

A Teacher's Role in Bridging the Achievement Gap Using Culturally Responsive Pedagogies

Abstract

This paper examines the achievement gap in education, stemming from historical inequalities and perpetuated by teacher implicit bias. Drawing on works by Ladson-Billings, Valencia, and others, it explores how deficit thinking and biases contribute to disparities in student achievement. The study emphasizes the importance of recognizing and correcting teacher biases through preservice and in-service training. Furthermore, it advocates for the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogies to create inclusive learning environments. Keywords: achievement gap, teacher bias, culturally responsive pedagogies, deficit thinking, education inequality.

Introduction

A school is where students of many different backgrounds, races, and ethnicities gather to learn and receive an equal education. However, a large number of studies have shown that there has been an achievement gap between minority and white students (Singham, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Cohen et al., 2006; Kober, 2011; Griner et al., 2013; Jeynes et al., 2015; Vincent et al., 2011). An achievement gap can be described in many ways, but most simply, it is the disparity in grades, test scores, and overall educational experiences between minority and white students. Historically, white students have been known to score higher on standardized testing and maintain overall grade point averages. On the other hand, minorities such as African American students are constantly overrepresented in the special education system and score lower than their white peers on testing (Harry et al., 2007; Kober, 2011). Kober (2011) states that "A wide racial/ethnic gap exists in achievement test scores: African American and Hispanic students score significantly lower, on average, than White and Asian students." While there are many reasons scholars may suggest for the achievement gap itself, teacher implicit bias and the lack of culturally responsive pedagogy seem to be solid catalysts for the inequalities minority students may face.

The theory of culturally responsive pedagogy is studied extensively by Ladson-Billings (1995), who states that being culturally responsive in the classroom can "bridge the gap between home and school" (p. 467). Ladson-Billings (1995) discusses the importance of taking students' cultures into account when educating them, analyzing your own biases and backgrounds as a teacher, creating solid and secure communities of learners, and also mentions the benefits of these practices in history. There is evidence of the benefits of culturally responsive pedagogies, which will be investigated further in this study. One example can be taken from Cohen et al.

(2006). Cohen et al. (2006) explain that by utilizing these culturally responsive pedagogies in the classroom, African American student achievement was increased by 40% (p. 1308). These practices include reaffirming self-identity and self-esteem through self-affirmations. Additional examples of culturally responsive practices will be discussed further throughout the study. Scholars may argue that there is no such thing as an achievement gap. Studies by Flores (2007) delve into the idea that there is no such thing as an achievement gap but rather a lack of opportunities for minority students. Reasons for this may include lack of home exposure to computers, making minority students living in poverty more likely to struggle with aspects of technology (Flores, 2007). They also may have more experience with less qualified teachers than white students due to funding, further exacerbating the lack of opportunities for these students (Flores, 2007). School funding is a significant aspect of the "opportunity gap" in the article by Flores (2007), as well as the lack of access to technologies and highly qualified teachers. While there may be examples of opportunity gaps in education, the achievement gap is still a glaring issue in the educational lives of students in America. With the growing diversity of student bodies throughout schools in America, it is critical to teach using culturally responsive pedagogies. With this being said, there must be culturally responsive pedagogies in place at every school, regardless of socioeconomic background, to ensure the needs of all students are being met. This paper will discuss ways for teachers to work towards bridging the achievement gap through culturally responsive pedagogies studied.

Literature Review

Over the years, many accounts of an achievement gap in education between minority and white students have been documented (Singham, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Cohen et al., 2006; Griner et al., 2013; Jeynes et al., 2015; Vincent et al., 2011;). Scholars have claimed this is

due to teachers' implicit bias (Hyland, 2005; Staats, 2015; Warikoo et al., 2016; Worrell, 2021). These scholars have created multiple suggestions to recognize, decrease, and work toward eliminating these inherent and implicit biases (Staats, 2015; Warikoo et al., 2016; Worrell, 2021). Others may strongly believe this is due to historical flaws in the educational system (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Jeynes et al., 2015). Similarly, these scholars voice their input on the importance of reforming the curriculum and implementing culturally responsive practices in the classroom to reduce this gap (Singham, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Vincent et al., 2011; Griner et al., 2013; Jeynes et al., 2015; Staats, 2015).

The Achievement Gap

The achievement gap is a theme that will be discussed throughout this study, as it is evidence of inequalities in the educational system. Historically, students of color have not been given the same opportunities in education as white students (Valencia, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2006). This gap has left students of color to struggle to receive the same grades, test scores, and opportunities as their white peers. The achievement gap has been studied by many sources, showing the importance of recognizing it and finding ways to bridge it (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Jeynes et al., 2015).

