationships are in behavioral prevention.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. self-reflect and identify personal biases or beliefs that may influence their reaction toward student behavior.
2. reflect on classroom behavior objectively and question if the action of the student is culturally based prior to reacting.
3. become competent in restorative justice discipline and social emotional learning.
4. develop competence in social -emotional learning.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The audience are teachers who actively engage with students at

School X. The teachers range in level of educational attainment. 61% of

teachers hold a master's degree, 38% hold a bachelors of arts degree.

No teacher currently holds their doctorate degree.

This audience of teachers range in teaching experience from first year

teachers to 20 or more years of teaching experience.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- To create a professional development workshop to address teachers' understanding of the correlation between race/ethnic norms and student behavior.
- To assist teachers with social-emotional learning opportunities to build a culture of community and trust.
- To embolden teachers to identify and have dialogue about unconscious biases.
- To enhance teachers' ability to selfreflect and identify unconscious biases.
- To develop teachers' capabilities with restorative justice discipline strategies
- Assist in building student/teacher and parent/teacher relationships.

DAY 1

INTRODUCTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- **Expectations of Instructor**
 - Attending workshop on time
 - Maintain an open mind
- **Overview of Workshop**
 - Presentation of the goals and purpose
 - Introduction of resources

GOALS AND PURPOSE FOR DAY 1

Purpose is for teachers to understand the value of cultural differences and how to use these differences to understand conflicting norms.

How to recognize personal biases when reacting to student behavior

Goal is for teachers to be able to critically reflect on unconscious and personal bias as it relates to their discipline approach

Understand students' cultural identity needs to be valued so students gain a sense of belonging.

How are School and Classroom Rules Established?

United States Educational Systems are designed to reflect White cultural norms (La Forett & Dr Marco, 2019). This reflects Derrick Bell's critical race theory, which was established in the mid 1970s to provide a theoretical explanation to help us understand the socio-cultural forces that shape how we perceive, experience, and respond to racism. We use this theory to help explain the disproportionate referral rate of non-White students.

As the student population continues to diversify, we are all responsible for institutional change (Miller & Harris, 2018).

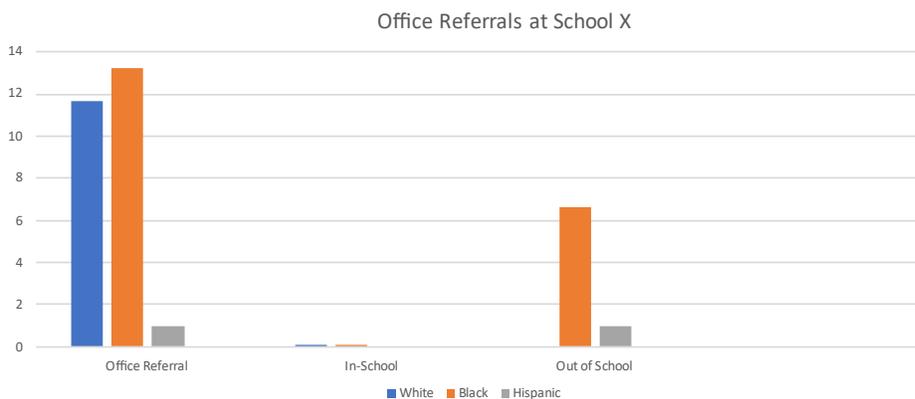
WHY IS EQUITY IN DISCIPLINE NECESSARY?

According to Kostyo et al. (2018), the disproportionate/unequal overuse of exclusionary discipline for non-White students contribute significantly to dropout rates and perpetuates the cycle of the “school-to-prison-pipeline.”

Gopalan (2019) identified that there is a significant positive relationship between the discipline gap and the achievement gap. According to Pyne (2019), students can feel devalued, and become stigmatized by exclusionary discipline, affecting their social and psychological stability.

The Center for Civil Rights, as stated in Anderson and Ritter(2017) identified that non-White students loose between 47-100 more days of instruction due to discipline than their White peers.

UNDERSTANDING THE DISCIPLINE GAP



POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTORS TO THE DISCIPLINE GAP

- Classroom rules are based on the norms and principles of the person in power (Gregory & Fergus, 2017).
- The gate keepers of the classroom climate may lack cultural knowledge outside one's own culture (Wilson et al., 2020), leading to misinterpretation of student actions.
- Lack of relationships between students and teachers of different cultures (Cole & Warren, 2018).

