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Abstract

Culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies (CRSPs) are foundational for transforming students' learning environments, yet little is known about their impact on teachers. Although teachers generally recognize the need for CRSPs, limited resources and competing demands place teachers at risk for burnout. We investigated CRSPs as a predictor of burnout, and the influence of demographic moderators among California in-service educators. Findings demonstrated that teacher use of students' cultural backgrounds predicted decreased burnout, while considering the impact of racism increased burnout, with grade level of instruction demonstrating significant moderating effects. Implications for teacher educators, school leaders, and policy makers are discussed.

Keywords

culturally relevant pedagogies, teacher burnout, well-being

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The U.S. public school system is more diverse than ever, with representation of students from a wide range of racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds in classrooms across the country (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2024). As of 2024, more than half of the 5.8 million students enrolled in California public schools are students of color (identifying as Hispanic, Black, Asian, two or more races, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Pacific Islander; Deng et al., 2025). Furthermore, California schools are now educating more low-income students and English-language learners (Brighthouse et al., 2018). This is happening across regions like Los Angeles, which has historically experienced population density, and in rural areas, where schools are now just beginning to experience demographic shifts (Carver-Thomas et al., 2021; Milner, 2012a). Yet our system of education—and the pedagogical practices most often employed—often fail to reflect or affirm the lived experiences of these students. Thus, there is a need to integrate asset-based practices that disrupt the “cultural mismatch” between students’ culture and how—and what—they learn (Howard, 2001). Culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies (CRSPs; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2021) are frameworks and pedagogical practices that have been found to profoundly transform students’ learning experiences (Paris, 2021). We use the term CRSPs to encompass three related frameworks: culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2021), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017), which we elaborate upon further in this paper. Currently, less is known about the work of teachers implementing CRSPs in their classrooms each day. Further, nascent research has explored the connection between CRSPs and educator well-being. While many advocate for the use of CRSPs to improve student and school-level outcomes, it is unclear how the *demands* and/or *resources* associated with using CRSPs impact educators’ well-being and burnout. Although many highlight the undue burden placed on educators to bring forth social and educational change, we posit that CRSPs may hold unexplored promise for understanding, and even remediating, teacher burnout (Morrison et al., 2019; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

A Review of Relevant Literature: Culturally Relevant, Responsive, and Sustaining Pedagogies

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) published the seminal paper, “But That’s Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,” building upon her 1994 book, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African-American Children*, in which she articulated a framework for teaching

that centered students' academic success in addition to (rather than at the expense of) their cultural and psychosocial well-being. Through her research studying the practices of Black teachers, she developed the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), which emphasize (1) fostering academic success (i.e., maintaining high expectations, using asset frames, and valuing students); (2) developing and maintaining cultural competence (i.e., nurturing cultural integrity and leveraging culture as a vehicle for learning); and (3) cultivating critical consciousness (i.e., sociopolitical consciousness "to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities"; pp. 160–162). Now, two decades later, her ideas have become a bedrock upon which the field of education understands and explores "good teaching"—theoretically, conceptually, and empirically. Many scholars have explored—and built upon—Ladson-Billings's initial conceptualization of CRP. There have been two notable expansions, the first of which is Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), which uses the "cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching more effectively" to (1) develop knowledge about ethnic and cultural diversity in curriculum; (2) demonstrate care and build learning communities; (3) communicate with ethnically diverse students; and (4) respond to ethnic diversity in instruction (Gay, 2002, p. 106). The second, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP), centers what "Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and all Global Majority communities have always done to sustain their young people and families through teaching and learning, including in formal and informal education settings" (Ladson-Billings et al., 2024 4, p. 472). CSP's key features include (1) centering communities, their languages, practices, and knowledge; (2) promoting student and intergenerational agency and input; (3) working to be in a good relationship with the land and the people of the land and building reciprocal relationships; (4) finding structured opportunities to contend with internalized oppression, false beliefs, and critical assessment (Paris, 2021, p. 367). Importantly, as these scholars have noted, the expansions and iterations should not be seen as in conflict with one another, but rather, "mutually enriching scholarship" that assumes a strengths-based tradition (Paris, 2021, p. 365) and seeks to dismantle deficit approaches to educating racially/ethnically diverse students. These asset-based approaches consider the sociopolitical contexts of schools, embrace a dynamic view of culture, center student voice, and empower teachers to support the needs of students, particularly in navigating vast educational inequities (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Paris & Alim, 2014; Stein et al., 2024). The critical conceptual nuances, iterations, and benefits of these approaches have been explored extensively in the literature (Byrd, 2016; Franco et al., 2024a; Gay, 2010, 2023; Ladson-Billings, 2014, 2021;