Ladson-Billings (2006) stated that minority students began their educational journey in an "educational debt," which has only accrued more and more over time (p. 5). She studied how the achievement gap in education relates to America's growing national debt and found many similarities between the two. Just as America falls more and more into debt, students of color begin school in a type of debt that only increases over time. Because historically, minority students began their educational journey in inequality, it creates an unfair disadvantage for these students in present-day America (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Teachers must implement culturally

responsive practices to help bridge this gap and recognize the long-standing inequalities that plague the educational system. By recognizing these flaws and inequalities, teachers can identify classroom issues and work towards eliminating them.

Ladson-Billings (1995) also addressed these issues in earlier works, as well, due to long-held and incorrect belief systems that minority students in her study, specifically African American students, were underperforming in education. These beliefs were further studied when Valencia (1997) addressed the impacts of the inequalities students of color faced, especially in the "separate but equal" eras of the 1890s-1900s. These ideals further led to the debt/gap in educational achievement among students of color. Whether this was stated explicitly or implicitly, these ideals were communicated, impacted teacher bias, and affected how students feel about themselves (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1995) strongly suggests that teachers must recognize social inequalities and their causes and potentially devise solutions to alleviate them (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Educators are expected to draw awareness to the fact that there are issues in the system but work alongside students to decide on best practices to create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment.

Jeynes et al. (2015) found that a potential reason for the achievement gap is the educational system explicitly tailored to white students. Jeynes et al. (2015) study the idea of the educational system being tailored to one specific kind of learner (white, able students) and the impacts of what happens to the other learners who do not get considered when this occurs. There is a call to the American school systems to implement cultural sensitivity, responsiveness, and awareness of this injustice to recognize and then help resolve these issues (Jeynes et al., 2015). Like Ladson-Billings (1995), drawing awareness of the situation and working on finding just solutions are key factors in bridging the achievement gap. Because the average general education

curriculum is tailored to one type of student, it has the potential to leave students feeling underrepresented, unheard, and unseen. Because of this lack of culturally responsive pedagogies, an achievement gap exists in education.

Dangers of Teacher Implicit Bias

Another theme discussed throughout this study is teacher biases and how to address these biases. Several studies describe teacher implicit bias as a catalyst for the achievement gap (Valencia, 1997; Bondy et al., 2007; Vincent et al., 2011; Staats, 2015; Warikoo et al., 2016; Worrell, 2021). Teacher bias also contributes to the detrimental impacts of deficit thinking, which further contributes to the divide of these students (Valencia, 1997). There is a strong focus on the importance of recognizing the importance of the role of a teacher in the classroom throughout many studies (Staats, 2015; Warikoo et al., 2016; Worrell, 2021). Teacher implicit bias may impact expectations of students, interactions with students, and the overall achievement and experience of these students in general (Bondy et al., 2007; Vincent et al., 2011; Staats, 2015; Warikoo et al., 2016; Worrell, 2021).

Deficit thinking is explored by Valencia (1997), where it can be described as a student's failing due to inherent flaws. Valencia (1997) dates this model of thinking as being prominent as early as the 1890s when segregation occurred due to incorrect but long-held beliefs that students of color were inferior (p. 4). If a teacher holds implicit bias about groups of students, it is likely to hold deficit thoughts or ways of thinking in their classroom. Valencia (1997) contends that schools often believe the students are the defect rather than the educational system itself. This way of thinking can and will contribute to the achievement gap of minority students if not corrected, as it promotes inequality in both society and the education system. These findings call for teachers and school systems to implement teacher bias training and culturally responsive

pedagogies.

If a teacher holds implicit biases about certain groups of students, whether knowingly or unknowingly, they can substantially impact those students' experiences without realizing it. Staats (2015) delved into teacher bias and why it is essential to recognize and fix it. The study focused on teachers' implicit bias and ways to reduce it. Staats (2015) stated that the teacher's implicit biases can change how they view their students and affect how much they believe they can achieve (based on students' cultural background). Teachers may be unaware of their implicit biases and prejudices about specific groups of students, which may impact their educational experiences. They may believe that students are more apt to succeed than others without even realizing this bias is present (Staats, 2015).