Decreasing the Disproportionate Discipline Gap

Understanding Bell's critical race theory, teachers can become more cognizant of their perception, reaction, and nonverbal cues when dealing with students outside of their own cultural identity.

Color-Visible creates equity... Color -blind creates invalidation

POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTORS TO THE DISCIPLINE GAP

- Classroom rules are based on the norms and principles of the person in power (Gregory & Fergus, 2017).
- The gate keepers of the classroom climate may lack cultural knowledge outside one's own culture (Wilson et al., 2020), leading to misinterpretation of student actions.
- Lack of relationships between students and teachers of different cultures (Cole & Warren, 2018).

WORKSHOP IMPLEMENTATION

- The teachers at School X that deal with students will be engaged in a three-day intensive workshop
- Day one will target diversity and cultural norms to enhance cultural awareness, and the reflection of personal biases and unconscious biases, microaggression and colorblind attitudes.
Day two will target restorative justice practices, and proactive classroom management strategies.
Day three will target building relationships with parents and students.

RACE NEUTRAL IDEOLOGY: IS THERE SUCH A THING?

Race neutral, color blind, cultural blindness cannot be maintained because:

- 1) It devalues one's cultural identify**
- 2) A student's cultural origin and background are significant factors that impact how learning takes place (Oberlechner, 2019)**

ACTIVITY 1

The teachers will be actively engaged in an activity called:

"Race and Privilege: A Social Experiment/Regardless of Race."

<https://youtu.be/F2hvibGdg4w>

After watching and participating in this activity, teachers will have a group discussion with table partners on "how they felt and what was realized by doing this activity."

(see appendix F)

How Do Stereotypes Impact Others?

A marginalized group is negatively impacted by stereotypes just by having knowledge of the stereotypes existing. Teachers can support students through conversation and integration of culture in instruction.

Stereotypes create psychological discomfort for people who feel they are being viewed through a negative stereotypical lens.

A person becomes concerned or stressed about being judged or treated negatively based on the stereotype they are generalized with. This can impact comprehensible input during instruction.

Stereotypes of certain cultures in education, tend to have students placed more frequently in lower performing groups, and these students begin to believe they are not as high achieving as their White counter parts according to Platt & Hoosier (2020).

HOW DO STEREOTYPES SUSTAIN

- Stereotypes are generalizations built by past experiences.
- Stereotypes maintain a false or inaccurate belief that can be ethically negative.
- Stereotypes can be considered FALSITY HYPOTHESIS.
- Stereotypes are widespread, inaccurate, controlling images or ideas about a group or culture used as a regulative social function.
- Stereotypes are maintained by a person who is choosing to maintain a prejudice stance rather than critically evaluating personal biases. Beeghly (2021).

Stereotypes and microaggression

What is it?

Have you ever done it?

Was it meant to be a judgement?

Did you know you did it?

How do you know, if we don't talk about it?

Teachers have the power to change perceptions through educational knowledge of cultural differences and similarities.

ACTIVITY 2

- Self-reflect for 5 minutes on anything you have found yourself stereotyping about your students.
- Do you feel stereotyping contributes to the way you interpret students' actions?
- Have you ever used the phrase, "It is a Cultural Thing."
- Try to identify why you feel that way?
- Take 3 minutes and go to your table's assigned note page and write one stereotypical thought that influences your reaction to a student's action.
- After time is called, all teachers will do a carousel walk and look at the content on all the note pages.
- Whole group reflection.

A 20 MINUTE MORNING BREAK STARTS NOW!

STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME STEREOTYPES

Building relationships with students can help overcome biases created through stereotypes and past experiences (Anyon et al., 2018).

Enrolling communitybased parents of color to act as cultural brokers to help White Teachers better understand students of color (Wilson et al., 2020).

Understand the students' cultural and social background helps to build a trusting relationships (Smolcic & Arends, 2017).

MICROAGGRESSION

Microaggressions are subtle insults that are usually not intended, and the perpetrator is not even aware they have committed a microaggressive comment.

There are 3 types of Microaggressions according to Thomas et al. (2018).

- Microinsults: demeans a person based on their race, even if it was meant to be a compliment. (You are very articulate for a Black person).
- Microassault: explicit racial derogation, verbal or nonverbal meant to hurt.
- Microinvalidation: negating or nullifying a person's race. (I don't see color in my classroom).

