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Examining High School Teachers' Perspectives with Culturally Responsive Teaching

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Walden University

College of Education

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Maria Victoria O'Brien

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Walden University

2023

Abstract

Examining High School Teachers' Perspectives with Culturally Responsive Teaching

by

Maria Victoria O'Brien

MA, Marymount University, 2014

BS, The College of William and Mary, 2012

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2023

Abstract

The problem that was addressed through this study was teachers' inconsistent use of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in a high school in Northern Virginia (NVHS). The purpose of the study was to examine high school teachers' perspectives on the successes, challenges and support needed to better implement CRT at the NVHS. Ladson-Billing's and Gay's culturally responsive teaching theory formed the conceptual framework that guided this study. The research questions focused on teacher perspectives about the successes, challenges, and support needed with CRT. A basic qualitative design was used to capture the insights of eight high school teachers through semistructured, individual interviews. A purposeful sampling process was used to select the participants. Emergent themes were identified through open coding, and the findings were developed and checked for trustworthiness through member checking and rich descriptions. The findings revealed that teachers recognize the academic and social value of CRT in diverse classrooms, that teachers are challenged by a lack of training, resources, and sufficient time to support the use of CRT, and that teachers identified the need to initiate professional learning communities (PLCs) for support and guidance. A professional development project was created to improve the consistency of high school teachers' use of CRT and to develop supportive services from administrators and PLCs. This study has implications for positive social change by creating a structure to provide teachers with strategies and support for improving the delivery of CRT approaches.

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Dedication

I dedicate this project study to my father, who taught me that I can be anything and do anything when I grow up. Thanks for the inspiration, Dad. Tambien se lo dedico a mi mama, quien me dio el caracter para ser lo suficientemente valiente como para ir por lo imposible. Lastly, I dedicate this to my husband Francis, who without his love, this journey would not have happened. Contigo, el mundo es posible.

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Section 1: The Problem

The United States is rapidly becoming more ethnically and racially diverse, requiring teachers to keep up with the change of pace and learn pedagogies that reach their learners where they are, regardless of differing race and ethnicity (Kazajian, 2019). According to the Pew Research Center (2019), White, middle-class students are projected to become the minority in the United States by 2045. This statistic highlights the need for educators to adjust their teaching to include more diverse perspectives. Education reformers are addressing this change in demographics by calling for the re-education of teachers to undergo culturally responsive teaching (CRT) training and to use CRT in their classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

CRT training helps address the growing racial and ethnic divide by educating teachers to view ethnically and racially diverse students' cultures as an asset in the classroom. Rather than ignore diverse perspectives, teachers who employ CRT incorporate diverse cultural perspectives into their pedagogy, develop students academically, support and nurture cultural competence, and help students develop a critical consciousness because they understand how this practice leads to better student learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Although CRT supports student learning, teachers' inconsistent implementation of CRT is evident at a local high school in Northern Virginia and nationally.

The Problem on the Local Level

The problem that was addressed through this study was teachers' inconsistent use of CRT in a Northern Virginia high school (NVHS). Even though teachers at the NVHS

were given opportunities to learn about CRT through professional development (PD) and were asked by administrators to implement CRT, teachers were inconsistently implementing this practice in their classrooms (Superintendent email message, personal communication, November 9, 2020). The inconsistent use of CRT was a gap in teacher practice at the NVHS that may have contributed to the academic achievement gap between White students and their ethnically and racially diverse peers. For the purposes of this study, ethnically and racially diverse students are Black and Latinx students. The academic achievement gap at the NVHS warrants an examination of the problem because it is evident in graduation rates, state examination scores, and chronic absenteeism (Virginia School Quality Profiles, 2021). According to Ladson-Billings (1995), the academic achievement gap may be a direct result of inconsistent CRT use by teachers providing support as to why inconsistent CRT use was a problem worth examining by researchers.

The Problem on the National Level

The problem of inconsistent use of CRT is also seen throughout the United States, which situates this problem nationally as well as locally (Gay, 2018). Many teachers do not implement CRT consistently because they are unsure of what CRT is, lack the time or incentives to attend PD to learn about CRT, or do not want to change their pedagogies (Neri et al., 2019). Often, teachers do not fully grasp that CRT can help close the academic achievement gap between their White students and their ethnically and racially diverse peers, leading to implementation apathy regarding CRT (Abacioglu et al., 2020). Inconsistent use of CRT leads to a disservice to all learners because CRT is proven to

help learners academically, emotionally, and socially succeed (Brown et al., 2019). In conclusion, the problem of teachers inconsistently using CRT is seen locally at the NVHS and nationally, meriting a deeper examination as to what support and resources teachers need so that faithful implementation of CRT can be accomplished. The consistent implementation of CRT leads to better student outcomes and the closure of the academic achievement gap (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem in the Local Setting

There are three pieces of evidence of the problem at the NVHS. First is a message by the principal and vice-principals showing how they expect all teachers to use CRT but admit that many do not because of a lack of knowledge, time restraints, and a lack of proper incentives (Vice-Principal, personal communication, January 12, 2022). Secondly, the NVHS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office have provided opportunities for teachers to undergo CRT PD throughout the past 20 years. However, attendance is not mandatory which contributes to a lack of knowledge on the topic because many educators do not attend the PD (Arlington County Public Schools, 2020). Thirdly, many teachers claimed that they do not have enough time to fully revamp their curriculum and pedagogies to include diverse perspectives (Local teachers, personal communication, November 4, 2021). All three examples provide evidence of the inconsistent use of CRT at the NVHS.

The inconsistent use of CRT strategies by teachers at the NVHS is a significant problem to the local setting because it may be contributing to the achievement gap. The

achievement gap is the persistent disparities in educational performance between White students and their ethnically and racially diverse peers (Mason et al., 2019). Ethnically and racially diverse students made up 76% of the NVHS population in 2021, showing that most students may fall into the achievement gap (Virginia School Quality Profiles, 2021). Graduation rates, Standard of Learning (SOL) state examination scores in reading and math, and chronic absenteeism rates provided evidence of the achievement gap at the NVHS.

The achievement gap is evidenced through graduation rates for the past 2 years in Table 1. This table shows how White students graduated at a higher rate than their Black and Latinx peers. Although there is not a glaring gap in graduation rates at the NVHS for the past 2 years, White students still graduated at a higher rate than their Black and Latinx peers. This gap leads researchers to ask how they can close the gap, especially since the gap between Latinx students and their White peers is wide (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Evidence of this gap is seen in Table 1 showing how Latinx students are graduating at a 9-14% rate lower than their White peers.

Table 1

Graduation Rates Comparing White Students to Black and Latinx Students

Year	White	Black	Latinx
2020-2021	98%	97%	91%
1919-2020	100%	98%	86%

Note: From The Virginia Department of Education School Quality Profiles, 2021

Tables 2 and 3 show how White students scored higher SOL reading and math scores than their Black and Latinx peers in 2021 and 2019. Data for 2020 are missing because students did not take an SOL for that year because of COVID-19 pandemic complications. The data support how the academic achievement gap is prevalent at the NVHS regarding SOL reading and math scores. In both tables, White students outperformed Black and Latinx students by 20% or higher. This disproportionality in scores proves the academic achievement gap.

Table 2

SOL Reading Pass Scores Comparing White Students to Black and Latinx Students

Year	White	Black	Latinx
2020-2021	85%	51%	62%
2018-2019	97%	72%	79%

Note: From *The Virginia Department of Education School Quality Profiles, 2021*. SOL = Standard of Learning Growth Assessment.

Table 3

SOL Math Pass Scores Comparing White Students to Black and Latinx Students

Year	White	Black	Latinx
2020-2021	81%	61%	57%
2018-2019	92%	82%	80%

Note: From *The Virginia Department of Education School Quality Profiles, 2021*. SOL = Standard of Learning Growth Assessment.

Table 4 shows how White students exemplify a lower rate of chronic absenteeism than their Black and Latinx peers. Chronic absenteeism in this example refers to students missing more than 10% of the school year. Data for 2020 are missing because administrators could not take that data because of COVID-19 pandemic complications. Both Black and Latinx students were more chronically absent than their White peers by 10% or more, proving disproportionality.

Table 4

Chronic Absenteeism Comparing White Students to Black and Latinx Students

Year	White	Black	Latinx
2020-2021	6%	10.5%	16%
2018-2019	13%	18.5%	22.3%

Note: From The Virginia Department of Education School Quality Profiles, 2021.

In conclusion, all four tables show how White students consistently scored higher on all four metrics proving that the closure of the achievement gap through solutions such as the consistent use of CRT is worth examining at the NVHS. Specifically, White students graduated at higher rates, achieved higher SOL reading and math scores, and attended more classes than their Black and Latinx peers. Researchers explain how this academic achievement gap can be mitigated through the consistent implementation of CRT, providing administrators and teachers agency and hope for the future (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Evidence of the Problem in the Literature

Key education reformers looking into how to close the academic achievement gap also state that a lack of CRT implementation is a problem plaguing schools across the country and must be addressed to successfully support student learning (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2017). Evidence of the inconsistent use of CRT is evident in the literature. For example, Abacioglu et al. (2020) explained that teachers inconsistently use CRT because it is difficult to define and implement. Furthermore, many teachers lack the resources and time to implement it appropriately (Abacioglu et al., 2020). Heredia et al. (2018) reasoned that even though teachers are aware of the benefits of CRT, many do not implement it because of a lack of administrative support, causing apathy in implementation. Both sources give evidence of the problem in the academic community.

Additionally, current research studies provide examples of how a lack of CRT can lead to inequitable classroom spaces leaving marginalized students behind academically, emotionally, and socially which contributes to the academic achievement gap. One such research study conducted by Sladek et al. (2020) showed how a lack of CRT leads to increased cortisol levels in marginalized students resulting in disengagement in the classroom. In the study, when administrators and teachers performed diversity inclusion reminders in the school, students' cortisol levels decreased (Sladek et al., 2020). According to Sladek et al., lower stress levels lead to students feeling socially and emotionally safe in class, resulting in higher academic engagement and student learning.

The academic achievement gap is also seen in the larger population prompting educators to look at ways to help close that gap which CRT does if used consistently by teachers (Gay, 2018). Confirmation of the achievement gap is seen in the assessment scores released by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a national assessment used to test what students in the United States know. This assessment shows how Black and Latinx students continue to lag their White peers in multiple academic metrics (NAEP, 2019). For example, compared to their White peers, Black students in 2019 earned an average score of 26% lower on their math scores at the end of their eighth-grade year (NAEP, 2019). In comparison to their White peers, Latinx students in 2019 earned an average score of 16% lower on their math scores at the end of their eighth-grade year (NAEP, 2019). The results reveal that the academic achievement gap is still an issue throughout the United States, justifying an examination of what support teachers need to consistently use CRT because studies have shown how CRT helps close the achievement gap.

The purpose of the study was to examine high school teachers' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and support needed to implement CRT at a NVHS. The successes, challenges, and support required to implement CRT at the study site was examined. An increased understanding of teachers' perspectives on CRT is valuable to the study site because the participant's responses shed light on why they do not use CRT consistently, allowing for a deeper understanding of those challenges. The support and resources teachers need to mitigate those challenges to achieve consistent implementation of CRT was also examined through interviews. The goal of the project held that once

support and resources were put in place, teachers at the NVHS would start consistently using CRT which would hopefully help close the academic achievement gap and increasing student learning.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are important to describe the relationship between diverse learners, teacher perception, and CRT. The terms are used throughout the study and are found in the literature. The terms defined in this section are academic achievement gap, culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogies, ethnically and racially diverse learners, inconsistent use of CRT and student learning.

Academic achievement gap: The academic achievement gap refers the academic disparity present between White students and their ethnically and racially diverse peers (Mason et al., 2019).

Culturally responsive teaching: Culturally responsive teaching is teaching that aims to mitigate the adverse effects of cultural miscommunication and dissonance between their students from different cultures by asking teachers to be knowledgeable about their students' cultures, encourage academic success and cultural competence, practice reflection about their own cultural frames of reference, and to embrace empathy (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Culturally relevant pedagogies: This is an approach to teaching and learning that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 2014). This term is used under the umbrella of CRT because CRT teachers use this type of pedagogy.

Ethnically and racially diverse learners: In the context of this study, ethnically and racially diverse learners refer to Black and Latinx students (Santoro, 2014).

Inconsistent use of CRT: This term refers to teachers who use none or some CRT pedagogies in their classrooms (Hammond, 2015).

Student learning: This refers to the learner's measurable skills, attitudes, and knowledge due to participating in the educational activity that is not solely measured using a standardized test. Student learning is used instead of academic achievement in some instances in this study because students can still provide evidence of learning but not score well on a standardized test (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Significance of the Study

This project's original contribution to the local setting was the deliverable of a PD seminar for teachers and administrators. The PD provided the support and resources teachers said they need to implement CRT more consistently. By attending this PD, educators learned the skills and gathered the resources they needed so that they could ubiquitously embrace CRT practices throughout the school. This study may improve teaching practices by supporting a consistent implementation of CRT at the NVHS. This study is an original contribution to the local setting because no one has done a study in the past 5 years interviewing teachers on their perspectives with CRT and on the support needed to implement CRT so that the academic achievement gap may close. Furthermore, investigating teacher knowledge regarding CRT revealed gaps in teacher knowledge on how to effectively teach ethnically and racially diverse students.

The study's contribution is that the data gathered filled a gap in practice by providing the support deemed necessary by the participants so that consistent implementation of CRT can be achieved at the NVHS. Additionally, little research is done on what support educators need from teachers to consistently implement CRT making this data a valuable contribution to the academic community (Lomeli, 2021). Educators and administrators must have a deeper understanding of what support teachers need so that their response can be targeted to those needs leading to the more prevalent use of CRT strategies in classrooms. The consistent use of CRT may help ethnically and racially diverse students because CRT creates more equitable learning spaces, resulting in higher student learning gains, which results in positive social change (Lomeli, 2021). In conclusion, once these barriers to consistently implementing CRT are known, and support is put in place, then educators can hopefully fully embrace CRT at the NVHS, thus ensuring higher student learning gains.

Research Questions

The following research questions are situated within the problem of inconsistent use of CRT and the purpose of examining teachers' perspectives with CRT. The study centered on the conceptual framework of CRT. The last question asks teachers to present a solution to the inconsistent use of CRT. The following research questions helped guide the study:

RQ1: What are high school teachers' perspectives on the successes in implementing CRT at NVHS?

RQ2: What are high school teachers' perspectives on the challenges in implementing CRT at NVHS?

RQ3: What are high school teachers' perspectives on the support and resources needed in implementing CRT at NVHS?

Review of the Literature

In this section, I reviewed the literature related to the problem of teachers' inconsistent use of CRT. The reasons why teachers are inconsistently using CRT drove the need for the project study. The literature review is organized using the following subsections: the conceptual framework, and the review of the broader problem. The review of the broader problem section is further organized into the following sections: the factors that influence students' academic achievement, the importance of teachers understanding student backgrounds, and teachers use of CRT. These themes helped develop the research questions and determine that the qualitative approach of semistructured, individual interviews would be the best approach. The study aimed to explore teachers' perspectives of the support and resources needed to implement CRT at the NVHS. The participant's responses to the interview were used to answer the last research question: What support and resources do teachers need to implement CRT? A basic qualitative approach was used because I aimed to explore teachers' perspectives with CRT and what support they need to consistently implement CRT. The data were analyzed using a thematic approach to coding.