The study by Warikoo et al. (2016) delves into the dangers of implicit bias in teachers. This study aimed to learn more and explain how implicit teacher bias can seriously affect a student's educational experience. This article explains how teachers may hold implicit biases regarding minority students, which can lead to overrepresentation in the special education system. These issues can be further exacerbated in under-resourced schools with little financial and administrative assistance due to teacher stress and burnout (Warikoo et al., 2016). Their workload and stress may make it easier for educators to succumb to implicit biases. Teachers with implicit biases may more likely determine and categorize normal student behavior as malignant. Holding an implicit bias begins a cycle of classifying minority students into special education, overrepresenting these students, and separating them from the general curriculum. Because of these aforementioned harmful effects, it is clear that implicit bias is undoubtedly damaging for students.

Correcting Teacher Bias

Worrell (2021) searches for ways to lessen teacher bias before people even become formal educators themselves. This study focused on both preservice and in-service educators but strongly focused on preservice teachers (student teachers). The study sought to see preservice programs' effectiveness in reducing implicit teacher bias and analyzing those biases in many different teachers. Worrell (2021) found that many preservice programs had a stronger focus on appearing unbiased rather than correcting the bias in these students. Worrell (2021) also deduces that all teachers from all demographic backgrounds hold a level of implicit bias (p. 1). These biases need to be recognized, addressed and reversed. Creating stronger preservice programs during student teaching may be beneficial, as well as implementing ongoing professional development programs for in-service educators. Worrell (2021) looked at preservice educators and in-service teachers and decided that more research is needed to reduce teachers' implicit bias. A strong recommendation includes ongoing implicit bias training for in-service teachers, as this should be an ongoing process, not an overnight solution (Worrell, 2021).

Vincent et al. (2011) discuss the benefits of learning about a teacher's inherent biases and how to implement positive behavior support through culturally responsive pedagogies. Vincent et al. (2011) believe that if you become more understanding of your culture, you can better understand others. If teachers can better understand their own cultures and identities, they can better understand the importance of cultural differences across the student population. This study researched ways to validate cultural differences as a teacher in the classroom and increase cultural awareness and relevance. This study mainly focused on a suburban school that received an influx of Latino students and quickly saw these children overrepresented in referrals and disciplinary action (Vincent et al., 2011). Many reforms were taken, such as self-assessments, ongoing teacher training, and increasing school access to these best practices (Vincent et al.,

2011). By recognizing teacher implicit bias, correcting it, and implementing culturally responsive techniques over multiple years, Latino students' scores rose by as much as 6% (Vincent et al., 2011).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogies

This study's main theme and focus would be culturally responsive pedagogies and their impacts. Many studies discuss culturally responsive pedagogies and their benefits (Singham, 2003; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Bondy et al., 2007; Vincent et al., 2011; Griner et al., 2013; Jeynes et al., 2015; Staats, 2015; Roessingh, 2020). Culturally responsive pedagogies seek to include all students and educators in a learning experience that acknowledges differences, honors diversity, and allows students of all backgrounds to be represented in the classroom curriculum.

Building off the previous discussion of teacher implicit bias, Bondy et al. (2007) deduced that a successful culturally responsive curriculum depends on the individual determination and views of a teacher. Additionally, Bondy et al. (2007) highlight the importance of addressing diversity in the classroom, in both the students' cultural backgrounds and learning abilities. Teachers should hold high expectations for every student in their classroom and demonstrate rules and expectations (Bondy et al., 2007). Additionally, teachers should share their personal experiences to help students feel more comfortable and connected. Sharing personal experiences may function as a way to make students feel more confident expressing themselves, as well as a way to model sharing about one's unique background. One final aspect of the study featured a community-style way of disciplining students, making school a place where students can voice how they feel and what they believe is right instead of having adults tell them what to do constantly (Bondy et al., 2007).

Hyland (2005) studied 27 different teachers, who were mainly white teachers in a school made up of predominantly Black children. Hyland (2005) asks how teachers can be culturally responsive and best support all students. It was found that many of these teachers did not hold high standards for their Black students, saw them and their families as dysfunctional, and saw themselves (the teachers) as "victims" for teaching in that school (Hyland, 2005, p. 436). This study shows the sheer importance of assuming competence and believing in the success of all students, regardless of race, gender, or ability. The main findings from Hyland (2005) also explained the importance of taking responsibility for creating an accepting classroom environment that rejects racism and racist acts, being willing to learn about students as well as their families, and also being driven to learn more about how your background and culture can impact your teaching.