Paris & Alim, 2014). Additionally, studies have built upon this work by exploring CRSPs within specific academic content—investigating the merit of these practices in, for example, math (e.g., Bonner, 2014; Abdulrahim & Orosco, 2020), social studies (e.g., Martell, 2013; Milner, 2014), science (e.g., Laughter & Adams, 2012), reading (e.g., Clark, 2017; Feger, 2006), and writing (e.g., Murphy & Murphy, 2016). In the current study, in an application to social and emotional learning (SEL; described below), we draw upon the most recent work by Ladson-Billings (2021), which situates CRSPs together to ensure that educators “open up worlds of possibilities for each student to bring [their] whole self into the classroom and into the world” (p. 353).

CRSPs are lauded as central to how all learning takes place (Gay, 2010). Literature has investigated what CRSP implementation and practice can look like (e.g., Morrison et al., 2008), often underscoring its connection to student outcomes. Specifically, studies find that CRSPs promote student outcomes, including students’ perceptions of teachers’ care (Savage et al., 2011), student reading achievement (Cantrell et al., 2023), and graduation and college-going rates (Howard & Terry, 2011). Byrd (2016) found that student perceptions of CRSPs (e.g., using real-world examples and creating a climate of respect) were significantly associated ($p < .05$) with interest in school and belonging and marginally associated ($p = .06$) with grades. Qualitative studies of teachers in urban settings have found that CRSPs helped students use critical thinking to identify and interrogate injustices, while particularly empowering Black students emotionally, socially, and academically (Esposito et al., 2012; Esposito & Swain, 2009). Case studies of urban schools and districts have similarly found that CRSPs may enhance students’ ability to understand their histories as well as support their class participation, engagement, grades, and enrollment in advanced placement classes (Howard & Terry, 2011; Milner, 2011).

Beyond student outcomes, the leveraging of CRSPs has been found to empower parent engagement, build teacher empathy, improve teacher–student relationships, and encourage leadership to challenge institutionalized racism (Bottiani et al., 2019; Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015). However, research has also found that many in-service educators feel unprepared to implement CRSPs effectively, citing the need for additional resources, training, and institutional support (Hernandez, 2022; Morrison et al., 2008). Despite these known benefits for students, limited research has explored CRSPs in relation to teacher well-being.

Teacher Burnout and the Job Demands–Resources Model

Cumulative and prolonged experiences of stress, associated with workplace burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2003), is common in education. While teachers

often report positive views towards CRSPs, when teachers feel inadequately prepared to effectively implement them (Hernandez, 2022; Morrison et al., 2008), this may increase work-related stress. Burnout has been defined as “a psychological syndrome emerging as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job” (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, p. 103; Salovita & Pakarinen, 2021). Burnout is commonly conceptualized as consisting of three dimensions: depersonalization (i.e., negative, cynical attitudes towards students), lack of accomplishment (i.e., negative self-evaluation), and exhaustion (i.e., chronic fatigue), with exhaustion argued as central to the whole construct (Fernet et al., 2013; Maslach & Leiter, 2016, 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). In the current study, we draw upon the job demands–resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001), which is recognized as a prominent model for understanding burnout among teachers (Oliveira et al., 2021; Prieto et al., 2008). Job demands include physical, psychological, social, and organizational factors that require effort and are associated with psychological costs (e.g., exhaustion and work overload; Demerouti et al., 2001; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Job resources, however, include factors that support individuals in accomplishing their work-related tasks (e.g., professional development [PD] and public recognition; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Under the JD-R model, *job demands* may drain mental and physical energy, thus contributing to emotional exhaustion, while *job resources*, or lack thereof, may deplete motivation and lower engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Fernet et al., 2013). Research has documented the detrimental effects of burnout for educators’ mental health and well-being (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016), job satisfaction (Klassen, 2010), job performance (Maslach & Leiter, 2017), and engagement (e.g., turnover and absenteeism; Ingersoll et al., 2014). Educator burnout has also been found to have implications for student outcomes ranging from achievement (Herman et al., 2018) to adjustment (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016).