Conceptual Framework

CRT is defined as a teaching practice in which teachers incorporate diverse cultural perspectives into their pedagogy, develop students academically, support and nurture cultural competence, and help students develop a critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Gay (2018) added that CRT teachers understand the importance of using diversity to teach, rather than ignoring students' backgrounds, and view ethnically and racially diverse students' cultures as an asset in the classroom. Teachers who use CRT understand how this practice leads to better student learning for all students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Researchers should know the development and history of CRT to understand how it works.

CRT originated in the mid 20th century when theorists tried to explain the academic achievement gap between White students and their ethnically and racially diverse peers. In the 1960s, many researchers claimed a genetic component to the achievement gap, stating that the White race is genetically superior, and that is why White students perform better academically on average than their Brown and Black peers (Howard, 2019). After this theory was debunked, another explanation arose called the cultural deprivation theory, which stated that Black and Brown students are deprived by their cultures, which causes them to fall behind academically (Baratz & Baratz, 1970). This blame-the-victim mentality gave way to a more positive theory called the cultural difference theory in the 1970s and 1980s (Boykin, 1986; Edmonds, 1986; Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974; Sizemore, 2008).

Cultural difference theory highlights how different cultures other than the mainstream White, Eurocentric norm are not inferior. However, their differing cultures could still inadvertently impact their academic performance because teachers are not teaching in ways that bring their lived experiences into the classroom (Gay, 2018). In the 1990s and 2000s, scholars such as Depit (1995), Irvine (2003), Ladson-Billings (1994), and Nieto (2010) constructed the theory of CRT, further expanding upon the cultural difference theory. These seminal authors stated that diverse cultures are not inferior and that teachers ought to construct their pedagogies to embrace these differences so that student learning can be promoted, and the academic achievement gap can be closed.

Alim and Paris (2017) added to CRT by creating a new pedagogical theory called culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). CSP asked teachers to sustain cultural pluralism and not judge ethnically and racially diverse students against White, middle-class norms of knowing that continue to dominate what constitutes achievement (Paris & Alim, 2017). Their theory encourages educators to examine their goal of education and to not judge students against White, middle-class norms but to explore, honor, and expand all cultural practices. CSP is a direct contrast to the cultural deprivation theory by saying that a school's purpose should not require diverse students to assimilate and lose their cultures to achieve. Instead, schools should be sites that sustain culture, leading to higher academic achievement for diverse learners (Paris & Alim, 2017). CSP is the latest pedagogical tool under the CRT umbrella that teachers can use. Ladson-Billings (2014) and other developers of CRT celebrate how CSP has evolved to become the natural predecessor of culturally responsive pedagogies and encourage teachers to adopt this

pedagogical tool so that learners can flourish in an enriching, culturally sustaining, and supportive environment.

Understanding CRT and its development over time is important to understanding the purpose of this study, which was to examine high school teachers' perspectives of the successes, challenges, and support needed with CRT. To situate the framework of CRT to the problem, researchers first should know the definition of CRT and why it developed as a theory to help close the academic achievement gap. The following subsection discusses the review of the broader problem.

Review of the Broader Problem

I searched for peer-reviewed journals, books, and published dissertations under Google Scholar and Walden's databases such as Education Source, SAGE, ERIC, and Thoreau Multi-database search. The search terms used were culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogies, culturally sustaining pedagogies, factors that influence students' academic achievement, understanding student backgrounds and high school teachers use of CRT. The literature review demonstrates saturation because it consists of 25 peer-reviewed sources in addition to the framework references and seminal works listed under the conceptual framework. The literature search culminated in 3 topics: the factors that influence students' academic achievement, the importance of teachers understanding their students' backgrounds to help their students achieve academic success, and teacher use of CRT. The literature review culminates with the challenges teachers have with CRT because it is a natural segue to the research question and purpose of the project, which asked teachers what support and resources teachers

need to implement CRT at the NVHS. These three topics are important because they help situate the problem of inconsistent use of CRT into the broader lens by discussing factors of why students may not achieve academic success and how it is up to teachers to use these factors in their teaching pedagogy so that they can positively impact student academic achievement. Lastly, the final topic of teacher use of CRT was selected because CRT is a teaching pedagogy that embraces student backgrounds and highlights the factors that influence student academic achievement leading to higher learning gains for all students.

Factors that Influence Student Academic Achievement

The factors that may influence student academic achievement are race, socioeconomic status, and social and emotional health (Kyriakides et al., 2018). The impact race has on student academic achievement has been well documented providing evidence of a gap in academic achievement between White students and their Black and Brown peers (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; O'Connor, 1999; Oyserman et al., 2001). Multiple research studies showed how White students have historically outperformed students of color in most academic metrics such as standardized test scores and GPA scores (Taggart, 2017). Explanations for the school failure of Black and Brown students have ranged widely from the cultural deprivation model to the cultural mismatch model putting the blame of academic failure on the shoulders of students instead of their institutions (Ladson-Billings, 2021). In the past two decades, administrators and teachers amended their explanations for this gap in achievement concluding that it is up to the institutions to better educate racially diverse learners (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Leath et al. (2019)

summarized two ways to improve schools and close the academic achievement gap. Leath et al. stated that school institutions should hire racially diverse educators and incorporate teaching pedagogies that celebrate race such as CRT. Yarnell and Bohrnstedt (2018) conducted a study examining the effects teacher race has on Black male students' reading scores and concluded that Black students who had a Black reading teacher did better on their reading tests than students who had a White teacher. Yarnell and Bohrnstedt is one study of many showing how racially diverse educators can help close the academic achievement gap. Both Leath et al. and Yarnell and Bohrnstedt examined the important impact race has on student achievement and stressed that schools should teach in ways that celebrate, rather than ignore, race.

Socioeconomic status has increasingly become an important factor determining student academic achievement. Paschall et al. (2018) conducted a 2-decade examination of racial and ethnic disparities in academic achievement by poverty status and concluded that the achievement gap between poor Black and Latinx students and their White peers grew, while the achievement gap between non-poor Whites and their Latinx peers became smaller. This shows how poverty, instead of solely race, dictates student achievement. Owens (2017) also surmised that socioeconomic status impacts student achievement and explained that this gap in achievement is due to income segregation between school districts, which creates inequality in the economic and social resources available to students. Both studies concluded that students who come from poor socioeconomic backgrounds score lower on standardized tests, achieve lower GPA scores and graduate at a lower rate than their richer peers (Owens, 2017; Paschall et al., 2018).

Other factors that influence student academic achievement are social and emotional health. Students' emotional and social health impacts their academic performance in certain ways. Li et al. (2018) proposed that students with low self-esteem are emotionally exhausted and socially isolate themselves causing them to perform poorly academically. Li et al. examined how students who received emotional and social support from their teachers, such as respect, care, and help, reported higher academic scores. Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018) also discussed the importance of emotionally and socially reaching all learners because this approach positively influences learning. Both studies included the latest development in neuroscience and the learning sciences to promote the claim that emotions and relationships strongly influence learning. According to both studies, teachers should educate the whole child by improving the school climate to include emotional and social support because this support leads to higher academic performance (Darling-Hammond & Cook, 2018; Li et al., 2018). Understanding the factors that influence student academic achievement help situate the problem of teachers not using the appropriate pedagogy to address the academic achievement gap at the NVHS. The next section discusses the importance of teachers understanding their student's cultures and backgrounds so that teachers can better improve their pedagogies to reach their learners where they are.

Importance of Understanding Student Backgrounds

Teachers and administrators should understand their students' backgrounds because students who are heard and seen by their educators score higher on academic achievement metrics (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Pedler et al. (2020) revealed how the

teacher's role is paramount to ensuring active participation and engagement from students. Pedler et al. conducted a study asking teachers how much they knew about their students' backgrounds and what teaching pedagogies helped them engage their students the most. Pedler et al. showed how teachers who took an active interest in their students' backgrounds and brought their lived experiences into the classroom experienced higher levels of engagement resulting in higher academic achievement scores. Denessen et al. (2020) analyzed teacher attitudes towards their students and showed how teachers who are interested in their students' backgrounds and bring their backgrounds into the classroom experience higher student success. Multiple studies show how a student's culture and background impact their ability to achieve academically in schools and how it is up to the teacher to be culturally responsive to their students so that the academic achievement gap continues to close (Ladson-Billings, 2021). One way teachers can show their commitment to understanding their student's backgrounds with the goal of positively impacting student academic achievement is for teachers to embrace CRT.

Teachers Use of CRT

Teachers experience many successes using CRT. Martorana (2020) surveyed a group of educators at a high school asking what their successes were with CRT and most educators cited higher engagement levels and better quality of work from their students. In addition, teachers who use culturally relevant pedagogies also claimed better personal relationships with students, resulting in healthy trust levels between students and their educators (Cruz et al., 2020). Teachers also said that students became more actively engaged in their communities as advocates and disrupters of injustice thanks to their use

of CRT (Cruz et al., 2020). Lastly, educators who use CRT cited higher academic success for their students and reported that their students developed or maintained healthy levels of cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 2021). However, despite the evidence of promise, many educators experience challenges with CRT and either do not implement it at all or inconsistently implement it.

Teachers experience challenges using CRT for several reasons. Abacioglu et al. (2020) surveyed a group of teachers throughout the United States on their views with CRT. Their results showed that many teachers are apathetic about implementation because they are unsure of how to implement CRT. Abacioglu et al. also found that they do not have enough time in their schedule to implement CRT, blaming an overwhelming workload and little support from the administration. Exacerbating these issues is that many teachers and administrators do not work together to make sure that CRT practices are accurately implemented (Heredia et al., 2018). This situation leaves many educators feeling unsupported and disincentivized, leading to implementation apathy with CRT.

Other reasons why educators do not embrace CRT despite the evidence of promise are a limited understanding and limited belief in the efficacy of CRT and a lack of how to execute it correctly (Neri et al., 2019). The claim by Neri et al. (2019) was supported by Abacioglu et al. (2020) who also noted that a lack of time and a lack of understanding and belief in CRT contribute to an increased sense of apathy about implementing CRT. Brown et al. (2019) further supported the claim that teachers are unsure of implementing CRT. Brown et al. interviewed teachers in a focus group on CRT and discovered that even after teachers attended a seminar on what CRT is, they still did

not match the theory to their practice because they were unsure how to implement it. According to Abacioglu et al., Brown et al., and Neri et al., the reoccurring theme of not knowing how to implement CRT should give pause to key education stakeholders and encourage them to create quality PD to confront this issue.

Teachers' perspectives of CRT also present further challenges. Ebersole et al. (2016) conducted a study asking teachers their perspectives of CRT. The researchers concluded that teachers were intimidated by their lack of cultural knowledge, leaving them feeling inadequate to implement CRT successfully. Furthermore, the study showed how many teachers did not see the value of being responsive to students' cultures, supporting Gay's (2018) claim that some teachers view the implementation of CRT as unnecessary. Gay further highlighted that some teachers view CRT as something to volunteer for instead of essential to address the academic achievement gap so that all learners can be supported. Teachers are inconsistently using CRT due to implementation apathy, lack of time and support from administration, and limited understanding of CRT and how to implement it properly. Lastly, teachers are not using CRT because they view it as something to volunteer for and unnecessary.

Implications

This study has implications for academic and social change. This qualitative study examined high school teachers' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and support needed to implement CRT at the NVHS. The findings of this study showed that teachers need support in consistently implementing CRT, and also revealed particular successes and challenges that teachers have with implementing CRT. The research questions

allowed teachers to share their perspectives of CRT and their perspectives on what support they needed to consistently implement CRT so that they can further support the academic and social needs of their ethnically and racially diverse learners.

The project resulted in a 3-day PD seminar providing the support and resources teachers said they needed during their interviews to consistently implement CRT at the NVHS. The PD also highlighted the teachers' successes with CRT so that other teachers can use those specific CRT strategies to improve their pedagogies. Due to this PD, teacher pedagogy may change to include more culturally relevant pedagogies that help students experience more academic success, gain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness that challenges the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The district could also use this PD to address how to consistently implement CRT at their schools, further showing the potential usefulness of this project to the overall district and the NVHS.

The findings may also be helpful to the academic community because not much research has been done on the support needed to consistently implement CRT (Lomeli, 2021). Research has proven that a lack of CRT plagues schools across the United States, and knowledge of what support is needed to tackle this issue would be valuable to the academic community (Neri et al., 2019). Overall, the findings of the data collection resulted in a PD seminar providing the support and resources teachers need to consistently implement CRT so that student learning can be gained and so that the academic achievement gap may further close at the NVHS.

Summary

This study is comprised of several sections making up the project. Section 1 introduces the local problem of teachers inconsistently implementing CRT at the NVHS which may be contributing to the academic achievement gap between White students and their ethnically and racially diverse peers. Section 1 covers the local problem, a rationale for the problem of choice, a definition of terms, the significance of the study, research questions that helped guide the study, an extensive literature review identifying and explaining key concepts, and the implications for possible project directions based on the findings. Section 1 introduces the main elements of the project study, which aims to look at teachers' perspectives of the successes, challenges, and support needed to consistently implement CRT at the NVHS.

Section 2 outlines the methodology approach and explains how a basic qualitative design is best used to interview the selected teachers on their perspectives with CRT. Section 3 consists of the project itself, including an introduction, rationale, literature review, project description, evaluation plan, and implications. Section 4 concludes with reflections such as project strengths and limitations, a recommendation for alternative approaches and implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

A basic qualitative design was used to interview eight teachers at the NVHS. The interviews were individual and semistructured and asked participants about their perspectives with CRT. A basic qualitative design aligns with the problem, purpose, and research questions because the project interviewed teachers' perspectives which this design is best used for (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The problem at the NVHS is that teachers were inconsistently using CRT. The interview questions aimed to understand this problem by being open-ended and probing so that the in-depth experiences of teachers regarding the successes, challenges, and support needed with CRT could be gathered (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The following research questions were the basis for developing the interview questions for the participants:

RQ1: What are high school teachers' perspectives on the successes in implementing CRT at NVHS?

RQ2: What are high school teachers' perspectives on the challenges in implementing CRT at NVHS?

RQ3: What are high school teachers' perspectives on the support needed in implementing CRT at NVHS?

All three research questions helped examine participants' perspectives with CRT. A basic qualitative approach aligns well with the problem and research questions because this design is best used by researchers trying to understand participants' perspectives.

Description of a Basic Qualitative Design

A basic qualitative design consists of many components. Foremost, a basic qualitative design uses only one form of data collection which aims to examine a phenomenon by asking the whys and hows rather than gathering objective, numerical data (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). A basic qualitative design embraces the subjective and looks to unpack a phenomenon by understanding participants' opinions, ideas, and experiences (Denzin et al., 2017). This design gathers data based on observations of social interactions and experiences occurring in natural settings so that patterns of behavior and meanings are unpacked, and further understanding is gained about the phenomenon in question (Babbie, 2016).