MICROINVALIDATION/MICROINSULT

<https://youtu.be/bjzWENcW6NQ>

(see Appendix G)

Time for Lunch 12:30-1:30

SELF-REFLECTION AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS USING CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Help teachers acquire a reflective process by a balanced understanding of critical race theory and using it to:

- Obtain a critical analysis of one's own culture and how it positions them in society.
- Consciously identify how human differences can be used by people of people to maintain and rationalize inequity in society.
- Identify and understand the complexity of culture and use of the fluid and dynamic nature of how culture is interwoven in all aspects of students (Smolcic & Arends, 2017)

WHY ARE CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND CRITICAL SELF REFLECTION OF BIASES IMPORTANT?

According to Macqueen et al (2020), cultural understanding is a necessity due to the rise in the cultural diversity of the student population. This change among the student demographic, had created a large disproportionality between teachers and the students they teach. Therefore, teachers need to be culturally competence to make all students competitive for our global economy/environment.

According to Gullo and Beachum (2020) the lack of identifying bias prevents social justice in education that needs to be addressed on both the macro and micro levels. Justice in the curriculum, equity and empowerment would all be lost.

CRITICAL REFLECTION IS NECESSARY

According to Moule (2012), Implicit bias is a mental process that is so well learned (habit of mind) that it operates without awareness. However, to acknowledge bias through critical reflection, will open the door for learning and allows people to consciously work in harmony.

RECAP THE BIG IDEAS FOR DAY ONE

IDENTIFY AREAS IN NEED OF CHANGE

Identify stereotypes that drive your opinion or reaction to a situation.

Learn to critically reflect and identify personal biases and use reflexive communication.

Build relationships to enhance cultural competence and avoid misinterpretation of events or actions.

FINAL ACTIVITY FOR DAY ONE

Think for 5 minutes, on anything you have encountered that maybe considered microaggression or a microinsult.

Next, write one of your experiences on the note paper and post it on the poster paper around the room.

Finally, do a carousal walk.

If you have any comments or question, post them on the parking lot.

Elements of Restorative Justice in Discipline

DAY TWO

DAY 2

INTRODUCTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- **Expectations of Instructor**
 - Attending workshop on time
 - Maintain an open mind
- **Overview of Day 2**
 - Presentation of the goals and purpose of workshop
 - Introduction of resources

GOALS AND PURPOSE For DAY 2

Purpose of today is for teachers to develop a strong understanding of what Restorative Justice in Discipline is, and how to attain it for their classroom.

The value of using proactive strategies to assist in extinguishing negative or inappropriate classroom behaviors.

Goal for today is for teachers to understand how to integrate Restorative Justice opportunities in their daily classroom routines.

To use PBIS starting on the first day of school to support students' understanding of school expectations.

STRATEGIES TO CREATE EQUITABLE CHANGE IN DISCIPLINE

Creating a Positive Classroom Climate Conducive to Learning

Understanding your classroom culture is necessary to establish an atmosphere of respect, safety and equity for learning.

- Getting to know the WHOLE student shows caring and trust
- Students want you to know something from their culture
- Allow your students to tell you what offends them
- Allow students to ask questions and allow students to respond

How do You Establish Classroom Rules?

How can classroom management prevent behaviors? What is the difference between proactive and reactive management? Have a table conversation on how you establish classroom rules and whether you think they are proactive or reactive measures that help build your classroom community.

Is Exclusionary Discipline Needed?

What would the Benefits be?

Have a table discussion on the following three questions.

Is the removal of the student based on subjective or objective reasoning?

Does the removal discontinue the behavior?

Does the student learn from their removal?

Research identified that exclusionary discipline does not distinguish the negative behavior, but may make it worse (Morgan, 2021).

Time for your first Break of the
Day
See you in 20 min.

Negative Impact of Exclusionary Discipline...
Is there any?

Exclusionary Discipline's Impact According to Research

Teacher's cultural bias may increase.

Increases the opportunity gap by missed direct instruction.

Decreases academic achievement opportunities.

Increases chances of dropping out of school later.

Missed social emotional learning opportunity with peers.

Increases the school to prison pipeline.