As educator burnout becomes more widespread, identifying mechanisms related to this problem requires more attention. In the literature, two sources are often attributed to contemporary teacher burnout. The first is the cultural mismatch between in-service educators who are predominantly White and middle class and the increasingly diverse student population (Goldenberg, 2014). In California, although a majority of educators identify as White, only 25% of students identified as White in 2024 (California Department of Education, 2024). This cultural mismatch has been linked to lower job satisfaction and increased stress and burnout among teachers (Bottiani et al., 2019). The second and more recent source of burnout is the COVID-19 pandemic, where years later, teachers continue to report increased workloads, navigation of new teaching modalities, and diminished student well-being (Marshall et al., 2024). A meta-analysis found that 52% of teachers reported feeling burned out

(Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2023), which many attribute to the alarming rates at which teachers are leaving the profession (Pressley, 2021). Guided by the JD-R model, we explore a third prospective antecedent of burnout—CRSPs. On one hand, burnout related to CRSPs may come from a lack of resources, such as limited administration support or PD. Conversely, CRSPs may actually function as a resource, providing teachers with increased efficacy and motivation from their work. Given the importance of CRSPs for reducing educational inequities and improving student learning, we posit that it is critical that those tasked with their implementation receive adequate support. The JD-R model can help us understand the interplay between demands and supports and ultimately identify strategies for reducing burnout and promoting more culturally relevant teaching.

Linking CRSPs and Teacher Burnout

Currently, the research linking CRSPs to educator burnout is scant and offers limited insight on the direction of the association. We investigate this relationship to counter harmful perceptions of CRSPs as an “add-on” and its superficial, misapplication in classrooms (Evans et al., 2020). Uncovering the link between CRSPs and burnout can honor the tenets of CRSPs as a means for liberation and help address inequities impacting teaching and learning conditions. Teachers are consistently tasked with going above and beyond to meet the needs of their diverse students by enacting CRSPs, often without the support of structural changes that necessitated the need for CRSPs in the first place. Siwatu et al. (2017) posited that teachers who are ill-prepared to teach students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds may doubt their abilities to implement culturally responsive classroom management practices and thus report higher levels of burnout. In contrast, the vast research on the positive implications of CRSPs for student outcomes has informed an emerging body of work indicating that these practices may decrease educators’ reports of burnout (see Siskind et al., 2023). In a study of pre-service educators, Chahar Mahali and Sevigny (2022) found that higher CRT self-efficacy was associated with lower levels of burnout. Given the limited evidence linking CRSPs and educator burnout, further exploration into this association is necessary. There may be a range of mitigating factors explaining this link, which we provide a brief overview of below.

We must first consider the many demands that teachers face beyond implementing CRSPs. In addition to imparting knowledge and supporting the personal growth of students (Malin, 2021), teachers are responsible for high levels of administrative work and emotional labor (Smith et al., 2025). In Smith et al.’s (2025) study on teachers’ emotional labor, teachers described

spending weekends working, constantly balancing competing priorities, and feeling so busy that they could not take time off while sick. Considering this, we believe it is the cumulative effects of these demands, not the expectations of CRSPs, that might explain why teachers implementing CRSPs experience burnout. Next, teachers' own identities may explain the association between CRSPs and burnout. While teachers of color may be empowered by their use of CRSPs (Pasternak, Harris, et al., 2023), research also finds that they experience immense pressure to be role models for students and form strong connections (Pasternak, Evans, et al., 2023). Furthermore, teaching demands may co-occur with their own experiences of racial microaggressions (e.g., unfair treatment and potential threats)—or racial battle fatigue—leaving them feeling othered, invisible, or isolated (Pizzaro & Kohli, 2020). These experiences are often the result of systemic issues that create working conditions and institutional contexts that may be racially hostile (Scott, 2025). Supportive conditions may include teachers being provided adequate planning time and input in decision-making (Scott, 2025). However, harmful institutional conditions may lead to educators having their identities questioned and little time to rest from hectic school days (Pizzaro & Kohli, 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). A significant relationship between CRSPs and burnout may illuminate “hidden” labor demanded of teachers tasked with enacting CRSPs in classrooms, without sufficient resources, to highlight a mechanism for systemic change.