Justification of Research Design

A basic qualitative approach is justified for this study for numerous reasons. First, a basic qualitative design works because its practical design helps practitioners address local issues within the field. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A basic qualitative design is used when looking into participants' perspectives in relation to the problem, and my project study does this by examining teachers' perspectives with CRT. Even though teachers are inconsistently using CRT, asking questions about their perspectives using a basic qualitative approach was a worthy endeavor because their responses shed light on their challenges with CRT. Their responses allowed me to understand those challenges and then enabled me to ask the follow-up question about what support they needed to achieve consistent implementation of CRT. Lastly, a basic qualitative study was appropriate for this study because I gathered deeper insight as to what teachers'

perspectives are with CRT, which could not be reduced to numbers or statistical data (Burkholder et al., 2019).

Other methodological approaches would be less effective for this study. For example, a grounded theory methodology was not appropriate because a grounded theory methodology aims to develop a theory based on previous data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used the existing, established theory of CRT and did not build my own theory proving the uselessness of a grounded theory approach to this study. Another ineffective research design would have been to use a quantitative approach because of its emphasis on using objective measurements to analyze data through numerical or statistical means (Burkholder et al., 2019). The study examined participants' subjective perspectives and required me to code their responses from the data, which cannot be done through a strictly objective lens or a numerical or statistical means. This fact made a quantitative approach to this study inappropriate. In conclusion, a basic qualitative approach was best for this project, whereas a grounded theory and quantitative approach would not have worked.

Participants

Criteria for Selecting Participants

I used purposeful sampling to select teachers who met the criteria. Purposeful sampling allows researchers to choose participants who will be most representative of the phenomena under investigation (Babbie, 2016). There are two criteria that participants must have had for selection. The first criterion states that participants must have worked with ethnically and racially diverse students at the NVHS within the past 5 years since I

aimed to understand the CRT strategies that helped teachers teach ethnically and racially diverse students along with the challenges, they encountered with CRT use and what support they needed for better implementation. As of 2021, 76% of students from the NVHS were from ethnically and diverse backgrounds guaranteeing that most teachers have worked with this subgroup which ensures a large participant pool (Arlington County Public School, 2021). The second criterion for selection was to ask teachers who have attended at least one CRT workshop in the past 5 years since I asked what their perspectives are with CRT and what support or resources they needed to use CRT more consistently. These two criteria ensured that I interviewed the appropriate participants, further establishing the successful completion of the study.

Justification for Number of Participants

Eight participants were a justifiable number for selection for various reasons. First, data saturation was reached at eight participants. Data saturation was reached at eight interviews because participants kept repeating similar answers to the research questions resulting in reoccurring themes early in the data collection stage. Data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study or when the new information obtained produces little or no change to the codebook (Guest et al., 2006).

Furthermore, the methodological approach of a basic qualitative design means that a small interviewing pool worked because I aimed to examine the in-depth experiences of the participants, which can only be obtained in smaller numbers due to time constraints. The smaller the pool of participants, the deeper the analysis can be

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Mason et al. (2010) further highlighted this point by stating that frequencies are rarely critical in qualitative research as one occurrence of the data is potentially as useful as many in understanding the process behind the topic. This explanation is due to qualitative research concerning itself with meaning instead of constructing generalized hypothesis statements (Mason et al., 2010). In conclusion, eight participants were enough to gain data saturation, justifying this number of participants for selection.

Procedure for Gaining Access to Participants

There is a particular procedure for gaining access to the participants that researchers must follow. Once I gained approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I emailed the principal explaining the study and asked permission to interview the potential participants. My IRB approval number is 06-21-22-1046274. After consent, I emailed the pool of participants with a recruitment letter asking them to volunteer for the study. I also accessed the list of teachers who attended a CRT workshop in the past 5 years from a previous colleague who led the training. This list is important because one of my criteria is that the participant must have attended a CRT workshop in the past 5 years since I interviewed teachers on their perspectives with CRT.

Establishing a Researcher-Participant Relationship

There are various methods of establishing a researcher-participant working relationship. According to Burkholder et al. (2017), the relationship is integral to the quality of the data output since participants who do not feel safe or respected may not participate honestly, leaving room for problematic data results. One way to ensure that

participants feel safe and in control is to establish the interview goals upfront and go over how the interview will be conducted ahead of time so that participants feel ready (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Another way to develop a healthy researcher-participant relationship is for the researcher to create open-ended questions that allow participants to go into depth and detail at their discretion (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). According to Ravitch and Carl (2021), when conducting interviews, researchers must also maintain good eye contact, professional posture and remain engaged throughout the interviews. Staying active and engaged helps participants know that the researcher is interested, and that the researcher is trying to learn from their responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). These specific methods and behaviors encourage participants, allowing them to gain the trust of the researcher because the process is conducted with a high degree of professionalism.

Protection of Participants' Rights

Certain measures were taken to protect participants, including confidentiality, informed consent, and protection from harm. The priority of the researcher is to ensure that no harm comes to participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I established confidentiality by informing participants of their rights and by using pseudonyms in the final study and kept their names safe in a locked space allowing for confidentiality and protection from harm. Secondly, I gained informed consent following the appropriate guidelines by Walden University's IRB and by reading the Research Participant's Rights and Responsibilities document provided by Walden prior to the interviews. Lastly, I protected participants from harm by ensuring that the interviews follow all set protocols and that all

ethical considerations are considered (Allen, 2017). The researcher's job is to make sure that participants do not undergo unjust burdens, which could result in negative emotions such as anxiety (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Participants were able to review their transcribed interview and discuss any points they might have an issue with, ensuring that participants are protected, heard, and valued throughout the process.

Data Collection

The main data source came from eight semistructured interviews of teachers who worked with diverse students and had attended a CRT workshop in the past 5 years at the NVHS. Interviewing individual teachers was a justifiable data collection method because the project aimed to examine teachers' perspectives with CRT on which interviews are best used (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Interviews involve researchers asking face-to-face questions to the participants either in person or through webcam software. An advantage of conducting an interview is that complicated or sensitive issues, such as CRT challenges, can be dealt with face-to-face, and misunderstandings can be explained as the interview unfolds (Burkholder et al., 2019). Furthermore, semistructured interviews are easier to replicate than unstructured interviews, allowing other researchers to review data produced more efficiently. Ravitch and Carl stressed how interviews are best used when examining perspectives because they enable participants to go into depth and detail regarding the subject matter and provide a systematic approach to gathering data. In conclusion, interviews were an appropriate evaluation method because interviews help explore participants' perspectives by asking questions face-to-face, are easier to replicate, and allow researchers and participants to go into more breadth and depth.

Data Collection Instrument

The data collection instrument was seven interview questions. The protocol I used was establishing an interview with each participant and conducting the interview one on one where I asked seven questions stemming from my initial three research questions. Interview questions were constructed asking teachers about their perspectives of the successes, challenges, and support needed with CRT. The interview questions were developed to access teachers' perspectives of CRT and how CRT works in helping students academically, socially, and emotionally succeed. The last interview question aimed to uncover what support or resources teachers need to address the gap in practice of teachers inconsistently using CRT at the NVHS. I developed the interview questions that were sufficient to gather the data required to answer the research questions.

Zoom interviews were sufficient in collecting the data for various reasons. Zoom is a video telephony software program used to facilitate meetings online instead of in person. First, Zoom allowed for flexibility and ease because participants could participate in the interview from their chosen location. Flexibility and ease are important qualifications to consider when interviewing teachers, especially since the advent of additional stressors to the profession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Pato & Fontainha, 2022). In addition, teachers are more comfortable using Zoom because they have used the software for the past 2 years to teach remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic school-mandated closures, further justifying my collection method (Oliffe et al., 2021). Oliffe et al. further described how participants who have partaken in Zoom interviews are more likely to be relaxed and share more because they are in a location

comfortable to them and because they have more control of the meeting due to the technical functions of Zoom, such as mute, stop, chatbox, etcetera.

In conclusion, using interview questions as a data collection instrument was beneficial for both researcher and participant due to its ability to cause ease, flexibility, and due to its agency-inducing qualities. Interviews were an acceptable data collection method because the interview questions gathered the necessary data to understand teachers' perspectives of the successes, challenges and supports needed with CRT. The interview questions asked teachers their perspectives on the successes, challenges and support needed with CRT which was comfortably facilitated due to the ease of Zoom.

Process for How Data Will be Generated, Gathered, and Recorded

The data were recorded using Zoom after approval of the IRB and after the participants signed the informed consent document. Participants gave permission to record all interview sessions, which ensured that participants are protected. The Zoom interviews took place during a span of two weeks in August 2022. The dates and times of the interviews were chosen by the participants and approved by me. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes, which allowed time for follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's perspectives with CRT.

Keeping Track of Data

I used Zoom to record the interviews and then downloaded the audio and visual files from Zoom onto my computer. Thankfully, Zoom has a function that allows for audio and visual recording of the transcript which enables researchers to fully focus and engage with the interview as it takes place since they do not have to transcribe the notes

themselves. Instead of worrying about transcribing everything, I was able to fully focus on the conversations as they occurred. However, I did write down notes in a reflective journal as the interviews took place because it helped me process the information and helped me formulate follow up questions.

I also used Temi, an automatic transcription service, because it enabled me to download the audio files from Zoom and convert the audio into a Word document. Temi was highly useful because it not only cleaned up the Zoom transcript by getting rid of filler words but by also formatting the dialogue into an easy-to-read script. Although Temi required a small fee per transcript, it efficiently converted the transcripts from audio to script enabling me to begin the coding process.

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

There is a particular procedure for gaining access to the participants that researchers must follow. Once I gained approval from Walden University's IRB, I emailed the principal explaining the study and asked permission to interview the potential participants. The principal then explained how I needed to obtain permission from the county school district administrators since they have their own IRB process. After obtaining the consent from the principal, the county, and Walden's IRB, I emailed the pool of participants with a recruitment letter asking them to volunteer for the study. I also accessed the list of teachers who attended a CRT workshop in the past 5 years from a previous colleague who led the training. This list was important because one of my criteria was that the participant must have attended a CRT workshop in the past 5 years since I interviewed teachers on their perspectives with CRT.

Role of the Researcher

My role was strictly that of a researcher who examined teachers' perspectives with CRT at the NVHS. I previously worked at the NVHS from 2015 to 2021 as a history and social studies teacher but did not have a supervisory role throughout my years there. I was never in a position of authority over my colleagues, which helped participants feel comfortable sharing information with me, especially since I no longer work for the district. Another way I helped ensured the reliability of the results was by telling participants that the study was in no way affiliated with the NVHS and that the findings were used only for the purposes of this study.

My previous role as a teacher at the NVHS should not have influence the data. However, a potential for bias existed because I am a Latinx woman who benefitted from teachers employing CRT and who currently teaches using culturally relevant pedagogies which participants are aware of. This knowledge could have swayed participants into not sharing their challenges with CRT. Instead, the observer-expectancy effect may occur where participants change their responses to satisfy the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

One way I helped mitigate potential bias participants have towards me was to let participants know that their perspectives were accurately portrayed to the best of my ability and that my role as the researcher would not affect data collection. The observer-expectancy effect was also challenged because I made sure to limit my views on the subject allowing the participant to develop their own views without my input. One way to mitigate the potential bias I may have towards the data was to make sure the findings

stem from the actual data and not from my predispositions, which would achieve confirmability (Shenton, 2004). During the data analysis phase, I made sure my findings stemmed from the data and not my predispositions. Both potential biases, and the observer-expectancy effect, were mitigated by showing participants the findings and allowing them to revoke or add information they deem important.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

The data were analyzed after the interviews using specific coding procedures. A thematic analysis method was used to understand the data by finding common themes in the participants' responses and by analyzing the meaning of their words or phrases (Saldana, 2016). The thematic analysis method asks researchers to examine their interview transcripts and formulate their analysis by coding them. A thematic analysis approach finds common themes in the participants' responses so that qualitative data can be recorded in an actionable, measurable way (Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

I used inductive coding by creating codes based on the qualitative data itself rather than starting with a set of themes before the interviews (Saldana, 2016). The process of coding each interview transcript began by looking for common themes, or patterns of meaning, across all transcripts and then transferring this data into an Excel document. Even though this was a time-consuming process, using thematic analysis to code yielded complete and unbiased data that answered the questions in a targeted way (Clark & Ivankova, 2016). The complete steps I took to code the data is found under the data analysis results section of this paper.

Evidence of Quality

I ensured that my process of analyzing the data were credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. For example, I asked participants to confirm their responses by asking participants to repeat themselves or reiterate a certain point live throughout their interviews. In addition, I employed the use of member checking to ensure credibility. Member checking is when participants review and comment on the transcripts to ensure that their perspectives are accurately transcribed (Varpio et al., 2017). I used member checking by providing each participant a copy of my findings and by having them review those findings. I also provided a time for the participants to discuss those findings with me if they so wished. Member checking is a straightforward way to avoid discrepancy because others read the data, ensuring it is accurately portrayed (Varpio et al., 2017). Member checking is one way to ensure that quality and credibility are respected.

One way to ensure that the data is transferable and dependable is to produce a rich description of the study results so that other researchers can develop their own conclusions based on the data (Saldana, 2016). I provided a rich description of my findings that were clear, elaborated upon, and included all the relevant data produced through the interviews. The greater and richer my description, the greater the opportunities for readers to able to transfer the findings. Another way to make data confirmable and thus heighten the quality is to complete an audit trail (Bowen, 2009). An audit trail provides the documented steps I took on how the research was conducted so that others may use these steps to replicate the study if they wish. An audit strategy is a

good way to establish confirmability. I ensured the quality of my data by employing member checking, developing a rich description of my findings, and by providing an audit trail.

Lastly, I strived to ensure that participants were treated ethically and with care by following the code of ethics given to researchers by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017). I gained informed consent from participants prior to the interviews. I avoided all types of deception by not withholding any information and by providing accurate descriptions of what an interview will look like. I adequately briefed and debriefed participants so that participants felt clear about expectations and felt like their voice mattered in how the interviews were conducted. I protected the participants by allowing them to withdraw if they wished and by saying that their data would not be disclosed to anyone unless agreed upon in advance. I did not provide incentives so that they felt no pressure to participate, although I did write them thank you letters after the interviews expressing my gratitude for their participation. In conclusion, I ensured that my findings had greater success at being accurate and reliable because I used member checking, provided a rich account, left an audit trail, and I followed all the code of ethics rules set aside by Walden and the American Psychological Association.

Data Analysis Results

The researcher's role in the data analysis process is to gather the data and interpret the data to answer the proposed research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data analysis process begins with organizing and structuring data collection and ends with re-examining the narrative the findings produced. The steps for qualitative data analysis

are: (a) conduct the semistructured interviews, (b) transcribe the interviews, (c) use an inductive coding process to create themes, and (d) review the data to conclude on a narrative (Burkholder, 2019).

The process by which the data were generated, gathered, and recorded followed certain steps. First, teachers were identified who fit the criteria of having worked at the NVHS within the past 5 years and had also undergone CRT PD. Eight teachers were sent an email asking for participation in the study. Each email had a consent form attached to it outlining the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, privacy, risks, and benefits. Each participant replied with "I consent" leading to the establishment of the interviews.

A semistructured interview protocol was used to collect data using Zoom, a video conferencing service. Please see Appendix E for the interview questions and Appendix B for the interview protocol request email. Each participant was made aware of the confidentiality of their participation and understood that they would be given the right to comment on the initial findings. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed using Temi, a software transcription service. Afterward, the transcripts were checked multiple times by me and underwent either no edits or minor edits. Cleaning the data ensures accuracy and assures participants that their interpretations are faithfully portrayed by the researcher (Babbie, 2016). Participants were given pseudonyms to maintain their confidentiality; each participant was called Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, and so forth until Teacher H for a total of eight teachers interviewed. Data saturation was reached at eight interviews because participants kept repeating similar answers to the interview questions resulting in reoccurring themes early in the data collection stage. The

interviews lasted between 25-45 minutes depending on participants' responses, follow-up questions, and natural segues that resulted from the discussion.