(Gopalan, 2019; LaForett et al., 2019; Nese et al., 2021; Wilson et al., 2020)

Negative Impact of Exclusionary Discipline

- Marginalized groups are suspended at a greater rate than their White peers (McIntosh et al., 2018).
- Exclusionary discipline is emotionally exhausting creating teacher burnout and indicating they are less able to manage their student's behavior (Bottiani & Bradshaw, 2019; Nese et al., 2020).
- May create more aggressive behavior as a coping strategy because of missed work creating learning gaps (Jacobsen et al., 2019).
- Creates a greater rate of absenteeism and risk of dropping out of school later (Nishioka et al., 2021).

Negative Impacts of Exclusionary Discipline Continued

Student learning does not increase by having removed a student for minor behaviors (Kervick et al., 2020).

Student removal causes trauma, anxiety and negative student/teacher relationship (Sutherland et al., 2020).

Student may misbehave as a work avoidance strategy (Egin, 2019).

2ND Break of the Morning

See you in 20 min.

WHY ARE THE BEHAVIORS OCCURRING: All behavior is communication.

Reasons:

1. Cultural mismatch between student and teacher.
2. Different expectations based on school and teacher.
3. Family influence on behavior.
4. Lack of parental support.
- 5 Lack of student and teacher relationship.

• Choices:

1. Engage students in the rule making process.
2. Teach students “HOW” to behave on the 1st day of school.
3. Build relationships with students.
4. Understand student culture.

Lunch Time 12:30-1:30

Making Connections: Teacher and Student rapport

- **Student & Teacher Connections**

It is important to foster a rapport with your students. According to Lybby (2019), the rapport built between teacher and student creates a classroom climate conducive to learning and produces outcomes that are more equitable.

Equity is achieved through the respect given to the diverse talent and ways of learning because, "learning was not meant to be a passive endeavor" (p.18).

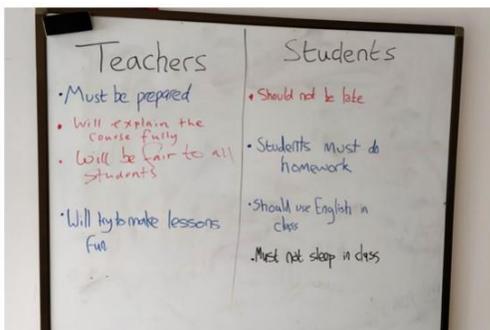
Create a Classroom Contract

According to Newbould (2018),

creating a **Classroom Contract** on the first day of school is a good way to establish expectations with accountability by involving the students in rule making:

- Set the rules and expected behaviors
- Gives students a sense of autonomy and agency in their learning
- Helps with student engagement
- The contract is a set of ideal classroom practices for both **themselves** and the **teacher**.

Teacher and Student Contract Example



What is Restorative Justice Discipline?

What do we know?

<https://youtu.be/5r1yvyP141U>

What do we want to know?

(see Appendix H)

Outcome:

Identify the difference between this approach compared to exclusionary discipline and the positive social change it can make.

Restorative Justice is about Knowing, learning and growing.

Building relationships is necessary in the classroom.

Acknowledging cultural differences.

Creates ownership of the problem.

Allows student to make amends.

Creates social and emotional growth.

Teaches self-awareness and mindfulness to students.

Allows students to see the impact of their behavior on others.

Creates opportunity for conversation and growth of empathy.

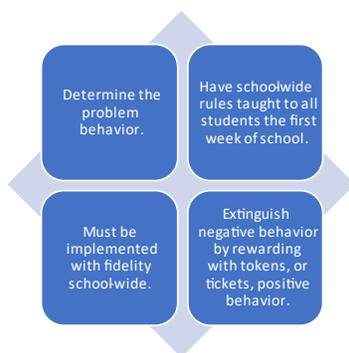
(Kervick et al., 2020; Seema & Sare, 2019; Billy & MedinaGarriguez, 2021).

STRATEGIES OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Greeting students at the door in the morning.	Builds emotional affirmation.
Classroom meetings/morning meetings.	Builds a classroom community.
Daily feeling check-ins.	Builds a feeling of trust.
Teaching conflict resolution strategies.	(Billy & Medina Garriguez, 2021; Lumadi, 2019).
Using talking sticks or spoons to ensure all students have a voice.	
Acknowledging the student, their culture, acknowledging the WHOLE student.	

POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION STRATEGIES (PBIS)

Benefits



Tickets or tokens must not be used as bribes.