Potential Demographic Moderators of CRSPs and Burnout

Despite the limited research linking CRSPs and burnout, there is consistent convergence of demographic factors explored in the literature, which often include gender, race, years of teaching experience, and grade level.

Gender. Meta-analytic evidence on burnout indicates a lack of consensus on the role of gender (Agyapong et al., 2022; Oliveira et al., 2021). Some studies have found that female teachers report higher CRT efficacy (Cruz et al., 2020) and assign greater importance to cultural responsiveness (Olivera-Aguilar et al., 2024), while others find no significant differences between females and males (Debnam et al., 2015). In the current study, we include gender as a study covariate.

Race. Research has frequently documented that teachers from racially/ethnically minoritized backgrounds are more likely to report greater readiness to use CRPs (McKoy, 2013) and be viewed as experts in addressing culture and race at their school, whereas White teachers often receive less socialization and training on the realities of racism in education (Cruz, 2020; Gaías et al., 2019). Currently, there are disparities in burnout reported by educators (Mahatmya et al., 2022), where teachers of color report greater demands for their time

and higher levels of stress (Fitchett et al., 2020; Griffiths et al., 2024). Coupled with research that has found that White teachers are less likely to use CRPs (Franco et al., 2024b; Larson & Bradshaw, 2017), we specifically examined this racial demographic as a moderator.

Years of experience. Currently, there is conflicting evidence on whether years of experience is related to CRSPs. Cruz et al. (2020) found that years of experience may be positively related to self-efficacy to implement CRPs, while Debnam et al. (2015) found no evidence for the association. Teaching is a highly stressful job, which may explain the high levels of burnout across all levels of experience (Jamaludin & You, 2019). Many argue that teachers *enter* the profession burned out, which may explain the high levels of burnout among novice teachers (Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Nguyen & Kremer, 2022), while others find that veteran teachers have more strategies and tools to prevent and address burnout (Agyapong et al., 2022). Alternatively, teachers experiencing burnout may leave the profession, rendering the average experienced teacher remaining in the profession with less burnout by nature of attrition. We explore years of experience as a moderator of the relationship between CRSPs and burnout.

Grade Level. Findings related to grade level in relation to CRSPs and burnout are often attributed to differences in the workload of educators and the diversity of the student body at different grade levels (Agyapong et al., 2022; Tatar, 1998; Tatar & Horenczyk, 2003). Secondary classrooms tend to be more heterogeneous and involve greater personal and emotional involvement with students (Tatar, 1998; Tatar & Horenczyk, 2003). Olivera-Aguilar (2024) found that elementary teachers were more likely to perceive cultural responsiveness as important. Typically, secondary teachers experience higher levels of burnout across dimensions of depersonalization and personal accomplishment (Salovita & Pakarinen, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). As teaching high school is linked to challenges with CRSP implementation (Hernandez, 2022; Ramsay-Jordan, 2020) and burnout (O'brennan et al., 2017), we hypothesized high school grade level instruction as a moderator.

The Present Study

The current study extends knowledge on the benefits of CRSPs by investigating whether teachers' use of CRSPs predicts later burnout. Much of the current work is cross-sectional and fails to identify *specific* pedagogical practices that may relate to burnout. Better understanding of how the implementation of CRSPs relates to teacher burnout could, if indicated, help to advocate for structural changes and resources to enable educators to *better* enact CRSPs, prevent burnout, improve retention, and ultimately support student success.

Through an item-level exploration of CRSPs, we examine each practice as a unique predictor, revealing variation in practices that might be more influential or behave differently in relation to burnout. Specifically, we sought to answer two research questions. First, to what extent do teacher reports of CRSPs predict their subsequent burnout? Second, to what extent do demographic factors (i.e., race, grade level, years of experience) moderate the association between CRSPs and burnout?

Methods

Participants and Procedures

We employed a secondary data analysis of surveys collected from in-service educators who enrolled in SEL Foundations through University of California, Berkeley in the spring of 2024. This 12-week graduate course provided instruction on classroom-based SEL with one of many learning objectives to be understanding SEL's role in promoting educational equity through culturally relevant, and healing-centered practices. Readers are directed to the following manuscripts to learn about the course instructors (Morris et al., in press), participants' motivations for course engagement (Morris et al., 2025)), learning outcomes (Duane et al., 2025a), and educators' self-selected improvement projects in their local schools (Duane et al., 2025b), in the context of a state-wide effort to improve SEL implementation (Shapiro et al., 2024).