The data analysis process began with the help of Dedoose, a web-based platform that allows researchers to organize their data for a more streamlined data analysis process. Using Yin's (2016) five phases of analyzing qualitative data, I began disassembling the data after uploading and compiling the data in Dedoose. I used an inductive coding approach by grouping the data into codes and then developing themes from the codes. This allowed for the narrative to emerge from the raw data itself rather than from preconceived notions about what the codes or themes should be (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I reassembled the data using structural coding by categorizing sections of text according to each research question which helped break the data into smaller, more manageable increments (Yin, 2016). Then I organized the codes into categories and subcodes which resulted in a structure that helped interpret the findings (Yin, 2016). Dedoose helped me with this fourth stage of interpreting the data by creating visual graphics that gathered the data into easily digestible charts. To conclude the data analysis process, I used a thematic analysis coding procedure that allowed me to find recurring patterns and themes throughout the transcripts. Yin's last stage of concluding the data analysis process culminated in the production of a final narrative with substantive propositions.

Research Findings

The findings were built off the problem and research questions. The research problem states that teachers are inconsistently using CRT at the NVHS. The purpose of

this qualitative study is to examine the successes, challenges, and support needed to better implement CRT at the NVHS. The three research questions asked teachers about their successes and challenges regarding CRT, and what support and resources they need to better implement CRT. Major patterns, relationships, and themes emerged from the research questions and helped clarify ways how to solve the problem of inconsistent use of CRT at the NVHS. All three research questions resulted in two themes per question for a total of six themes. All six themes are supported by the current literature and discussed in three respective sections titled RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3. I began the interviews asking participants about their successes with CRT since the problem is inconsistent use, not zero use, of CRT. I did this purposefully because I wanted to see what CRT strategies teachers are already using that worked well so that I could use those results in my project study PD. My next two research questions, and the subsequent interview questions, ask about the challenges and support teachers need with CRT. All eight participants shared how they inconsistently use these strategies for a variety of reasons and ask for specific support and resources.

RQ 1: Student Successes With CRT

The first research question asked what successes teachers experienced using CRT. Interview questions 3 and 4 stem from the first research question. Teachers discussed CRT strategies and then spoke about specific successes associated with those strategies. The two reoccurring themes that emerged from the codes were student academic success, and student social and emotional growth. The findings for interview questions 3 and 4 are listed in Table 5.

Table 5

Themes Identified From Data Analysis for Interview Questions 3 and 4

Interview Questions	Codes	Themes
3. What teaching strategies do you use that you believe are culturally responsive?	Student-Centered Instruction Culturally Responsive Supplemental Materials	Student Academic Success
4. What are the successes you have had with using those strategies?	High Test Scores Better Learning Outcomes High SOL Scores Built Strong Relationships Safe and Comfortable Classroom Culture Confidence Building Trusting Environment	Student Social and Emotional Growth

Note. SOL= Standard of Learning State Examinations

Theme 1: Student Academic Success

Interview questions 3 and 4 identified participants' CRT strategies and their successes with those strategies. All eight participants revealed two strategies that resulted in student academic success: student-centered instruction and culturally responsive supplemental materials. All eight participants said that they knew a little bit about CRT and used some CRT strategies sporadically which resulted in a variety of successes. All eight participants wished they had more knowledge and support using CRT so that they could use CRT strategies more consistently.

Four out of the eight participants highlighted academic success due to their CRT practices. According to Teacher C "academically, students perform better, they have better learning outcomes, and they produce more work" when taught using student-

centered instruction and culturally responsive supplemental materials. Teacher E emphasized that using CRT strategies resulted in “all my students passing their SOL (Standards of Learning State Exams) exams one year, even my English Language Learners”. Teacher H added that “their metacognition actually improved” and highlighted that her students began advocating for their learning styles to be represented in the classroom more often. Teacher H noted how proud she was that their metacognition improved and how the unintentional benefit was higher exam scores in her subject. Teacher H also stated how the county provided teachers with PD on metacognition and noted how that helped her become a more effective teacher leading to higher academic gains for her students. Using CRT resulted in better academic scores for four participants showing the tangible benefits of CRT.

Furthermore, all four participants who discussed academic success because of CRT noted how unsurprised they were that these practices yielded higher test scores and higher student academic gains such as better SOL exam scores. For example, Teacher F said, “those exam results are probably better because of these culturally responsive approaches than they would be otherwise”. Moreover, Teacher H cited how CRT is simply “good teaching” and so it is understandable that CRT would lead to better student academic progress. These two statements provide evidence of the positive causality between increased CRT use and increased student academic success.

Theme 2: Student Social and Emotional Growth

Responses to interview questions one and two also resulted in the theme of student social and emotional growth. Participants emphatically stated that both student-

centered instruction and using culturally responsive supplemental materials, helped students' social and emotional growth. Teacher A stressed that these strategies "help give them (students) confidence and allows students who would perhaps otherwise go unnoticed to feel empowered in the classroom". Teacher B emphasized how student confidence grew in her classroom as well as students becoming "more open to share, converse and engage in conversations". Teacher D concluded that using CRT strategies "makes a classroom where the kids want to be" and saw positive student social and emotional growth in his classroom.

Teachers H and B also noted how using CRT led to the creation of safe and comfortable classrooms where students felt comfortable growing socially and emotionally. Specifically, Teacher H said, "my classroom was a space where they could just show up as themselves... that they didn't have to shapeshift in order to be acceptable in the classroom community". Teacher B also agreed that CRT led to safer spaces by saying how students "felt comfortable expressing themselves" and how that inadvertently led to students becoming more productive in the classroom. According to these participants, creating safe and comfortable classrooms are the result of successful CRT practices.

RQ 1: Support from the literature. Four out of the eight participants reported that their CRT practices led to higher student academic success which is supported by key CRT researchers such as Ladson-Billings (2021) and Gay (2018). Ladson-Billings and Gay both highlight how CRT gives guidance to teachers on how to teach in ways that reach their learners where they are so that they can achieve student success. Additionally,

all eight teachers reported that their CRT practices led to better student social and emotional growth supporting the current literature that CRT helps students develop rich social and emotional lives (Li et al., 2018). Furthermore, current research also links student social and emotional health to academic gains which participants discussed in detail concluding that they understood how CRT practices are beneficial for students (Darling-Hammond & Cook, 2018). Both themes of academic success and student emotional and social growth are supported by the current literature and these findings further provide evidence that CRT is “good teaching” that leads to better student outcomes academically, emotionally, and socially (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

RQ 2: Teacher Challenges With CRT

The second research question asked what challenges teachers had with CRT. Interview question 5 stems from the second research question. Their responses were coded and resulted in the following two themes: lack of CRT knowledge, support, resources, and time restraints. The findings for interview question 5 are seen in Table 6.

Table 6

Themes Identified From Data Analysis for Interview Question 5

Interview Question	Codes	Themes
5. What challenges do you face with implementing culturally responsive teaching?	Limited Expertise Poor CRT PD No Buy-in From Other Staff and Parents Limited or Outdated Resources Low Expectations Limited Time to Learn About CRT Limited Time to Implement CRT	Lack of CRT Knowledge, Support, and Resources Time Restraints

Theme 3: Lack of CRT Knowledge, Support, and Resources

The fifth interview question revealed how all eight participants found it challenging to consistently implement CRT strategies even though when they do, they experience student success. All eight teachers noted how they wished they could consistently use CRT strategies instead of once and while but noted that they do not due to a lack of CRT knowledge, and a lack of support and resources. All eight teachers cited specific challenges with consistently using CRT and asked for support and resources to mitigate this issue so that their CRT use would be consistent, instead of sporadically used. Teacher H stated how the county did not offer quality PD on CRT and that most of

her CRT knowledge was self-sought and not in the “vision or direction of our school community”. Teacher F further commented that “a lot of teachers aren’t opposed to it (CRT), but don’t think it’s a priority”. These two comments highlight how CRT is challenging to implement because of the lack of resources and support from the school community. Most notably, all eight participants said they need more CRT resources and guidance so that they can better develop their CRT practices.

Teacher C and Teacher D also concluded that they find a lack of support in the form of low expectations from students, parents, and staff. Teacher F added that “the challenges that I did face came from other teachers and colleagues, a very small minority, but there’s always a couple that are hostile to the idea of culturally responsive teaching”. This quote shows how some teachers at the NVHS view CRT as unnecessary and a waste of time. According to Teacher F, a lack of CRT knowledge, support and resources lead to “low expectations which resulted in poorer student outcomes”. Lack of support by others leads to low expectations and results in a disservice to all learners emphasizing the need for more CRT knowledge, support, and resources at the NVHS.

Theme 4: Time Restraints

Lastly, the fifth interview question showed that four participants encountered time restraints as a challenge in implementing CRT. Teacher D succinctly summarized that adapting his teaching to be fully culturally responsive is “challenging from a time perspective because of the pressure to teach all the content, especially in a class that has a state end-of-year exam”. Teacher G agreed with Teacher D by saying that teachers “feel like sometimes there might not be enough time and that’s a challenge and that some,

perhaps new teachers, put culturally responsive teaching on the back-burner because they want to focus on just getting through their curriculum or just putting together a good classroom management program”. Teacher D added how most teachers “just do the comfortable thing” of teaching the same lesson plans year after year rather than taking the time to restructure their lessons to be culturally responsive to their current population. All four participants cited the pressure they feel to cover the curriculum rather than spending time creating a more culturally responsive classroom.

RQ 2: Support from the literature. Findings in the literature speak to the same CRT challenges that participants discussed in their interviews. For example, a key study by Abacioglu et al. (2020) highlighted how teachers found that they do not have enough time in their schedule to implement CRT, blaming an overwhelming workload and little support from the administration. All eight participants noted the same challenges, stating how they struggle to find the time to either implement CRT or learn about CRT. Neri et al. (2019) also discussed how a lack of CRT support and resources resulted in teachers experiencing frustration which was evidenced in many participants’ responses. In all, the current literature supports the two themes found in the interviews, concluding with how participants need CRT support and resources to fully implement CRT.

RQ 3: CRT Support and Resources

The third research question asked what support and resources teachers need to consistently implement CRT. Interview questions 6 and 7 stem from the third research question. The reoccurring themes in their responses were coded into two themes:

administration support, and quality PD. The findings for interview questions 6 and 7 are seen in Table 7.

Table 7

Themes Identified From Data Analysis for Interview Questions 6 and 7

Interview Question	Codes	Themes
6. What support do you need to implement culturally responsive teaching?	Staff Culture	Administration Support
	Extra Staff	
	Professional Learning Communities	Quality Professional Development
	CRT Mentors or Coaches	
7. What resources do you need to implement culturally responsive teaching?	In-person PD	
	On-going PD	
	Easily Applicable PD	
	PD Developed by County Instead of State	

Theme 5: Administration Support

All eight participants stressed how they would like administration support in consistently implementing CRT. They mentioned how they would like to see administration support in four key areas: staff culture, providing extra staff, the development of professional learning communities (PLCs), and extra time. Firstly, Teacher H said that the administration must be “explicitly on board by regularly and intentionally” relaying to their staff the importance of teaching in a CRT manner so that

staff culture embraces CRT. Teacher E noted that teachers can be supported in this way by “trusting teachers to try what they are learning in their classrooms and to watch, listen and support teachers” when they fail or succeed. According to Teacher H, the administration would have higher buy-in for CRT if they “explicitly and regularly push forward the values of CRT thus creating a CRT supportive staff culture”. According to the findings, the administration can support their staff by instituting a culture where CRT is lauded, embraced and evident at the NVHS.

Another finding showed how participants want the administration to support staff by providing extra staff to help teachers with the implementation of CRT. For example, Teacher H noted how helpful it would be if each department had a CRT coach or specialist who worked with teachers to create more culturally responsive lessons. Teacher B also added that teachers would “benefit from a mentor who could work with them one on one” to help them become more culturally responsive. Three of the eight participants noted how they would love to see CRT experts in action so that they can learn their strategies. For example, Teacher D said “observing other teachers is one of the most beneficial things to me as a new teacher” and “I love absorbing from experts in action”. Participants concluded that administrators could support their teachers by providing substitutes to cover for teachers as they go observe other teachers or by providing CRT coaches, specialists, or mentors.

Participants also stated how the administration can support teachers by creating PLCs where teachers meet periodically in small groups to gather and share CRT resources that work for their students and their subjects. Teacher F emphasizes that these

PLCs could function as spaces “where teachers can seek each other out and get advice on how to make their lessons more culturally responsive”. Teacher B agreed with Teacher F and added that the administration should “blend content teachers to actually work together and get it done”. Teacher D stressed how he envisions these communities as spaces where he can “collaborate in a meaningful way, in meaningful partnerships with colleagues”. Administrators can support staff by creating PLCs aimed at supporting CRT.

Lastly, six out of the eight participants emphasized how administrators should provide more time in their schedules to learn about CRT and more time to apply their new learnings to their lessons. For example, Teacher D noted how he often takes “three, four, five hours on a weekend to look up a new resource” and then spends his time creating a more culturally responsive lesson. He stressed that he would benefit from having extra time in his work schedule to create more culturally responsive lessons. He also mentioned how he would benefit from the administration giving staff extra time to collaborate with other teachers in PLCs. Teacher F emphasized the need for more time to “plan and time to absorb it all and to reflect and to think about how I would implement those resources in the classroom”. A key finding showed that the need for more time was the most sought-after support participants mentioned in the interviews.

Theme 2: Quality Professional Development

All eight participants stated how they would like better CRT resources so that they can implement CRT more consistently in their work. All eight participants cited how important quality PD is for obtaining CRT resources and improving their teaching pedagogy. Specifically, Teachers H and G said that the county needs PD that is

“authentic to their student demographics” and should thus be created by staff who know the students’ demographics. Currently, the PD on CRT is provided in a one-hour online module created by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE, 2022). Three participants mentioned how this one-hour online module PD does not authentically teach them about CRT since it is not wholly relevant to their students’ particular demographics and does not hold them accountable throughout the year. This finding shows how teachers desire CRT PD that is relevant to their students’ backgrounds and is provided periodically throughout the year.

Teacher E cited how quality CRT PD provides educators with better supplemental resources for their subject matter making it easier to implement CRT. Unfortunately, Teacher E also said that quality CRT PD is hard to come by, showing how the county needs to invest in better CRT PD. Teacher H stressed “I need effective training” which Teacher F explained as PD “that is connected to what we are already teaching through the lens of equity, diversion, and inclusion”. According to Teacher D, effective training also looks like “coaching and teaching on communication skills and learning to listen to students”. Teacher C said how she would like PD sessions that “leave opportunities for us to collaborate”. Lastly, Teacher B stressed the importance of PD that is in person with “no phones, no computers, and not virtual” so that staff can truly connect and buy-in on adopting CRT. The theme of quality PD as necessary support was seen throughout all eight interviews emphasizing how important and necessary quality CRT PD is for teachers so that they can consistently implement CRT.