It is important to mention that culturally responsive teaching is important in more ways than one. Throughout the study, Griner et al. (2013) stated that culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) works towards helping racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students, correcting disproportionality, and bridging the cultural divide. Griner et al. (2013) believe that CRP includes implementing multiple forms of cultural knowledge in the classroom, specifically by highlighting students' experiences and honoring different ways of life in the classroom. By doing so, the curriculum would be more diverse and more relevant for a higher majority of students (Griner et al., 2013). Honoring different ways of life would make students feel more seen and heard by being able to share their past experiences in the classroom. It will also benefit all students by learning new things from other cultures.

Roessingh (2020) sought to find simple ways to implement CRP in the classroom through her study and details her findings in the study. Roessingh (2020) found that discussing specific

cultural objects, foods, items, or music can benefit students greatly. Finding common ground can be a simple way to make a connection between students. Making connections with students through these simple possessions can open up a world of possibilities for connecting with students in a culturally responsive manner (Roessingh, 2020). Students can make meaningful and lasting connections by using these personal yet universal experiences to relate to the curriculum. Feeling meaningfully connected to classwork increases students' sense of belonging, agency, and identity (Roessingh, 2020). These findings by Roessingh (2020) show the significance and simplicity of implementing culturally responsive practices.

The impacts of CRP speak for themselves. In a study by Cohen et al. (2006), the benefits and effects of utilizing CRP in the classroom were studied thoroughly. In the classroom, simple practices such as reaffirming self-identity and strengthening self-esteem were used (Cohen et al., 2006). The study sought to see if negative stereotypes impacted student academic performance. It was found that redefining these stereotypes and promoting positivity was extremely beneficial for students (Cohen et al., 2006). Students saw a positive grade change after practicing these self-affirming strategies (Cohen et al., 2006). The 40% reduction in the achievement gap after these activities' conclusion is proof of the benefits of CRP in the classroom.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Literature

The literature reviewed has done a solid and thorough job of describing the factors that lead to the achievement gap and ways to begin to bridge the gap. The achievement gap is a highly studied topic, with many authors studying different causes and issues (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Valencia, 1997; Griner et al., 2013; Jeynes et al., 2015). Ladson-Billings (1995, 2006) is a strong proponent of studying this gap, critiquing the educational system, and searching for ways to reverse these inequalities. There was mainly a strong focus on African American

students. Additional studies should include impacts and risk factors for Latinx students, immigrant students, students in poverty, and other marginalized groups to increase inclusivity. A suggestion would be to focus on more minority groups, such as other ethnicities, genders, and sexualities. While there were a large number of teacher bias studies (Bondy et al., 2007; Vincent et al., 2011; Staats, 2015; Warikoo et al., 2016; Worrell, 2021), there was not an overwhelming amount of different ideas on how to address and change these biases. The information seemed similar, citing strengthening preservice programs, creating ongoing teacher training, and recognizing one's biases (Vincent et al., 2011; Staats, 2015; Worrell, 2021). While these were deemed effective, unlike the others, more unique strategies were needed. A recommendation would be to differentiate these strategies and create new ones. An additional recommendation would be to assess administrator bias, as they also play a large role in shaping the students' educational experiences by creating teacher rules and regulations.

As for culturally responsive practices, there was a plethora of information and sources to support cultural responsiveness in the classroom. There was a strong focus on connecting with students, highlighting and honoring different cultures, and allowing students to be seen and heard in the classroom (Hyland, 2005; Bondy et al., 2007; Griner et al., 2013; Roessingh, 2020). There was an impressive array of culturally relevant and responsive techniques to create a more inclusive classroom environment. Recommendations include studying this topic further and implementing more classroom studies to see how effective these strategies are. Getting student feedback and teacher/administrator input would also be effective in gauging these strategies' benefits.

Set-Up

Over time, many documented studies have found achievement gaps between minority and

white students (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Griner et al., 2013; Jeynes et al., 2015). Minority students are often overrepresented in the special education curriculum, given a high amount of disciplinary action, and are not given the same opportunities as their white peers. Minority student test scores may often be lower than white peers, as well as overall grade point averages (Harry et al., 2007; Kober, 2011). While the reasoning behind this gap may be debated, multiple studies have cited teacher implicit bias as the main catalyst for it (Bondy et al., 2007; Vincent et al., 2011; Staats, 2015; Warikoo et al., 2016; Worrell, 2021). Teachers may be unaware of their implicit biases, which can subliminally impact how they educate their classes. Because of this, it proves why it is critical to be aware of and correct this potential bias. How can teachers recognize and combat this bias and then overcome it? How can teachers address the achievement gap in schools and bridge the gap between minority and white students' educational experiences? It can be argued that teachers must use culturally responsive pedagogies in the classroom to help bridge the achievement gap between minority and white students.