Any stakeholder in the building can reward any student for observing positive behavior.

Cost-effective.

Decreases exclusionary discipline needs.

(Uslu & Baglama, 2020; Corcoran, et al., 2021).

FINAL TASK OF DAY 2

Talk with your table mates and determine what 5 school -wide behaviors should be implemented as part of a school -wide positive behavioral intervention system

Post your tables choices on the posters placed around the room.

SEE YOU TOMORROW

DAY 3

INTRODUCTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- **Expectations of Instructor**
 - Attending workshop on time
 - Maintain an open mind
- **Overview of Workshop**
 - Presentation of the goals and purpose
 - Introduction of resources

Goals and Purpose for Day 3

Purpose is for teachers to understand how parent/teacher and student/teacher relationships build a community of trust.

Goal is that teachers utilize strategies to enhance relationship building to decrease inappropriate classroom behaviors.

WHO ARE THE STUDENTS YOU TEACH?

WHO ARE THEY?

WHERE ARE THEY FROM?

WHAT IS THEIR FAVORITE THING TO DO?

WHAT OFFENDS THEM?

LEARN HOW TO SAY THEIR NAME?

HAVE THEM TEACH YOU SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR CULTURE.

HAVE STUDENTS BRING ITEMS FROM THEIR COUNTRY TO SHARE WITH THE CLASS.

INVITE PARENTS TO READ TO THE CLASS IN THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGE.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

Activity 1

SHARE AT YOUR TABLE THE WAYS YOU GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS DURING THE FIRST COUPLE WEEKS OF SCHOOL. NEXT, GO TO YOUR DESIGNATED POSTER PAPER AND WRITE YOUR IDEAS DOWN. BE READY TO SHARE OUT.

<https://youtu.be/kxGWsHYITAw>

(TIMER)

WHY STUDENT/TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS ARE IMPORTANT

When students feel like they are a part of the classroom community, they tend to behave better and have higher academic achievement (van Vemde et al., 2021).

Students' sense of belonging is increased by the teacher's understanding of their culture, increasing trust (Smith et al., 2022).

BREAK TIME. SEE YOU IN 20 MIN.

USE WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS TO ENRICH THEIR LEARNING

Using students' background to enhance engagement in their learning creates engagement and less distractibility.

Use culturally relevant pedagogy to create greater learning opportunities.

Create a cultural night to engage families.

Have parents become cultural brokers for greater understanding.

Using culturally responsive pedagogy is using students' culture, perspectives and experiences to assist in creating more meaningful and rich learning opportunities (Edelen & Bush, 2020).

ACTIVITY 2

At your table, use the poster paper to create pictures showing what you know about CRT and be ready to share out.

<https://youtu.be/kxGWsHYITAw>

(timer)

WHAT IS CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING (CRT)?

- CRT engages the learning by making the learning relevant to real-life.
- CRT brings culture into learning, so students have something to connect to.
- CRT can assist in decreasing classroom behavior (Edelen and Bush (2020)).

WHY IS CRT IMPORTANT?

<https://youtu.be/LxhF7TZqDyA>

(see Appendix I)

<https://youtu.be/ztnwmVBMfd0>

(see Appendix J)

Comments or questions?

LUNCH TIME 12:30-1:30

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS AND THEIR PARENTS.

Student relationships are built:

- 1) Daily interactions.
- 2) Active listening and meeting their needs academically, socially and emotionally.
- 3) Getting to know who they are, what they are about.
- 4) Letting them know you care.

Parent relationships are built:

- 1) Through communication, outside of negative calls or letters home.
- 2) Invitations to participate in classroom events.
- 3) Offering opportunities for them to engage with the school.
- 4) Letting them know you care.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Students need to feel a part of their community.

Parents need to be communicated with on positives prior to hearing negatives.

Cultural is relevant and needs to be integrated into instruction to increase student engagement and decrease opportunities for inappropriate behaviors.

Social Justice, social emotional learning all come together to increase students' self-awareness, accountability, and opportunities for students to make amends.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE; MAKE A POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANG

WE ARE ALL CULPABLE;
THEREFORE, WE ARE ALL
RESPONSIBLE FOR INSTITUTING
CHANGE ~

Miller & Harris (2018).

THANK YOU...

Before leaving, please fill out the survey and place in the envelope by the door.