RQ 3: Support from the literature. The findings of this study showed how participants would like CRT support and resources specifically through administrative support and quality PD. Findings in the literature also support that teachers need more administration support (Brown et al., 2019). For example, Heredia et al. (2018) stated how teachers and administrators do not work together to ensure that CRT practices are accurately implemented leading to staff feeling unsupported and disincentivized. Many participants noted the same frustrations, highlighting the necessity of more administrative support at the NVHS.

Lastly, the findings of this study emphasized how all eight participants would like to attend quality CRT PD. According to Lomeli (2021), teachers who undergo quality PD on CRT are more likely to implement CRT in their classrooms leading to better student outcomes. Lomeli's study provides a solution to the local problem of inconsistent use of CRT at the NVHS by explaining the benefits of quality CRT PD. Many participants stressed how they would like to see quality CRT PD so that they can improve their pedagogy and in turn, improve their students' academic, social, and emotional lives.

Discrepant Cases

There were no discrepancies that altered the findings of the study. I reviewed the results multiple times to determine if any discrepancies came up. Revision is important to make sure there are no conflicts that would alter or impact the findings (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Evidence of Quality

Member-checks were conducted to assure the reliability of the data results. Member-checking allows participants the opportunity to engage with their data by allowing them editing rights of their transcripts (Birt et al., 2016). All eight participants member-checked their transcripts with only two of them emailing me back with minor edits. Most edits resulted in cutting out sections that did not apply to the study.

Additionally, I emailed members a one-page summary of the results of the study based on their transcripts which all eight accepted without edits. The transcripts and summary of findings are evidenced in the appendixes. Participants thus had two opportunities to edit and check their responses. This process of member-checking improved the accuracy of the results and ensured the validity of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Summary of Findings

The six themes described in this section were identified by participants' responses to interview questions regarding their perceptions of their successes, challenges, and support and resources needed with CRT. These themes help answer the question of how to help educators consistently implement CRT at the NVHS which was the purpose of this study. With these responses, key stakeholders at the NVHS have insight on how to help educators become more culturally responsive in their teaching.

Emergent Themes

The themes that emerged from the first research question regarding teachers' successes with CRT were academic success and social and emotional growth. All eight

participants cited either theme in their responses showing how CRT results in student success academically, socially, and emotionally. This finding provides evidence that CRT is a valuable pedagogical tool that educators should embrace to effectively teach all learners. Four participants cited increased academic success using the CRT strategies of student-centered instruction and using CRT supplemental materials. Most teachers emphasized that their most important success metric is if they built strong relationships with their students because those strong relationships led to better student outcomes.

The themes that emerged from the second research question regarding CRT challenges were lack of CRT knowledge, support, resources, and time restraints. A key finding showed that participants cited time restraints as the biggest challenge to implementing CRT. Another challenge was a lack of quality CRT PD and resources. Participants concluded that without quality PD and resources, they could not consistently implement CRT.

The themes that emerged from the third research question regarding what support and resources teachers need to consistently implement CRT were administration support, and quality PD. Four codes emerged under the theme of administrative support: PLCs, school culture, extra staff, and extra time. Most notably, participants cited the need for administrators to create PLCs where staff can gather in small groups to share CRT resources and foster meaningful collaboration. Another finding showed that teachers want administrators to support them by fostering a school culture where CRT practices are encouraged and normalized amongst all staff. They also mentioned the need for extra staff for either CRT mentors or substitutes so that they can attend PD on CRT. Additional

sought-after support from the administration was for the administration to include more time in their schedules to attend CRT PD and to have time and space to then implement what they learned.

Lastly, participants highlighted the need for CRT PD that authentically teaches educators about their specific student population. Additionally, participants stressed that their lack of CRT knowledge could be mitigated by quality PD that is given throughout the year, instead of only once a year. Participants also mentioned how quality PD provides helpful resources that they can immediately implement in their classrooms.

Project Deliverable

In conclusion, the responses to the last research question provided solutions on how to address the problem of inconsistent use of CRT at the NVHS. This research project culminated in the deliverable of a PD seminar for teachers on how to consistently implement CRT at the NVHS. Specifically, the PD highlighted the key themes that emerged from question three on how best to support teachers. The participants mentioned how they would like to see administration support in four key areas: staff culture, providing extra staff, the development of PLCs, and extra time. For example, during the PD, teachers are asked to create PLCs where they can collaborate and share CRT resources. The PD also discusses the importance of providing quality CRT PD based on their students' demographics, instead of attending a one-hour, online PD created by the VDOE.

The PD seminar also provided teachers with a platform to gain more expertise and familiarity with CRT with the aim of growing their CRT pedagogy. The PD seminar

included opportunities for collaboration, reflection, and discussion on how best to support teachers' implementation of CRT. Overall, the findings from the data provided enough material to create the project deliverable of a PD seminar aimed at addressing the local problem.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this PD project is to assist teachers in the consistent implementation of CRT. The results of the study indicate that teachers require additional CRT support and resources to address the local problem of teachers inconsistently using CRT. The target audience for this PD is all teachers at the NVHS.

There are three goals for this PD program. The first goal is to provide teachers with a PD extension of what CRT is and why CRT is important for the success of all learners. The second goal is to provide teachers with support and resources on how to better implement CRT at the NVHS. The third goal is to provide teachers the opportunity to collaborate, reflect, create, and coach each other in PLCs by using a variety of CRT resources.

There are three learning outcomes associated with the PD program. First, the learner will describe what CRT is and provide examples of CRT's importance in developing successful learners. Secondly, the learner will gain an understanding of effective CRT support. Lastly, the learner will design and sustain PLCs using an array of CRT resources so that the consistent implementation of CRT can be achieved.

This 3-day training is in addition to the cultural competency training provided by the State of Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). This training will take place at the NVHS in increments of 6-hour days where teachers will have the opportunity to participate and collaborate. This training will be constructed using the appreciative inquiry model because this model provides a collaborative structure where teachers can

discover, dream, design, and sustain what they learn in their sessions. The appreciative inquiry model is a strengths-based, positive approach to development and is used by organizations to help teams move toward a shared future (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 2017). The overall aim of the PD series is for teacher PLC groups to move forward toward a shared future of consistently using CRT to enhance student growth academically, socially, and emotionally.

The PD series schedule will go as follows. The first day will start with a morning session aimed at reviewing what CRT is and will build off the one-hour module presented by the VDOE. The morning session will also cover CRT strategies that teachers are already successfully using according to their interviews. Please see Appendix D for the content of CRT strategies. The afternoon session will cover the reasons why CRT is important for the success of all learners according to the current literature and according to the data gathered from the interviews. The second day will cover the support teachers need to consistently implement CRT according to the current literature and according to the data gathered from the interviews. The morning session will discuss how to improve positive staff culture and will culminate with an activity on creating a shared mission statement and school values. The afternoon session will discuss the importance of PLCs and will give teachers the opportunity to co-construct their own PLCs. The third day will provide an array of CRT resources and will conclude with opportunities to reflect, discuss, and collaborate on a plan to sustain CRT growth throughout the year. The morning session will provide administrators with a series of quality CRT resources they can choose from to implement immediately in their PLCs. The afternoon session will

offer activities where participants can reflect on their learning outcomes and collaborate. By the end of the 3-day series, teachers in their PLCs will have formulated a tailored plan on how to consistently implement CRT with the hopes that CRT use is sustained and monitored going forward.

Rationale

A 3-day PD series works best for this project study because the series provides teachers the tools necessary to help address the local problem of inconsistent CRT use by teachers at the NVHS. The data provided through the interviews showed that teachers need more support and resources regarding CRT so that they can consistently implement CRT at the NVHS. All eight participants said they need support regarding staff culture, PLCs, and effective PD that incorporates quality CRT resources.

Specifically, teachers asked for administration support in addressing staff culture and providing CRT PLCs. For example, Teacher H stressed how the “environment of the school needs to support risk-taking.” Teacher F added to this critique of school culture by saying that unless teachers feel supported, they will be hesitant to use new CRT ideas. These two excerpts from the data show how teachers desire an improvement in staff culture. This PD will provide teachers the opportunity to develop staff values and help improve staff culture so that CRT can be further embraced.

Teachers also noted how they work best when collaborating with other teachers in PLCs. For example, Teacher F highlighted how important it is to create opportunities where other teachers can share strategies that they are using and how talking with other teachers helps define “good teaching.” Teacher G elaborated by saying that she “learns

best from other teachers and mentors who share what works and what doesn't" and that PLCs help enable this sort of work. This PD will allow them to build their own PLCs that will meet throughout the year thus providing the help teachers said they needed.

Lastly, teachers asked for effective CRT PD. Specifically, teachers asked for ongoing, in-person PD that is easily applicable and conducted by staff who know their particular student demographics. For example, Teacher H described how she wants PD that is mandated by the county and not the state and that the training should be "specific to our student population because otherwise there is little buy-in." Teacher E noted how he does not want an online PD module that is only done once at the beginning of the year. Currently, teachers must attend a one-hour, online module on cultural competence during their in-service week before the school year begins. The VDOE mandated that all licensed teachers must attend cultural competency training every two years through HB 1904 (VA Legislative Information Session, 2021). However, the results of this study showed that teachers want more than just a one-hour, online module produced by the state. This PD series will be an extension of the cultural competency training providing teachers with more resources and support. This PD will be ongoing, in-person, and will be easily applicable to content while also providing a variety of CRT resources that reach their particular student groups.

Overall, this 3-day PD series will present the solutions the teachers gave in their interviews so that the problem of inconsistent CRT use may be mitigated. Teachers will leave the PD with an array of CRT resources and solutions so that consistent implementation of CRT can be achieved at the NVHS. Research shows that when

teachers use CRT, students excel academically, socially, and emotionally further supporting the value of a PD aimed at helping teachers develop their CRT pedagogies (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Review of the Literature

The following literature review is based on the themes that arose from participants' responses to the research questions in their interviews. The third research question asked participants what support and resources they need to consistently implement CRT at the NVHS. The responses to this question formed the basis of this project's PD providing the support and resources participants said they need. Participants mentioned the themes of improving staff culture, the need for CRT PLCs, and the need to attend effective PD. Lastly, this literature review will also cover what the appreciative inquiry model is and why this formula was chosen to help structure the PD series. The themes of staff culture, PLCs, effective PD, and the appreciative inquiry model are used to guide the development of the project and will be discussed in this section.

I used the Walden University library databases and Google Scholar to complete the review of this literature. I used the library databases of Google Scholar, Education Source, SAGE, ERIC, and Thoreau Multi-database search to search the following key terms: improving staff culture, the importance of formulating common staff values, the role of PLCs, the benefits of PLCs, the role of coaching and mentoring amongst teachers, the impact of quality PD, difficulties in implementing effective PD, the appreciative inquiry model, the effectiveness of the appreciative inquiry model. The literature review demonstrates saturation because it consists of 26 peer-reviewed sources that help present

an analysis of how theory and research support the content of the project and the findings of the project.

Improving Staff Culture

The importance of creating a shared staff culture. The data from the interviews showed that teachers desire a school culture where CRT is lauded, embraced, and evident. School culture is the shared values, attitudes, and beliefs of stakeholders in a school as well as the relationships between school staff, students, and families (Lee & Louis, 2019). Many elements influence a school's culture, such as its policies and history. Fostering a positive school culture where CRT practices are celebrated is imperative to the consistent implementation of CRT (Cruz et al., 2020). The current literature supports the finding that schools that embraced common CRT staff values boast a higher level of student and staff success (Lee & Louis, 2019).

According to Darling-Hammond and Cook (2018), a positive school climate is at the core of a successful educational experience because the climate encourages a healthy environment where students' academic, social, and emotional growth flourishes. A school community that is driven by common CRT values provides affirming relationships, rich, hands-on learning experiences, and explicit integration of social, emotional, and academic skills (Darling-Hammond & Cook, 2018). Quan et al. (2019) supported that common CRT values create a positive school culture by adding that teachers' beliefs on learner equity and social justice are far more important in affecting student-learning outcomes than any other measure of teacher quality. CRT values are

founded on this premise of learner equity and social justice justifying that teachers schoolwide should embrace CRT values so that student-learning outcomes benefit.

Lastly, common, clear CRT values that are embraced by staff result in accountability and guidance while enabling educators to work effectively (Darling-Hammond & Cook, 2018). When staff feel accountable and guided by supportive leadership, they are more likely to take risks and try new pedagogical strategies. This collective responsibility often leads to innovative lessons that result in higher academic success for all learners showing the value of creating a staff culture where common CRT values are celebrated (Zajda, 2021). Supportive leadership can help in leading the creation of common CRT values by providing teachers time to get to know their students and their families and providing funding so that teachers can attend PD that teaches them about their students' cultures (Zajda, 2021). All stakeholders win when leadership acts accountable for the success of their teachers by providing them with opportunities and funding to learn about their students. The literature supports that it is highly important for all stakeholders to share common staff values based off CRT principles because these values provide a collective goal for all to work towards.

Co-Creating Staff Values

The PD series will hold a session where teachers will co-create common values that emerge from CRT principles. The process of co-creating staff values must be driven by a clear vision and with due consideration and attention to sustainable work practices to be effective (Morris et al., 2021). Research shows that when teachers are involved in creating a common mission statement, values are followed more faithfully than if they

were not a part of the process (Quan et al., 2019). Quan et al. (2019) stressed how teacher identity and activism were positively impacted when teachers are given the space to voice and create a common mission statement and shared values. Greenwood and Kelly (2018) added that teachers' sense of belonging increases when they are driven by shared values and a shared mission. They stressed that this sense of belonging then passes to students creating a positive school climate. Greenwood and Kelly expanded on this finding by saying that students are more motivated, engaged, and dedicated to their education if they feel a sense of belonging and support at school. Both students and staff benefit when staff co-create a shared mission statement and implement CRT values.

Professional Learning Communities

The PD series will have a session where teachers form CRT PLCs to meet throughout the year. PLCs are intentionally grouped teachers who meet periodically to foster collaborative learning (Ong-Art, 2021). The role of PLCs is to improve the skills and knowledge of educators and improve the educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment of students through stronger leadership (Ong-Art, 2021). PLCs empower educators to transform their pedagogies leading to student success.

There is an array of benefits that PLCs produce according to the current literature. For example, PLCs allow teachers to directly improve their teaching pedagogy because it provides them time to share what activities and resources are working or not working (Lee & Louis, 2019). Additionally, PLCs help build strong relationships among staff since they are routinely collaborating and working towards a common goal (Lee & Louis, 2019). This shared sense of collaboration is immensely important for the success of PLCs

if all members take collective responsibility for the success of the group. Ong-Art (2021) conducted a study analyzing the pros and cons of PLCs for basic education teachers and concluded that PLCs work well when teachers are willing to implement PLCs and feel ownership of their PLCs. Ong-Art concluded that to build a positive school learning community, teachers must willingly collaborate and have support from leadership and stakeholders inside and outside the school. When all teachers willingly collaborate, they feel safer taking risks and coming to the table with new ideas because all are held accountable to participate by other teachers and by leadership.

Furthermore, PLCs help teachers stay on top of new research and new technology which ensures that innovative, fresh ideas are circulating (Brown et al., 2018). PLCs help teachers reflect on new ideas and help create spaces where teachers can share their successes and failures leading to teacher growth and indirectly, student growth (Brown et al., 2018). Often, teachers feel like they do not have time to delve into the newest technological tool or pedagogy showing how valuable PLCs can be because they provide teachers with the time and space to learn (Cholifah & Oktaviani, 2019). Lastly, teachers feel safe in trying out the newest research or technology when PLCs embrace authenticity and when all members are given time to practice new pedagogy or use new technology.