Support

Collins (2013) describes multiple theories and models in research, particularly a social constructivist theory. This theory asks us to redefine ability (Collins, 2013, p. 3). Instead of focusing on what students have done either correctly or incorrectly, this theory focuses more specifically on the teacher's role in instructing and assessing these students (Collins, 2013). This theory is similar to the deficit thinking discussed by Valencia (1997), where we must adjust our gaze from what is considered an impairment between learners to what can be done to serve these learners better. Collins (2013) goes on to further contend the idea that ability and disability are dependent on the opportunities students have in the classroom, likewise with the individual relationships they possess (p. 3). These opportunities can be instructional opportunities in the

educational sphere or social opportunities to build relationships and a sense of belonging in the classroom. These ideas contribute to positioning learners for success or failure based on the teacher's choices in the classroom (Collins, 2013).

The relationship between positioning and how it impacts students is researched in this study. Throughout the study, student Jay is studied across school settings to research how both teachers and other students position him. Jay, an African American student with seemingly "disruptive" behavior, was in the fifth grade at a predominately white school. Due to this behavior, his teacher diagnosed him as being "learning disabled" (Collins, 2013). Jay was subject to "ability profiling" in school. The idea of "ability profiling" targets and separates students based on what they seem to be able to achieve. It is defined by Collins (2013) as "the process of responding to a student as though he is 'disabled,' that is, regarding all of his actions and interactions through the lens of deficiency" (p. 13). Again, deficit thinking is revisited (Valencia, 1997). Jay struggled to shed his label of being a disruptive student, as he was constantly viewed as underperforming due to these labels.

Positioning could be as obvious as seating charts but as sinister as the total exclusion of a child in the classroom (Collins, 2013). Early in the study, something as simple as Jay's seat communicated much about how the teacher viewed him. His teacher, Laura, believed that he could not achieve as much as the other students due to his differences and behaviors. Subsequently, he was often excluded in various ways. Collins (2013) expressed this occurrence, stating, "Jay and other students who manifested various forms of 'difference'... (were) positioned at the margins of the classroom community, their desks pushed to the fringes of the room." (p. 14). A seemingly innocuous seating arrangement held much deeper meaning, taking a minority student and isolating them from their peers because of their differences. His teacher's choice

pushed him away from the classroom community's heart.

This exclusion is also seen when the teacher makes more calculated stances on p. 90, stating, "Laura's teaching practices relative to Jay communicated her expectations for him to the rest of the class, in both implicit (her lack of substantive response to his utterances) and in explicit ways (taking Carl and Kevin aside and asking for their help in managing Jay's behavior; placing him in the hall during the small-group interaction). The community members seemed to be working together to exclude Jay." (Collins, 2013). The educator's behavior alienated Jay in an educational sense and marginalized him in a societal setting. He was now cut off from his peers as well as his teacher. Although Jay attempted multiple times to reposition himself unsuccessfully, he juggled between becoming overly expressive in the classroom and silent. Neither was conducive to his learning experience, and he struggled due to this positioning.

The situation above is a clear example of how a teacher can marginalize a student based on their decisions in the classroom. If the teacher recognized her implicit biases about students of color and worked to reverse them, she may have held different beliefs about what Jay could and could not do. It was evident through the teacher's decision-making process that she held different beliefs about what Jay could achieve based on his differences regarding how other students were viewed. If there were more culturally responsive practices in place, Jay may have been able to feel more seen and heard in the classroom instead of feeling (literally and figuratively) pushed to the wayside. Jay was seated away from his peers, and further alienated throughout the school day by being ignored and excluded from participating in classroom activities and discussions (Collins, 2013). Educators must be aware of their power within the classroom, either to marginalize students because of differences or to create opportunities for all students to thrive.

Positioning by teachers that marginalize students is a strong catalyst for the achievement

gap between minority and white students, which was described in great detail by Collins (2013). Broderick and Leonardo (2016) describe another potential catalyst: the idea that Whiteness is equated to "goodness" in the education system. This unfair, biased mindset is a common issue in education, specifically when it comes to discipline differences between students of color and white students. Because of these differences, students' perceptions of themselves as learners may be harmed and negatively impact their self-identities in school.