Appendix B: Professional Development Schedule

Timetable for the 3-day professional development

Day One	Time
Breakfast and social time min.	30
Introduction with Goals and Purpose Presentation on why equity in discipline is necessary School X referrals by race data analysis Possible reasons for discipline gap Whole group discussion	15
Race neutral ideology discussion	1 hour
Activity 1 (Social Experiment) Discussion min.	30
Stereotyping Discussion Media	
Activity 2 (Self-reflection & Carousel walk) min.	45
1 st morning break min.	15
Stereotypes Microaggression/Microinvalidation/Microinsults Media	
Thoughts or Questions	1 hour
Lunch	1 hour
Self-reflection and critical analysis	

Final activity on microaggression/insult	
Discussion	
Recap and final closing for day one 15 min.	1 hour
Total hours	6 hours 30 min.

Day Two	Time
Breakfast and social time min.	30
Introduction with Goals and Purpose min.	15
Presentation on Social Justice	
Media	
Media and discussion	
Activity One self-reflection	
Activity Two Table group conversation	
Whole group conversation shared reflection	1 hour
First morning break	20
min. Presentation on the negative impact of exclusionary discipline	1 hour
Second morning break min.	15
Activity three pair share possible reasons for behavior	
Presentation of statistical information of causal factors for behaviors 15 min	1 hour
Lunch	1 hour
Building connections through classroom contracts	
Presentation of restorative justice	
Positive Behavioral Intervention Strategies (PBIS)	

Final task for day two 15 min	1 hour
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Thoughts or Questions

Recap and final closing for day one min.	20
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Total hours	6 hours 30 min.
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Day Three	Time
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Breakfast and social time min.	30
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Introduction with Goals and Purpose min.	15
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Presentation on building relations and why they are important

Media

Activity One table work with drawing and ideas on how to get to know your students then share out in poster walk format

Whole group discussion

Brief recap	1 hour
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First break min.	20
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Discussion on how to integrate what you know about your students into the learning process

Presentation about Culturally Relevant Teaching

Discussion

Media

Activity 2 self-reflection through drawing on what is known about culturally relevant teaching post and do a Carousel walk.

Discussion	
Media	
Thoughts or Questions	1 hour
Lunch	1 hour
Why relationships with parents' matter media	
Discussion	
Final thoughts/questions/comments	
Closing 30 min.	1 hour
<hr/>	
Total hours	6 hours 30 min.
<hr/>	

Appendix C: Interview Questions

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions of behaviors that are in need of an office referral and are creating a disproportionate referral rate by race. The following questions will be used for each one-on-one semistructured interview, lasting about 1 hour.

Questions to Teachers:

1. What are the specific behaviors that prompt you to complete an office referral?
Relating to RQ: 1
2. What do you expect student classroom behavior to look like?
Relating to RQ: 1
3. How are your classroom rules established?
Relating to RQ 2
4. How are the classroom rules explained and clarified for non-English speaking students?
Relating to RQ 2
5. What type of behaviors do you expect all students should come to school already knowing what is acceptable?
Relating to RQ 1
6. What type of behaviors do you expect all students should come to school already knowing is unacceptable?
Relating to RQ 1
7. What type of benefit is noticed when the student creating the behavior is removed from class?
Relating to RQ 2
8. What are the negative impacts of having a student who creates behaviors removed from class?
Relating to RQ 2
9. What support from your administrators would benefit classroom behavioral intervention proactively rather than reactively?
Relating to RQ: 3
10. What do you describe as a benefit of understanding students' culture and how it relates to your actions and reaction in class?
Relating to RQ: 3
11. What does a relationship with the parents provide when dealing with a behavioral student?
Relating to RQ 3

Appendix D: Research Questions and Data Analysis Summary

RQ 1: What do teachers at this research site perceive as behaviors that challenge the teachers' authority in the classroom?

Interviewee 001 rude, talking back, not doing what they are told, physical violence, inappropriate things.

Interviewee 002 disrespect, cheating, touching, rude responses toward teacher/peers

Interviewee 003 fighting, stealing

Interviewee 005 inappropriate names calling

Interviewee 006 interrupting class instruction

Interviewee 007 physical contact, vulgar or aggression language

Interviewee 008 bullying, physical, teasing, harassing teacher or students

Interviewee 004 inappropriate names calling, physical, or interrupting the teaching

The findings to RQ 1 on what teachers perceive as behavior that challenges teachers' authority in the classroom revolve around disrespectful language, to include vulgar and inappropriate names towards peers and teacher. Another challenging behavior was bullying, anything physical and interpreting class instruction. The findings were put into categories and strategies to classroom management were addressed within the professional training.