Further studies were conducted showing additional benefits of PLCs to teachers. For example, Bess (2020) conducted a qualitative study examining teachers' perspectives on PLCs. Teachers deduced that the benefits of PLCs included collaboration, shared vision, collective learning, shared practice, and supportive conditions. Most notably, Bess highlighted that all teachers in the study confirmed that authentic PLCs result in

collective learning because they provide teachers the time to gather and share their pedagogical wins and losses with the aim of helping their colleagues. Additionally, Schaap and De Bruijn (2018) also conducted a study that examined teachers' perspectives on PLCs. Their case study agreed with Bess by highlighting that the benefits of PLCs include collective learning and supportive conditions but included the caveat of only when teachers feel equal ownership of roles and employ the perception that all tasks are equal amongst members (Schaap & De Bruijn, 2018). In conclusion, PLCs provide teachers with an array of benefits such as providing teachers time to collaborate, providing teachers the space to form strong relationships and a positive school climate, and providing teachers the supportive conditions to learn and try new research and technology.

Effective Professional Development

Teachers attend PD to learn new instructional pedagogies and gather new resources with the hopes of improving student outcomes. Teachers inconsistently use CRT because of a lack of understanding and a lack of how to implement it properly (Neri et al., 2019). Gore and Rickards (2021) stressed that quality PD could help address these issues. Vermunt et al. (2019) also supported the claim that quality PD would work in fixing these issues but stipulated that PD must be done at set intervals throughout a teacher's career rather than only once at the beginning of their careers. Consistent PD should be enforced because teachers forget key concepts over the years, requiring reinforcement (Vermunt et al., 2019). Moreover, new skills and pedagogies often emerge in the teaching profession requiring teachers to keep up to date with the current skill sets

needed to effectively teach their communities (Gore & Rickards, 2021). PD is effective when it is on-going because new skills and pedagogies often emerge that teachers would benefit in learning.

Another element of effective PD is when the PD is supported and encouraged by the administration. Ruchti et al. (2018) reinforced this claim by saying that what educators learn in PD should be supported by the administration. One way to do this is for the administration to set incentives for teachers to use the new skills they learned (Ruchti et al., 2018). Another way administration can support the implementation of the skills learned in the PD is for the administration to conduct formal visits to teachers' classrooms to see if they are using their new skills (Ruchti et al., 2018). The administration can also bring in the community by spreading awareness via social media, highlighting the latest pedagogies and skills teachers are using in their classrooms (Ruchti et al., 2018). The strategies of setting incentives, conducting formal visits, and using social media by administration would encourage teachers to adopt new skills because these actions show that their administration and their communities support them.

According to the current literature, PD must have additional attributes to be classified as effective. Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2021) interviewed teachers on their perceptions of what makes PD effective, and their findings showed that PD is most effective when it is sustained, collaborative, subject-specific, draw on external expertise, has buy-in from teachers, and is practice-based. Their study concluded that the most important element of effective PD is if teachers willingly collaborate and buy into the shared goal of the PLC (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). According to Sims and Fletcher-

Wood, PLCs must have teachers who are willing to collaborate and buy into the goals of a PLC to be deemed effective.

Another study done by Bates and Morgan (2018) showed that teachers find PD most effective when the PD covers seven elements. First, the PD must focus on content as well as teaching specific strategies that help propel content forward (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Focusing on both content and content-specific strategies ensures that teachers are gaining the resources they need to improve their pedagogy. Furthermore, PD must include active learning where teachers can meaningfully engage with the content rather than following a traditional lecture model (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Bates and Morgan's study also supported Sims and Fletcher-Wood's (2021) study by highlighting how important willing collaboration is for a PD to be effective. Meaningful collaboration takes time because it requires teachers to trust one another (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Although trust takes time to build, once teachers trust one another, they take risks and authentically address instructional issues or dilemmas that challenge their practices. Both Bates and Morgan and Sims and Fletcher-Wood agreed that the most important element of an effective PD is when teachers come willing to collaborate and willing to spend time to develop trust amongst each other.

Moreover, effective PD argues for the use of modeling effective practice and coaching. Teachers benefit when they see successful practices in action which leads them to work directly with their curricular materials (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Teachers also benefit from coaching and expert support (Bates & Morgan, 2018). This element of effective PD is seen in multiple current studies showing the importance of having

coaches or mentors to provide individualized feedback tailored to the teacher's needs (Bragg et al., 2021). The impacts of feedback from mentoring sources show that teachers responded positively to feedback and changed their practice if they got feedback from a variety of sources. Findings showed that experienced teachers benefited the most from feedback and that student feedback was the most valuable feedback overall (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Teachers benefit when they see coaches and mentors at work because they learn to model their behavior supporting the claim that effective PD must include modelling of effective practice and coaching.

Other elements of effective PD are feedback, reflection, and sustained duration (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Feedback must be constructive and should directly connect to the concrete data and behavioral evidence so as not to be construed as hurtful or negative (Bragg et al., 2021). Lastly, PD should be sustained instead of given only once. Sustaining PD gives teachers time to meet, implement new ideas in the classroom, reflect, and engage in cycles of continuous learning.

Effective PD is hard to implement because it is time-consuming, costly, and hard to staff. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) discussed how administrations do not require teachers to undergo as much PD as they would like because of the time-consuming nature of PD, citing that they would have to pay teachers to attend and that their budgets are not extensive enough. Additionally, Senevirante et al. (2019) stressed how administrators struggle to staff PD seminars citing competition for the same resources across the state or even the country. Both Darling-Hammond et al. and Senevirante et al. called attention to why PD is hard to implement.

In conclusion, key researchers such as Gore and Rickards (2021), Ruchti et al. (2018), and Vermunt et al. (2019) understand the importance of quality PD in shaping how and what teachers teach. Researchers highlight that although quality PD is hard to implement, it still ought to be reinforced throughout a teacher's career and supported by the administration and the larger community (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Senevirante et al., 2019). The reasons behind the inconsistent use of CRT may be mitigated by effective, quality PD.

Appreciative Inquiry Model

Understanding the appreciative inquiry model. The appreciative inquiry (AI) model will be used to structure the project's PD project. The AI model developed by Cooperrider and Srivastva in 1987 is often called an asset-based or strengths-based approach to systems change because it embraces positive idea generation over a deficit-based approach (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 2017). This model helps organizations change, grow, and improve by providing structured seminars where stakeholders can build on the positives to help address challenges. The model makes inquiries about the organization and then makes improvement plans based on those inquiries (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 2017). AI has received popularity since its start in the 1980s because a strengths-based approach allows participants to feel as if positive change is possible because they are not inundated with solely focusing on the problems.

The process of AI. The process of AI to enact change involves the four stages of discovery, dream, design, and destiny (Mohn, 2022). In the first stage of discovery, the practitioners who are leading the PD ask positive questions and make inquiries about

what structures are already working in that organization (Mohn, 2022). A positive tone is set by starting with listing what is going right in the organization, leading to more enthusiastic participation by the participants.

The following stages are dream, design, and destiny. The dream stage is when participants are asked “What might be?” requiring them to think about what the organization is being called to do (Mohn, 2022). During this stage, participants can dream about how the organization might be a force for positive change. This stage encourages innovation where participants are asked to use the data from the discovery phase to see what is already been accomplished to see what might be accomplished in the future. The third and fourth stages are called design and destiny. During the design stage, participants co-construct frameworks that will help the organization change (Mohn, 2022). Lastly, the destiny stage focuses on how to sustain the action plan or framework created during the design stage (Mohn, 2022). These four stages enable participants to effectively analyze their organization and create sustainable plans on how to improve it.

Effectiveness of AI as a PD structure. Bergmark and Kostenius (2018) administered a study reflecting on the AI method for facilitating student voice processes. Their study discovered that all four stages of discovery, dream, design, and destiny are vital to the success of the PD because it gives participants permission to imagine and articulate their visions on how to improve their school. Bergmark and Kostenius (2018) concluded that students would not have felt as empowered or heard if they were not part of the process of innovating, co-constructing, and sustaining. Rather than using a lecture-based

approach to PD, the AI model encourages participation from participants by giving them the opportunity to appreciate, innovate, and co-construct.

Another study that looked at the effectiveness of AI was done by Gray et al. (2019). Gray et al. examined the impact that teacher engagement in the AI process had on their professional learning. In the study, teachers discussed, listened, reflected, and shared their success stories. This process led to re-articulating and re-enacting their practice and learning within the context of a more positive future. Teachers who attended the AI PD designed meaningful programs so that their students would be more engaged. Gray et al.'s study showed how AI as a PD structure can be highly effective for teachers in creating sustained, positive change.

Overall, the AI model is an appreciative, applicable, proactive, and collaborative form of organization study. The AI model can generate social transformation and its transformational impact is widely documented in the literature (Grieten et al., 2018). The current literature supported that the AI model is an effective way to structure PD because the model enables active participation, innovation and collaboration that leads to participants storing their new learning in their long-term memory.

Conclusion

The literature review topics of improving staff culture, PLCs, and effective PD all emerged as themes teachers want support in so that they can consistently implement CRT in their classrooms. All eight participants cited that staff culture must embrace CRT principles and that they need support from administrators in the creation of authentic PLCs. Lastly, all eight participants want effective PD that provides quality CRT

resources. The literature review consisted of 26 articles that supported the data by providing further evidence that most teachers also want the same support and resources. Finally, the project's PD series was constructed using the AI model as a framework to structure the PD because it effectively engages participants and gives participants the tools to sustain meaningful change (Mohn, 2022). In all, the current literature supports the content of the project and helped guide the development of the project.

Project Description

Resources

Potential resources for the implementation of this PD series include funding, support from the administration, and technology. The county school board approved a budget of \$749.9 million for the 2022-2023 school year with a portion of that funding going to approved PD (ArlingtonNow, 2022). The county's school board put together a list of priorities for the 2022-2023 school year detailing where their funding should go. Their first priority listed was to ensure student well-being and academic progress by allocating 12 million dollars and 95.65 positions to enable this priority (APS Budget & Finance, 2022). Fortunately, this PD series falls under their first priority since teachers will be learning how to further student well-being and academic progress through how to consistently implement CRT at the NVHS. A portion of this budget will go to ensuring that this PD series is completed. Funding will also go towards all the necessary tools needed to conduct the PD series such as journals, flip charts, scissors, post-it notes, pencils, pens, markers, and tape. Funding will also go to feeding the staff lunch every day.

Another resource necessary is support from the administration. Without administration support, the PD cannot be conducted so buy-in from these stakeholders is one key to success. I will petition for the PD to take place at an administration meeting and expect approval because the nature of my PD falls under the county's first priority of helping student well-being and academic progress. Administration support is also crucial to the success of my PD because once the administration supports this effort, then teachers will trust that the PD is valuable to them and buy into its overall message (Svendsen, 2020).

Lastly, technology is a crucial resource necessary for the success of the PD. Teachers will use their laptops to participate and engage via apps such as Google's JAM board, Google drive, and Google docs. I used Google slides for my presentations and will project the slides using a SMART board. The presentation will take place in a room designated for teacher PD which is equipped with all the necessary technology needed for success.

Potential Barrier and Solutions

A potential barrier to success is having faulty technology at the event. The potential solution to this barrier is to have an IT specialist on hand to help with any potential technological issues. Luckily, the school employs an IT specialist whose job is to help with any issues regarding SMART boards and laptops. Another solution is setting up the technology beforehand and testing it out to make sure that there are no glitches. Testing equipment beforehand helps ensure that the event will run smoothly and without any technological errors.

Implementation and Timetable

The implementation of this PD will take place at the NVHS in a room specifically designed for teacher PD. The training will take place over a series of three days and will begin at 9:00 AM and last until 3:00 PM. The timetable for implementation goes as follows. At 9 AM on the first day, teachers will be directed to cooperative small groups of 5-8 sharing one table. They will have an entrance ticket projected on the SMART board asking them to write down what CRT is and what CRT is not according to their perceptions. They will write these responses down on the handout provided on their table. At 9:15 AM they will verbally share their responses in their small groups following an overall group debrief. At 9:45 AM, teachers will listen to a short presentation on what CRT is that expands on the mandatory PD they previously attended on CRT. This presentation will include an activity where they self-assess their use of CRT. The morning session will culminate with teachers sharing CRT strategies that they are already successfully using according to the data collected during their interviews. Teachers at the PD will also share what CRT strategies they use. This portion will include a role-play activity where small groups pick one CRT strategy, create a script showing how this strategy works in action, and then present their skit to the whole group. This kinesthetic activity helps teachers to learn by doing and helps create meaning to the subject matter which helps the material to be processed in long-term memory (Crompton et al., 2019). Lunch will be provided to staff from 12 PM to 1 PM. The afternoon session begins at 1 PM with an entrance ticket via JAM board asking teachers why they think CRT is important for the success of all learners. Responses will be shared, and a discussion will

ensue. At 1:30 PM, I will provide a presentation via Google slides on the reasons why CRT is important for the success of all learners according to the current literature and according to the data gathered from the interviews. The first day will terminate with an exit ticket asking teachers to describe one CRT strategy that works and one reason why CRT is important for the success of all learners. This exit ticket accomplishes the first goal I set for the PD series.

The second day will cover the support teachers need to consistently implement CRT according to the current literature and according to the data gathered from the interviews. The morning session will begin at 9 AM with a JAM board entrance ticket asking teachers to define staff culture and values. At 9:20 AM, they will participate in the AI second step, dream, by asking themselves “What might be?” and by listing the values they want to see reflected at the NVHS (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 2017). After, teachers will discuss how to improve staff culture in small groups and will present their findings to the overall group. At 11 AM, teachers will participate in an activity that asks them to create a shared mission statement and to list the school values they want to see at the NVHS. Lunch will be provided to staff from 12 PM to 1 PM. The afternoon session will begin at 1 PM with an entrance ticket via JAM board asking teachers to list reasons why PLCs are important. After debriefing, I will present a Google slides presentation reviewing why PLCs are beneficial for staff according to the current literature and according to the data gathered from the interviews. From 2 PM to 3 PM, teachers will co-construct their own PLCs to meet periodically throughout the year to reflect, create and share CRT resources, and provide each other with support.

The third day will provide an array of CRT resources and will conclude with opportunities to reflect, discuss, and collaborate on a plan to sustain CRT growth throughout the year. The morning session will begin at 9 AM providing teachers with a series of quality CRT resources via a playlist they can choose from to implement immediately in their classrooms. After their lunch session from 12 PM to 1 PM, they will gather in their newly constructed PLCs. Their entrance ticket will ask them to share 1 CRT strategy they learned about in the morning. At 1:30 PM, they will implement that strategy into a lesson plan and will use that strategy sometime in the next six weeks. They will have access to the CRT playlist throughout the year and will meet every six weeks to try a new CRT strategy. The afternoon session will culminate with activities where participants can reflect on their learning outcomes and come up with a plan on how to sustain their CRT PLCs throughout the year. Lastly, teachers will complete an anonymous Google form multiple-choice and short-answer survey evaluating the effectiveness of the PD. Teachers will leave with PLCs in place designed to meet throughout the year where teachers can collaborate, reflect, create, and coach each other by using a variety of CRT resources provided by the playlist so that consistent CRT implementation can be achieved.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher and creator of this project will be to lead the PD series at the NVHS. I am responsible for making sure the administration approves the PD series and grants me permission to lead the series sometime after I graduate from Walden University. My role as a researcher is to provide a summary of the results to the

administration and to provide them with a copy of my final study. The administration can decide to share the findings with other schools in the county because the findings may be relevant to their demographics.