Course participants completed an initial reflection assignment (containing a pre-course survey) at the start of instruction in February 2024 and a second reflection assignment (containing a post-course survey) during the last week of instruction in April 2024. All students were given the online assignments as a part of their course participation. A total of 699 students completed the pre-course survey, and 418 completed the post-course survey. Although the survey was primarily designed to provide an opportunity for learner reflection, inform instruction, and catalyze program improvement, students were also asked whether they consented for their responses to be used, secondarily, for research purposes, in accordance with a protocol approved by the University of California, Berkeley Institutional Review Board. The analytic sample consists of participants ($N = 366$) who completed both pre- and post-course surveys and consented to research.

Measures

Demographic Characteristics. We examined teachers' self-reported demographic characteristics including gender, race, years of experience, and grade level.

Gender was assessed with the question “Are you . . .” Response options included the following: a woman, a man, nonbinary, genderfluid or genderqueer, other, or prefer not to answer. Each response option was then transformed into a dichotomous variable (0 = not selected, 1 = selected). In our analyses, we included female gender as a covariate. The remaining three demographic variables were explored as moderators. Teachers’ years of experience was assessed with the question, “For how many years have you worked as a credentialed teacher?” Years of experience was measured as a continuous variable. Race was assessed by asking, “How do you best describe your race and ethnicity?” Response options included American Indian/Native Alaskan, Asian/Asian American, Black/African American, Middle Eastern/North African/Arab American, Non-Hispanic White/European American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, other, and prefer not to answer. Each response option was then transformed into a dichotomous variable (0 = not selected, 1 = selected). Our analyses used the variable non-Hispanic White/European American, or White, as a moderator. Grade level was assessed by asking educators, “What is the grade level of students with whom you primarily work?” Response options included Pk/Tk [pre/transitional kindergarten], kindergarten to second grade, third to fifth grades, sixth to eighth grades, and ninth to 12th grade. Each response was then transformed into a dichotomous variable (0 = not selected, 1 = selected). Our analyses used teaching ninth to 12th grade, or high school, as a moderating variable.

CRSPs. *CRSPs* were assessed with items selected from the Berkeley Assessment of Social and Emotional Learning - Teacher Voice (BASEL-TV; Shapiro et al., 2022), a self-report assessment. Researchers have previously used BASEL items to assess educators’ and educational leaders’ perceptions and self-reported actions in the context of teacher PD (Duane et al., 2025a) and the implementation of systemic SEL (Caouette et al., 2025; Metzger et al., 2025, 2026)). The CRSP items were developed using the Ladson-Billings CRP framework: “I am able to use my students’ cultural background to help make learning meaningful” (cultural competence); “I am able to examine curricula to determine whether they reinforce negative stereotypes,” and “I consider the impact of race and racism on experiences in school” (critical consciousness); and drawing on existing literature of CRSPs that encourages CRSP student self-report surveys to “direct[ly] focus on race and culture in the classroom” (Bryd, 2016, p. 6): “I consider how bias may shape my interpretations of behavior.” For all items, respondents rated their agreement with the statement on a 4-point Likert scale (4 = *NO! definitely not true*, 3 = *no mostly not true*, 2 = *yes mostly true*, 1 = *YES! definitely true*). These response options have been validated and used in multiple studies over the past 40 years (Social Development Research Group, 2005–2019). All items were reverse-coded, where higher reports indicated higher endorsement.

Burnout. To assess burnout, we used the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OBI; Demerouti et al., 2003). The instrument consists of the subscales *emotional exhaustion* ($\alpha = .80$; e.g., “During my work, I often feel emotionally drained”, eight items) and *disengagement* ($\alpha = .72$; e.g., “I always find new and interesting aspects in my work”, eight items). Items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *disagree*, 4 = *strongly disagree*), and appropriate items were reverse-scored. Higher scores are undesirable, indicating higher emotional exhaustion and disengagement. The OBI has frequently been used to assess job-related burnout among educators (see César Dias et al., 2021; Sowden et al., 2022).