Core Category relating to RQ 1

Classroom Behavior

THEME: CONSISTANT "DO AND DON'T" RULES THROUGHOUT CLASSROOMS AND INNAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS NEED TO HAVE CONSEQUENCES SO STUDENTS LEARN WHAT IS NOT ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOL

Category: Appropriate Behavior

Code: active listening

Code: raising hand

Code: engaged in lesson

Code: working cooperatively

Code: respect for self/peer/teacher

Code: good citizenship

Code: transition quickly & quietly

Category: Inappropriate Behavior

Code: Physical contact

Code: Disrespect of peers/teacher

Code: Rudeness when speaking

Code: Vulgar language

Code: Cheating

Code: Yelling out

Code: Out of seat w/o permission

Code: Bullying

Code: Teasing Special needs students

Code: Refusing to follow teacher directions

RQ 2: What do teachers do to establish understandable classroom rules for all students?

Interviewee 001 have rules translated and keep a copy on the student's desk.

Interviewee 007 sends home rules in students' native language, and has other students translate.

Interviewee 003 peer to peer communication, observing how the class is running, or having the students watch how their classmates are acting and signaling what is appropriate behavior.

Interviewee 005 rules could be translated to their language, role playing, or a student of their culture can explain.

Interviewee 006 having students translate rules would be helpful in non-English learners' understanding.

The findings to RQ 2 identified that teachers attempt to provide understandable classroom rules for all students and make extra effort to ensure non-English students understand the rules as well. The ideology of culture plays an important role in learning, behavior and providing equitable discipline. The findings were put into categories and the approach to cultural competence, sensitivity and building relationships to impede behavior and build relationships are addressed within the professional training.

Core Category relating to RQ 2

Parent relationship

THEME: OUTCOMES OF PARENTAL SUPPORT PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS

Category: Benefit

Code: problem solving team

Code: strengthens student relationship teacher

Code: decreases behavior

Category: non supportive

Code: provides excuses

Code: diminished respect for

Core Category relating to RQ 2

Creating a classroom community

THEME: CREATING CLASSROOM RULES WITH STUDENTS CREATES OWNERSHIP

Category: sense of ownership partnership

Code: meaningful rules teacher's rules

Code: voice matters validation

Code: accountability

Code: community accountability

Category: passive

Code: compliance of

Code: lack of personal

Core Category relating to RQ 2

Cultural influence and Behavior

THEME: CULTURAL NORMS AND THE INFLUENCES ON BEHAVIOR

Category: Beneficial knowledge Knowledge

Category: Lack of

Code: cultural norms & behavior
 Code: realizing a difference exists
 Code: parent communication model
 Code: reflect time culture

Code: power struggle
 Code: difference of respect
 Code: Lack of effective role
 Code: their culture vs our

RQ 3: What do teachers at this research site perceive as the support needed to assist with classroom behaviors proactively rather than reactively?

Interviewee 001 having a social and emotional learning program of some sort would be beneficial.

Interviewee 007 having administration being more visible throughout the school, and visiting classrooms more, talking about good character, reading stories to the class would be proactive.

Interviewee 003 I would like administration to support the teachers when the behavior is bad enough for them to be sent to the office, and just send them back to class after just talking to them. So, for me, I guess there is no proactive stance, just reactive.

Interviewee 005 a reward program is effective that comes from administration for good behavior, not for those students who are bad, but made good choices one day.

Interviewee 002 rewards good behavior to get good behavior, has students take accountability and fix what they did wrong, so students learn.

Interviewee 004 providing teaching with training on culture, and social justice skills.

Interviewee 008 there needs to be consequences that impact the child, so proactively, help teachers with strategies to deal with behavioral students.

The findings for RQ 3 show that teachers at this research site perceive the support needed to deal with classroom behavior that is proactive rather than reactive was by providing restorative practice training, social and emotional training and allow students to take accountability for their actions. The administration is also requested to be more present within the halls and classrooms and interact more with students positively rather than punitively. Teachers felt that having the student removed was harmful and had little result. However, when students were sent to the office, teachers wanted results, not having the student sent back to class to have the same behavior recurring. The findings were categorized and addressed within the professional training.