Role of the Participants

The role and responsibilities of the participants are to participate in the 3-day PD series. All 150 teachers at the NVHS will be asked to attend the PD. Teachers will be expected to describe what CRT is and provide examples of CRT's importance in developing successful learners. The participants are expected to design and sustain PLCs throughout the year where they use an array of CRT resources and support so that the consistent implementation of CRT can be achieved. Administrators will ensure that PLC groups have time to meet throughout the year.

Project Evaluation Plan

Formative and summative assessments will be used for this project. Formative assessments will take place in the form of entrance tickets designed to see how much information is already known to participants so that problems and concerns can be addressed immediately. Exit tickets will also be used to show what information participants learned during a particular part of the seminar. Formative assessments are valuable because they help participants understand what their strengths and weaknesses are concerning the material (Leenknecht et al., 2021). Formative assessments also help me understand what areas I need to target during the PD series. Using formative assessments helps me use time wisely because I can adjust my presentations based on the responses of my participants.

Summative assessments will also be used at the end of the 3-day PD series in the form of a survey. This survey will be done anonymously online using Google forms where teachers answer a series of multiple-choice questions and short-answer prompts. Please see Appendix C for a copy of the summative assessment. Anonymous surveys ensure that participants are honest with their feedback and allow them the space to share insights they might not have otherwise (Dolin et al., 2018). The survey questions will be centered around what worked and what did not work during the PD and what suggestions they have about the improvement of the PD. Asking participants to directly rate the PD after they take it can result in meaningful feedback.

A summative assessment will also be conducted at the end of the year after teachers have consistently implemented CRT strategies in their classrooms. Teachers will meet every 6 weeks throughout the year to discover one new CRT strategy in their PLCs and are tasked to use that strategy sometime throughout the following 6 weeks. By the end of the year, teachers will have used up to six new CRT strategies and will have debriefed their successes and failures with the strategy at each PLC meeting. During their last PLC meeting for the school year, teachers will be provided an anonymous Google form survey asking them about what strategies worked best and which ones did not. They will also rate themselves on how well they consistently implemented the CRT strategy. This feedback will provide evidence of whether the goals of this project were met.

Overall Goals of the Project

There are three goals for this PD program. The first goal is to provide teachers with a PD extension of what CRT is and why CRT is important for the success of all

learners. The second goal is to provide teachers with support and resources on how to better implement CRT at the NVHS. The third goal is to provide teachers the opportunity to collaborate, reflect, create, and coach each other in PLCs where they are tasked to use a variety of CRT resources throughout the year. The overall goal of the project is for teachers to consistently use CRT at the NVHS so that all learners can flourish in an enriching, culturally sustaining, and supportive environment.

The evaluation goal is to see whether teachers consistently used CRT strategies throughout the year. The end-of-year survey will provide the data answering this question and will enable me to adjust my PD using said data going forward. The end-of-year survey will evaluate whether teachers used consistent implementation of CRT in their classrooms. I will also ask teachers to complete an anonymous Google form survey evaluating the 3-day PD series. This feedback will enable me to glean what strategies, materials and information needs to be kept, amended, or tossed.

Stakeholders

Key stakeholders for this PD series are the administration, teachers, and indirectly, their students. The administrators are the staff members that run the school and are made up of the principal, vice-principals, director of counseling, and director of student activities. The administration provides the leadership needed to help run a functioning school. There is an administrator for every grade level and every subject matter. They work directly with their designated groups and help support teachers. Administrators will support the PD by allowing the PD to take place and by giving their staff time to meet in their PLCs throughout the school year.

Teachers who work at the NVHS are the other critical stakeholders since they are the ones who will attend the PD and will learn how to consistently implement CRT in their classrooms. All teachers will be welcome at the PD, including special education teachers, because they all work with students who would benefit from their teachers training in CRT. Lastly, students are key stakeholders because they will benefit the most from teachers consistently implementing CRT in their classrooms. The students who attend the NVHS attend ninth through 12 grade and come from a variety of different racial and socio-economic backgrounds. In conclusion, the administration, teachers, and students are the stakeholders who will benefit most from the project.

Project Implications

The contribution from the study is that the data gathered filled a gap in practice by providing the support and resources teachers said they needed to consistently implement CRT through a 3-day PD seminar at the NVHS. The expectation is that educators will be able to fully embrace CRT once barriers to consistently implementing CRT are known and support is put in place. Consistent implementation of CRT may help close the academic achievement gap and may support students' social and emotional health leading to positive social change at the NVHS (Lomeli, 2021). Lastly, little research has been done on what support and resources teachers need to implement CRT making this study a valuable contribution to the NVHS.

Due to this PD, teacher pedagogy may change to include more culturally relevant pedagogies that help students experience more academic success, gain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness that challenges the current social order

(Ladson-Billings, 1995). The district could also use this PD to address inconsistent use of CRT at their schools, further showing the potential usefulness of this project to the overall district and not only the NVHS. The project is important to the local stakeholders because the PD series provides the resources and support needed to consistently use CRT so that student success can further be achieved.

The findings may also be helpful in the larger context because not much research has been done examining the support needed to consistently implement CRT (Lomeli, 2021). Research has proven that a lack of CRT plagues schools across the United States, and knowledge of what support is needed to tackle this issue would be valuable to the academic community (Neri et al., 2019). Overall, the findings of the data collection resulted in a PD seminar providing the support and resources teachers need to consistently implement CRT so that student learning can be gained and so that the academic achievement gap may further close at the NVHS.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The PD series may help address the local problem of inconsistent CRT use by teachers by providing the resources and support teachers need according to the literature and according to the data from their interviews. The project's strength lies in being able to address the problem because it provided the resources and support needed to make CRT ubiquitous at the NVHS by using current literature and interview data. For example, Vermunt et al. (2019) said that PD needs to be on-going instead of only once a year. This project addresses this issue by requiring teachers to meet in PLCs during set intervals throughout the year where they can collaborate and implement CRT strategies into their lessons. Another example from Bates and Morgan (2018) highlighted that PD must include active learning where teachers meaningfully engage with the content. This PD requires teachers to become active learners in a variety of ways. For example, teachers are tasked to create and perform a role-playing activity that asks them to present a CRT strategy in action to their peers. This kinaesthetic activity helps teachers process and retain the information because they are engaging meaningfully with the content. The current literature supports the project because during the PD series, teachers are asked to continue with their PD in on-going PLCs throughout the year and because this PD asks teachers to actively learn the content through various activities such as a role-playing skit.

A limitation of the PD series is that it did not provide content-specific CRT strategies even though the literature said that content-specific strategies are important in providing effective PD (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Another limitation of the of the PD

series is that the series was produced solely for teachers even though administrators would have also benefited from attending the PD series. The administration was not present to help incentivize their teachers into using CRT strategies which was a lost opportunity. According to Ruchti et al. (2018), teachers are more likely to consistently use CRT strategies if they are properly incentivized to do so by their administrators. In summary, this PD had limitations by lacking content-specific CRT resources and administration incentivization.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

An alternative approach to mitigate the local problem of inconsistent CRT use by teachers is to hire CRT experts on staff. These CRT experts can work as mentors and observe, collaborate with, and inspire teachers to use CRT. Their purpose would be to create content-specific CRT strategies that help teachers. Specifically, these mentors could create content-specific lesson plans incorporating CRT strategies and then present these lesson plans to the teachers during their PLC meetings. Teachers would then be able to easily take what is created and incorporate it seamlessly into their lessons. Mentors could then come by their classrooms, observe the teachers in action, and provide direct feedback on how well they implemented the CRT strategy. This type of collaboration between mentor and mentee could result in meaningful growth for the teacher since they are getting tailored, constructive feedback from their mentors. The administration could support the use of CRT mentors by allocating a part of their budget into hiring these CRT experts to work as mentors and assign one expert to each department. Lastly, this alternative approach was spoken about by multiple participants

during their interviews showing that teachers at the NVHS want CRT experts as mentors and further supporting how this alternative approach of providing CRT mentors would help address the local problem.

An alternative definition of the problem would be to look at the inconsistent use of CRT by teachers as a problem that resulted due to a lack of administrative support. Research showed how many teachers do not use CRT because they do not have their administration's support (Abacioglu et al., 2020). For example, current research shows that teachers are not given enough time in their schedules to create student-centered lesson plans that are tailored to their specific demographics, even though this CRT strategy results in high academic gains for students (Neri et al., 2019). One alternative solution to a lack of administration support is for the administration to check-in with staff more often by making sure their evaluation and feedback are meaningful and constructive. Another solution is for administrators to provide more time for their staff to attend CRT PD and create incentives, so teachers incorporate CRT strategies in their classrooms.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

I learned many lessons throughout the research portion of the project. For example, I learned how to conduct a semistructured interview and how to compile data using an online tool called Dedoose. I learned how iterative the writing process is and that it takes multiple people from my chair to URR members to approve portions of my paper. I also learned many lessons on why using a PD series as a project would work for the local problem at the NVHS. For example, all eight teachers during their interviews

said how they would like effective PD to address CRT challenges. My project answered their request and presented a solution to the problem by providing said PD.

As a scholar, I learned how best to navigate the numerous databases and scholarly articles. I learned that Walden's Education databases and Google Scholar provided quality, peer-reviewed articles that helped create both of my literature reviews. As a project developer, I learned that the best way to structure a PD series is to use the AI model because it fosters positive collaboration among participants. I also learned how much effort goes into creating an effective PD series and that each minute had to be accounted for.

The most important lesson I learned is that I would like to teach classes at the university level teaching future teachers on how to be culturally responsive educators. My next step professionally is to become a university professor and use all the skills and knowledge I acquired throughout my doctoral journey. I hope to inspire future generations of teachers to embrace culturally sustaining pedagogies so that their students experience social, emotional, and academic success.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

My research project is important because it is one of the few studies in the current literature that examines the resources and support teachers need to be culturally responsive educators through the perspectives of teachers themselves. Researchers have delved deep into examining why CRT is important and why CRT is not embraced by all teachers, but researchers failed to ask teachers what support and resources they need to become more culturally responsive. My research project answers this missing piece of the

puzzle providing valuable information that schools could use to better improve their CRT use by teachers.

The overall knowledge gained through this project study is that teachers desire specific resources and support to consistently implement CRT so that the local problem of inconsistent CRT can be mitigated at the NVHS. For example, teachers called for administrative support and effective PD so that they can improve their CRT pedagogies. Teachers understand that CRT benefits all students but struggle to find the time, administrative support, and resources to incorporate CRT into their classrooms. If teachers use the support and resources presented in this project, then they may more readily embrace CRT leading to tangible, positive student outcomes. These outcomes could result in many benefits such as the closing of the academic achievement gap or improved social and emotional relationships for students.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The potential impact for positive social change is that the NVHS could experience a positive social transformation where all teachers consistently teach students using CRT after attending the PD series. This PD may result in teacher pedagogy changing to include more culturally relevant pedagogies that help students experience more academic success, gain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness that challenges the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The district could also use this PD to address how to consistently implement CRT at their schools, further showing the potential usefulness of this project to the overall district and not only the NVHS.

The findings may also be helpful to the academic community because not much research has been done on the support needed to consistently implement CRT (Lomeli, 2021). Research has proven that a lack of CRT plagues schools across the United States, and knowledge of what support is needed to tackle this issue would be valuable to the academic community (Neri et al., 2019). Overall, the findings of the data collection resulted in a PD seminar providing the support and resources teachers and administrators need to consistently implement CRT so that student learning can be gained and so that the academic achievement gap may further close at the NVHS.

A recommendation for future research is to examine the perspectives of CRT through the perspectives of the administration instead of teachers. This may provide valuable insight as to why administrators are not providing the support and resources necessary to aid their staff so that consistent implementation of CRT can be achieved. The administrative perspective would be beneficial because their interview responses could yield solutions as to why CRT is not embraced by all teachers. Addressing the problem through this angle could result in further understanding of how to fix the problem of teachers inconsistently using CRT.

Conclusion

This study examined the local problem of teachers inconsistently using CRT even though the current literature shows how CRT is proven to help all learners succeed academically, socially, and emotionally (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2017). The project that emerged from the data filled a gap in practice by providing the resources and support necessary for teachers to ubiquitously embrace CRT. This

project resulted in a PD seminar aimed at helping teachers consistently use CRT so that teachers perpetuate, foster, and sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism so that all students have equal access to achievement and well-being (Paris & Alim, 2017). By attending the PD series, teachers may leave with a series of resources and support which may help them consistently implement CRT so that their students achieve greater success academically, socially, and emotionally.

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Appendix A: The Project

Purpose: The purpose of this PD is to assist teachers in the consistent implementation of CRT. The PD series will take place over three days, and the duration of each day is six hours. The project is a direct result of research completed which uncovered specific support and resources that teachers need to consistently implement CRT. Teacher will participate in a PD series aimed at meeting their needs so that they can become successful practitioners of CRT.

Goals:

1. Provide teachers with a PD extension of what CRT is and why CRT is important for the success of all learners.
2. Provide teachers with support and resources on how to better implement CRT at the NVHS.
3. Provide teachers the opportunity to collaborate, reflect, create, and coach each other in PLCs by using a variety of CRT resources.

Implementation Schedule:

Teacher PD Days: 9 AM – 3 PM

Three days

Day 1: August 2023

9 AM Entrance Ticket: The SMART board will project a prompt asking them to write down in their journals what CRT is and what CRT is not according to their perceptions.

They will write these responses down and then share as a small group and then as an overall group.

9:45 AM Instruction: Teachers will listen to a short presentation on what CRT is that expands on the mandatory PD they previously attended on CRT. They may write down notes in their journals.

10:00 AM Activity: Teachers will self-assess their use of CRT by answering a poll via Google forms on the SMART board asking them to rate their teaching along a CRT scale of one to 10. The higher the score, the more CRT they employ in their teaching. A verbal debrief will occur after discussing the polling results.

10:15 AM Activity: Teachers will participate in the first step of the appreciative inquiry model called discovery where they are asked to describe what CRT practices they are already using that work well with their students. They will do this verbally in small groups at their tables.

10:30 AM Instruction: Google slides presentation on what CRT strategies teachers are already using at the NVHS according to the data. Then, teachers will watch a video clip on CRT strategies that work throughout the United States. Teachers are to write down one to three strategies they would like to try as they listen and watch.

11:00 AM Activity: Teacher will participate in a role-play activity in their small groups where they pick one CRT strategy, create a script showing how this strategy works in action, and then present their skit to the whole group.

12:00 PM Lunch Break: Lunch will be provided to staff in the cafeteria.

1:00 PM Entrance Ticket: Teachers will participate via JAM board by answering the prompt of why CRT is important for the success of all learners. A whole group discussion will take place discussing the results.

1:30 PM Instruction: Teachers will listen to a presentation via Google slides on the reasons why CRT is important for the success of all learners according to the data gathered from the interviews. They will then watch a TEDx video on why CRT is important. They may write down notes in their writing journals.