As mentioned, Broderick and Leonardo (2016) posed the idea of "goodness" equating to Whiteness in education. This belief is due to societal beliefs that certain groups hold more power and authority than others. These beliefs then translate into how a student is perceived in the classroom setting. Students are positioned based on their "goodness" in the classroom, with goodness not only meaning quiet and responsive but also based on their "cultural capital and authority" (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016, p. 60). Minority students may be more fiercely disciplined for various reasons, including an inherent bias that they are "bad" (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). These decisions that an educator makes further confirm the unfair positioning minority students may feel in society. How these students are treated in the classroom can reaffirm negative stereotypes and contribute to negative self-identity over time (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016).

An example is explored by Broderick and Leonardo (2016), where a scenario is described where white student Nicky would not be as fiercely punished as his Black classmate Jamal (p. 60). Nicky and Jamal would participate in the same disruptive classroom behaviors (throwing paper airplanes), with Nicky receiving a verbal warning and Jamal receiving multiple detentions (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). Broderick and Leonardo (2016) stated, 'Through the asymmetric and inequitable distribution of rewards and punishments for behaviors in the classroom, both

Nicky and Jamal were actively interpolated into racialized identities as "good" and "bad" boys" (p. 61). Because of the students' race, they were disciplined differently. Again, this is due to implicit biases that teachers may hold. This idea may be so ingrained that teachers may be unaware they hold this bias. The embodiment of these biases may manifest in different, simple ways, such as behavior charts, names on the board, or even which students are chosen to be line leader, teacher's helper, and so on (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). These are daily reminders to students about who or what gets ignored or recognized and create somewhat of a routine in inequality (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). This idea of Whiteness equating to "goodness" further contributes to the achievement gap between minority students and white students. These students will become conditioned to feel ignored, excluded, and otherwise alienated due to their inherent differences, which contributes to further expanding the achievement gap in schools.

Similar to Collins (2013), who discusses ability profiling, Broderick and Leonardo (2016) discuss the similarity of racial profiling in education. Just as ability profiling greatly impacts students when teachers view students through a lens of deficiency, the same goes for viewing them through a lens of varying privileges (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). With this being said, it is critical to view all students as able to learn and achieve, regardless of any differences that may be present. Teachers hold immense power in shaping students' educational experiences and how they view themselves as learners. Broderick and Leonardo (2016) highlight the importance of a teacher in the classroom, emphasizing the power they hold to either confirm or change the meaning of "goodness" in students. This idea is similar to Collins (2013), as the power of a teacher was emphasized throughout the research study. The detrimental effects of implicit bias impacted the learning experience of student Jay and contributed to the exclusion of throughout his educational experience. Both of these texts complement each other in the sense that they

make the power of a teacher apparent, a make-or-break factor in a student's educational experience.

While the two studies had several similarities, there were a few key differences. One difference is the research's reasoning and the subjects. Collins (2013) focused on one student, Jay, and his educational experiences in a predominantly white school district. However, Broderick and Leonardo (2016) study what determines "goodness" in education and society. While the findings were similar (teachers' power in the classroom and the need for culturally responsive practices), the reasons for the research differed. This study shows evidence that the issue of the achievement gap and teacher implicit bias is widespread, as well as documenting the need for culturally responsive pedagogies in the classroom.

It must be reiterated that teachers must implement culturally responsive pedagogies to bridge the achievement gap between minority and white students. Teachers hold the power to make the changes necessary to bridge these gaps in education and positively impact all students, regardless of any differences. Students' achievement should not vary based on race, ethnicity, or cultural background. Far too often, minority students score lower on standardized assessments and overall grade point averages than their white peers (Harry et al., 2007; Kober, 2011). Additionally, these students are overrepresented in special education classes and disciplined due to behavior much more often than their white peers (Harry et al., 2007; Broderick & Leonardo, 2016).

Many studies have shown that teachers may hold implicit biases about groups of students that can further expand the growing achievement gap (Valencia, 1997; Bondy et al., 2007; Vincent et al., 2011; Staats, 2015; Warikoo et al., 2016; Worrell, 2021). Implementing culturally responsive pedagogies is highly effective in bridging the achievement gap and benefitting all

students in a multitude of ways (Singham, 2003; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Bondy et al., 2007; Vincent et al., 2011; Griner et al., 2013; Jeynes et al., 2015; Staats, 2015; Roessingh, 2020). If these practices are not implemented in the classroom, schools run the risk of widening the achievement gap between our minority and white students even further. Schools must work to provide strategies to recognize and reform teacher implicit bias and implement culturally responsive pedagogies to ensure all of our students have the opportunity to learn to the best of their abilities.

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