Core Category relating to RQ 3

Removal From Class

THEME: REMOVING A STUDENT WITH BEHAVIOR IS NOT ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM.

Category: Benefits

Code: Decreased anxiety

Code: Increased focus

Code: Calm learning environment

Category: Negative Impact

Code: Trauma

Code: Direct instruction

Code: Student shut down

Code: Distraction decreases
Code: Consequence is seen
Code: Teacher gets a break

Code: Reward
Code: No consequence

Core Category Relating to RQ 3

Administration Support

THEME: ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS

Category: Pro teacher

Code: social-emotional training

Code: follow up w/teacher

Code: support teacher emotionally

Code: give consequence

Code: be visible more

Category: Not pro teacher

Code: no consequence

Code: sent back to class

Appendix E: Survey

At the end of the 3-day training, the participants will respond to specific survey questions to determine the effectiveness of the professional development training.

survey

Use the following scale to answer the questions:

1-Strongly Agree 2- Agree 3 –Disagree 4- Strongly Disagree

1. The training improved my self-efficacy, knowledge, and development in the critical reflection of unconscious bias, personal values, and privilege.
1 2 3 4
2. The training improved my self-efficacy and knowledge of the importance of cultural awareness.
1 2 3 4

Survey Continued

3. The training improved my self-efficacy, knowledge, and development in social-emotional learning.

1 2 3 4

4. The training provide knowledge in proactive discipline

1 2 3 4

Survey Continued

5. The training provided knowledge and reflective practices on the impact of exclusionary discipline practices.

1 2 3 4

6. The training fostered knowledge sharing.

1 2 3 4

Appendix F: “Race and Privilege: A Social Experiment/Regardless of Race.”

This supplemental material provided a glimpse for teachers to see the impact of privilege on race and opportunity from the perspectives of people from a race or socioeconomic status that is different from their own. The experiment was done using ten participants of various races. The director asked a series of questions relating to race. If the participants were impacted by the statement positively, they move forward. If they were impacted negatively by the statement, they were to move backwards. Examples of the questions were 1) someone spoke to you and used the term, “you people.” 2) someone stated, “you are a credit to your race.” 3) you were in a conversation that you found racially uncomfortable but were afraid to say something. At the end of the questions the participants look at the positions they were in and the position of those around them, then identified their position in relation to social privilege. In closing, the participants shared how they felt based on the position they stopped at, and whether they realized if they lacked the power of social privilege or were provided opportunities because of their social status/privilege they were born into and had now just been hit with a dose of reality.

Appendix G: Microaggression/Microinsults

This supplemental material was a way to show real world events that happen unconsciously and may seem innocent in nature to some but may be considered an insult to another. These microaggression/microinsult examples displayed within the video show how word choices and actions have different interpretations based on a person's racial identity. To positively support social change, the issue of microaggression and microinsults needed to be openly discussed as racial diversity continues to change with in School X.

Appendix H: A Restorative Approach to Discipline

This supplemental video provided insight into the restorative discipline approach from the perspective of the teachers and the students. It provided the reasons why it was working and why exclusionary discipline was a reward for many students. The restorative approach created accountability, provided positive interactions, peer conversations and conflict resolution strategies, rather than having students continue to use avoidance and denial as a way of coping with their behavior. This approach was creating a positive social change within the school climate and in the students' lives that were being taught the restorative approach, which can be used both in and outside of the school setting.

Appendix I: Culturally Responsive Teaching 101

This supplemental video looks at how trauma impacts learning and by acknowledging trauma and using culturally responsive teaching, teachers are better able to create positive social change for students of all races by creating equity through integration of cultural components relative to the students. The integration of cultural components helps engage the learners and assists in building relationships within the classroom between students and between students and teacher creating a calm and safe environment conducive for learning.

Appendix J: Supporting Culturally Responsive Practices

This supplemental video is necessary for the participants of the professional development to observe as the learning walks are examples of building teacher capacity in equitable cultural strategies. This video explains reasons the learning walks are so powerful for the students and how the cultural aspect of the students is the primary initiative for the design used by the teachers to enhance the learning experience. The video shows a unique way of creating a schoolwide positive social change initiative by teachers being able to observe in other teachers' classrooms and take new ideas and implement them into their own teaching.

Appendix K: PowerPoint References

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