2:00 PM Rest Break

2:15 PM Activity: Groups that have not presented their role-playing skits from the morning session will be given time to present.

2:45 PM Exit Ticket: Teachers will be asked to describe one CRT strategy that works and one reason why CRT is important for the success of all learners in their writing journals.

Day 2: August 2023

9:00 AM Entrance Ticket: Teachers will journal their definitions of staff culture and values. An overall group discussion will occur.

9:20 AM Activity: Teachers will participate in the second step of the appreciative inquiry model called dream where they are asked “What might be?” and list the values they would want reflected at the NVHS in their journals. After, teachers will discuss their responses and develop ideas on how to improve staff culture in small groups. They will write their responses on a giant flip chart and then present them to the overall group.

10:15 AM Rest Break

10:30 AM Activity: Teachers will watch a short video clip on why shared values and a common mission statement is important for the success of the school community.

11:00 AM Activity: Teachers will participate in an activity that asks them to create a shared mission statement and to list the school values they want to see at the NVHS.

12:00 PM Lunch: Lunch will be provided to teachers in the cafeteria.

1:00 PM Entrance Ticket: Teachers will list reasons why PLCs are important via JAM board.

1:20 PM Instruction: Teachers will listen to a Google slides presentation providing reasons why PLCs are beneficial for staff according to the current literature and according to the data gathered from the interviews. Teachers may write down notes in their writing journals.

2:00 PM Activity: Teachers will co-construct their own PLCs to meet periodically throughout the year to reflect, create and share CRT resources, and provide each other with support.

2:50 PM Activity: PLC groups will verbally share one goal they created for their group with the whole group.

Day 3: August 2022

9:00 AM Activity: Teachers will have a playlist, or a collection of videos, articles, podcasts, and blogs on CRT. Teachers will choose the way they wish to interact with the information. This playlist is provided to help teachers learn about CRT, and specifically learn about culturally responsive pedagogies they can easily implement into their classrooms.

10:15 AM Rest Break

10:30 AM Resume previous activity. Teachers will be asked to choose one lesson plan that they will cover in the next six weeks and modify the lesson to include one culturally responsive pedagogy that they learned from the playlist.


12:00 PM Lunch will be provided to staff in the cafeteria.

1:00 PM Entrance Ticket: Teachers will share one CRT strategy via JAM board and explain how they implemented it into one of their lessons.

1:20 PM Activity: Teachers will gather in their PLCs to decide which strategy they will implement as a group in the first six weeks. They will adjust their lessons to include that strategy. They will come up with a schedule for the year where they will meet every six weeks to debrief on the previous culturally responsive strategy and create a new lesson plan with a new culturally responsive strategy using the playlist from this series. At the end of the year, teachers will complete an anonymous Google form multiple-choice and short-answer survey evaluating how their year long journey with CRT went and evaluating if they consistently implemented CRT.

2:45 PM Exit Ticket: Teachers will complete an anonymous Google form multiple-choice and short-answer survey evaluating the effectiveness of the PD.

Day 1 Slides: Defining CRT



Day 1: Defining
Culturally
Responsive
Teaching

By: Maria O'Brien



Entrance Ticket

Prompt: In your journals, write down what you think CRT is and what you think CRT is not.



Defining CRT

- Culturally responsive teaching is a rich, intentional approach woven into every aspect of student learning.
- It focuses on the assets students bring to the classroom rather than what students can't do.
- It raises expectations and makes learning relevant for all students.

Video Clip:

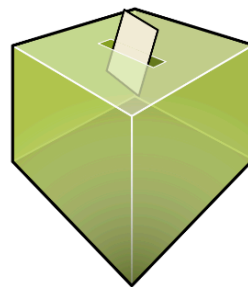


Activity: Polling

Directions: Type in the anonymous poll by going to <https://bit.ly/3WOyRBS> and rate yourself 1-10 on how well you implement CRT in your classrooms today.

1= I do not use any CRT pedagogies

10= I consistently teach using CRT



Appreciative Inquiry Model Step 1: Discovery

Activity: Discuss what is *already* working with CRT in your small groups.

What gives life to your students? What practices do you use that inspire students to participate? What inspires students to ask questions? What do you do that helps your students be successful academically, socially and emotionally?

Discovery: What is already working at your school?

According to teachers at this school...

- Student-centered instruction
- Building trusting relationships
- Family to school connections
- Using culturally responsive supplemental materials

Direct Quotes from the data:

Teacher C said “academically, students perform better, they have better learning outcomes, and they produce more work” when taught using student-centered instruction and culturally responsive supplemental materials.

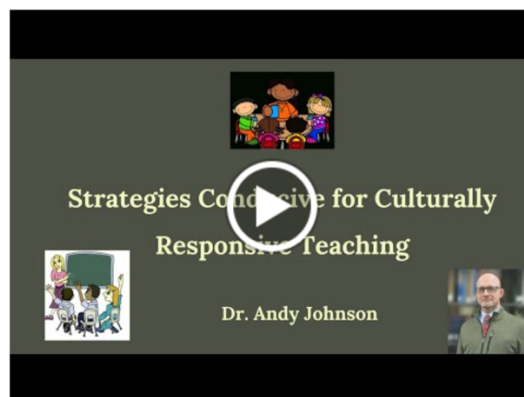
Teacher A stressed that these strategies “help give them (students) confidence and allows students who would perhaps otherwise go unnoticed to feel empowered in the classroom”.

Discovery: What is already working nationally?

According to the current literature...

- Activating students prior knowledge
- Making learning contextual and bridging the gap between the classroom and their lived experiences
- Incorporating popular culture
- Setting high expectations
- Tapping into student's cultural capital
- Raise their socio-political consciousness
- Use problem based-learning
- Experiential learning

As you watch, write down three strategies you want to try:



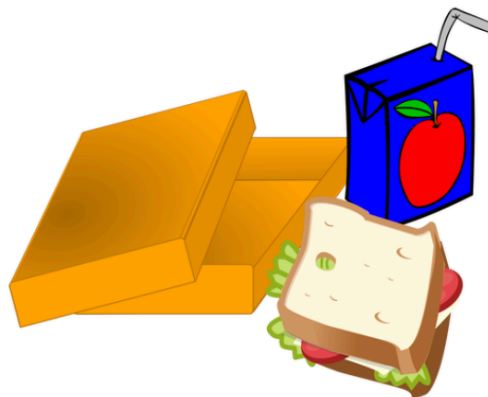
Activity: Role-playing skit

Directions: You will create a role-playing skit with your small groups. You will pick one lesson and incorporate 1 CRT strategy into that lesson. Then, you will act out how that CRT strategy works in action. You will present your skit by the end of the day!



12 PM -1 PM Lunch

Click to add text



Entrance Ticket: JAM board

Complete this JAM board question by clicking here: <https://bit.ly/3EjXOOp>

The JAM board asks why CRT is important for the success of all learners?



Why CRT is important for the success of ALL

According to teachers at this school, CRT leads to...

- Higher exam scores
- Better learning outcomes
- Higher SOL scores
- Better relationships between students and staff
- Safer and more comfortable classroom cultures
- Students' confidence increasing
- A more trusting environment

Overall themes:

- Student academic, social and emotional growth

According to the current literature...



Activity: Finish role-playing skit

Any teams that did not present, will present now.

Exit Ticket: Reflective Journaling

Prompt: In your journals, describe one CRT strategy that works and one reason why CRT is important for the success of all learners.

Thank you for your participation!



Day 2 Slides: Staff Culture, Values and Mission Statement and Professional Learning Communities

Day 2: Staff Culture and Professional Learning Communities

By: Maria O'Brien

Entrance Ticket: Journaling

Prompt: *What is the definition of staff culture and staff values?*



Appreciative Inquiry Model Step 2: Dream

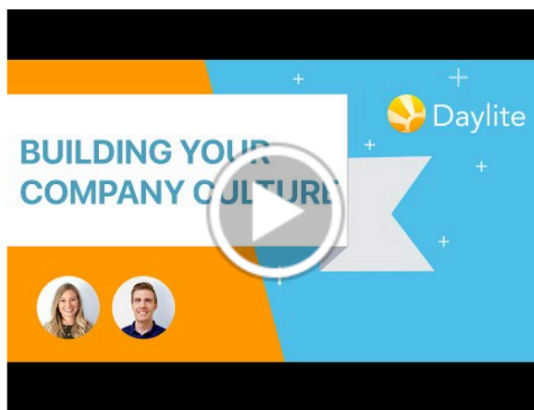
Prompt: *Write down what values you would want reflected at the school. Envision the possible. Ask yourself, "What could be?"*

We will come together and write down our values as small groups and then as an overall group.

10:15 AM - 11:30 AM Break

Why are shared values important?

Watch a [short video clip](#) on why shared values and a common mission statement is important for the success of the school community.



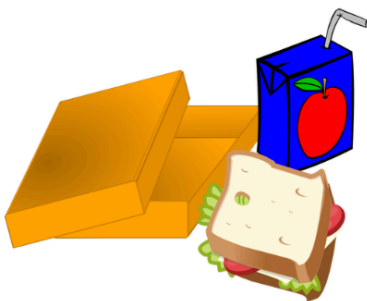
Appreciative Inquiry Model Step 3: Design

Step 1: Create a shared mission statement in small groups.

Step 2: Write down the values you want to see reflected in the school community in small groups.



12 PM-1 PM Lunch



Entrance Ticket: JAM board

Use the JAM board to answer the prompt: <https://bit.ly/3G1Ap5y>

Prompt: *Why are professional learning communities useful or important?*



How are PLCs beneficial?

According to the teachers at this school...

Teacher F said that PLCs could function as spaces “where teachers can seek each other out and get advice on how to make their lessons more culturally responsive”.

Teacher D stressed how he envisions these communities as spaces where he can “collaborate in a meaningful way, in meaningful partnerships with colleagues”.

According to the current literature...

- Provides time for staff to collaborate
- Helps teachers build strong relationships among staff
- Helps teachers feel ownership of their work
- Helps teachers stay on top of new research and technology
- Helps teachers develop a shared vision

Designing Year Long CRT PLCs

Task: You are tasked to co-construct your own PLCs to meet periodically throughout the year to reflect, create and share CRT resources, and provide each other with support.



Guidelines:

1. PLC members should all be from the same department.
2. PLC groups should meet every six weeks throughout the year so please create a calendar that works for all members.
3. PLC groups should create shared expectations and goals for your group for the year.

Exit Ticket: Verbal Debrief

Prompt: *What are some shared expectations or goals that your PLC group created?*



Day 3: CRT Resources and Support- A Playlist

By: Maria O'Brien

Appreciative Inquiry Step 3: Design

Click on the following Google doc to access links, videos, articles and blogs on CRT:

bit.ly/3Toqt9d

In your journals, write down specific strategies and pedagogical styles that help teachers successfully teach all learners.



10:15 AM - 10:30 AM Break

Appreciative Inquiry Step 3: Design Continued

Click on the following Google doc to access links, videos, articles and blogs on CRT:

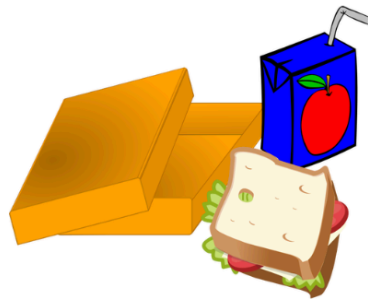
bit.ly/3Toqt9d

Continue writing down notes in your journal.

Task: Choose one CRT strategy from your notes and modify a lesson plan that you will teach in the following six weeks to include that culturally responsive pedagogy.

12 PM-1 PM Lunch

Click to add text



Entrance Ticket: JAM board

Use the JAM board to answer the prompt: <https://bit.ly/3NR8oza>

Prompt: *What CRT strategy did you use to modify your lesson plan and how did you implement this strategy into your lesson?*

Appreciative Inquiry Model Step 4: Destiny

Task: Gather in your PLCs to decide which strategy you will implement as a group in the first six weeks. You will adjust many of your lessons to include that strategy. You will meet every six weeks to debrief on the previous culturally responsive strategy and create new lesson plans with a new culturally responsive strategy using the playlist from this series.

Looking ahead: At the end of the year, you will complete an anonymous multiple-choice and short-answer survey via Google forms evaluating how your year long journey with CRT went and evaluating if you consistently implemented CRT.

Exit Ticket: Google form

Directions: Use the Google form to complete an anonymous, multiple-choice and short-answer survey via Google forms evaluating the effectiveness of the professional development. <https://bit.ly/3fSUPD4>



Appendix B: Invitation Email

Dear (participant name),

I hope this email finds you well and that the end of the 2021-2022 school year is going smoothly. I am emailing to ask if you would be interested in participating in a 45-minute Zoom interview asking you questions about culturally responsive teaching practices? I am currently at Walden University obtaining my Doctorate in Education: Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction and am conducting a project study titled “Examining High School Teachers’ Perspectives With Culturally Responsive Teaching”.

If you are interested, please see the consent form attached which outlines all the practicalities. This is completely voluntary, and your name would be hidden in the final study. If you consent but have more questions, please email me and I will walk through any questions with you in the following week. If you consent and have no more questions, please reply with your consent via email by writing “I consent” and provide a few dates and times you are available in the next month for a Zoom interview. After the interviews, I will share my takeaways via Zoom or email (according to your preference) so that you can confirm whether my interpretations are accurate. After the study is written, I will email you a 1–2-page summary sharing the study’s results.

I am available for any questions that you may have and appreciate your time. I hope to hear back from you within the week if that works for you.

Best,

Maria Victoria O’Brien

Appendix C: Copy of Summative Assessment

Evaluation Form Edited from Google Forms

1. The presenter was knowledgeable about the subject matter.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Somewhat
2. The presenter effectively delivered research-based practices that support improved student achievement and engagement.
 - a. Very low
 - b. Somewhat low
 - c. Somewhat high
 - d. Very high
3. The materials presented were relevant to my professional development needs and helped me implement culturally responsive teaching practices.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Somewhat
4. The presenter provided materials that effectively addressed multiple learning styles (auditory, kinaesthetic, visual, etcetera).
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Somewhat
5. I would recommend this professional development to colleagues.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Please provide suggestions for improvement and topics for future sessions below.

Appendix D: Content of CRT Strategies

Culturally Responsive Playlist of Resources Edited from Google Forms

Directions: Click on the following websites, blogs, articles, and videos to discover how to teach using CRT. Google form is live by clicking on this link: bit.ly/3Toqt9d

Websites:

- Education Weekly
- Edutopia

Blogs:

- Northeastern University
- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
- Teach Away

Peer-Reviewed Articles:

- Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers: Rethinking the Curriculum
- The what, why, and how of culturally responsive teaching: international mandates, challenges, and opportunities

Videos:

- Creating a culturally responsive classroom
- Learning for Justice

Podcasts:

- The Cult of Pedagogy Podcast
- Turnaround for Children Podcast

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Semistructured Interview Questions:

1. How would you explain culturally responsive teaching?
2. What is your experience with teaching ethnically and racially diverse learners?
3. What teaching strategies do you use that you believe are culturally responsive?
4. What are the successes you have had with using those strategies?
5. What challenges do you face with implementing culturally responsive teaching?
6. What support do you need to implement culturally responsive teaching?
7. What resources do you need to implement culturally responsive teaching?