Research Team Positionality

Milner (2007) asserted that in the work of understanding our positionality as researchers, we must (1) understand ourselves, (2) understand ourselves in relation to others, (3) engage in reflection and representation, and (4) shift from self to system (p. 395). Accordingly, here, we elaborate our individual and collective position as they relate to how we come to this research on education, CRSPs, and burnout. We write collectively as a team of researchers with deep commitment to the equitable transformation of schools to promote the collective well-being of youth and educators. Our conceptualization of this article is reflective of our rich and varying racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, which shaped our own experiences as students and scholars. Our individual and shared experiences, assumptions, and biases informed the research questions, analysis, and influenced our interpretations.

The first author is a Black woman, racism scholar, and educator who recognizes how systemic racism shapes the way she understands and engages with CRSPs. Her experience as both a student and former pre-service educator in California makes her aware of not only the need but also the pride and demands associated with implementing CRSPs in classrooms. She has witnessed and experienced the need, and sometimes resistance, to disrupting racism in schools and research on educational processes. The second author is a White woman, current assistant professor, and former elementary teacher in a large urban emergent (Milner, 2012b) school district. She comes to this work with lived experience implementing CRSPs in the classroom; however, as a White woman, she is at a distance from the culture she seeks to embed in instruction and thus works to interrogate biases, interrupt racism, and dismantle deficit ideologies both personally and professionally. The third author is a Latina and former youth organizer and district-wide student engagement consultant. From her work and lived experiences, she has long recognized the need to disrupt racism, which informs her of the urgency, excitement, and

need for supporting the implementation of CRSPs in schools. Though she has not formally taught in classroom settings, she seeks to understand practice and draws upon her experiences collaborating with educators. The fourth author, an international undergraduate student, is a cisgender woman of Indian nationality and South Asian descent who recognizes that her middle-class socioeconomic background has afforded her various privileges. Growing up in Indian society, where mental health is often stigmatized, has profoundly influenced her perspective on how mental health must be addressed in educational institutions. The fifth author is the scientific director of a coordinated effort to improve SEL implementation statewide. She is a White woman who holds an imperative to produce actionable information for transforming systems to improve the well-being of young people. She brings experiences as a prevention scientist, school social worker, and mother of young children to her work.

Data Analysis

We began by exploring bivariate relationships among study variables and whether CRSPs varied across demographic characteristics using independent-sample *t*-tests. Cohen's *d* was calculated to assess the effect size. To address our research questions, we employed two separate hierarchical regression models using SPSS (29.02) to examine how CRSPs (Time 1) predict two dimensions of burnout, disengagement and emotional exhaustion (Time 2), and whether this association was moderated by demographic characteristics. The covariate (i.e., gender) was entered in the first step. Step 2 included the other demographic characteristics and CRSPs. The final step included two-way interaction terms between the CRSPs and three demographic variables (i.e., race = White, years of teaching experience, and grade level = high school). We focused our analysis on specific categories for race and grade level of instruction to simplify the comparison and improve statistical power. Although reducing the data in this way has its drawbacks (see the Discussion section), parsimony is justified by our sample size, and decisions are conceptually justified by the available literature on CRSPs and burnout.

Results

Preliminary Analyses of Demographic Factors, CRSPs, and Burnout

Results from an independent-sample *t*-tests indicated that teachers who identified as White reported less use of students' cultural backgrounds ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.57$) compared to non-White teachers ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.57$), a difference understood to be "medium" in magnitude ($d = 0.39$). There were no other

Table 1. Study Demographic Characteristics.

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	317	87.1
Male	47	10.4
Nonbinary	4	1.1
Other	2	.5
Prefer not to answer	9	2.5
Race		
American Indian/Native Alaskan	8	2.2
Asian/Asian American	29	8
Black/African American	11	3.0
Hispanic/Latinx	103	28.3
Middle Eastern/North African/Arab American	3	0.8
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2	0.5
Non-Hispanic White/European American	210	57.7
Other	15	4.1
Prefer not to answer	16	4.4
Grade level		
Pk/Tk	63	17.3
K to second	119	32.6
Third to fifth	139	38.1
Sixth to eighth	108	29.6
Ninth to 12th	86	23.6

Note. Some variable percentages exceed 100% due to a “select all that apply” response format.

significant demographic differences in teachers’ use of CRSPs or levels of burn-out (see Table 1). Correlations for all study variables are shown in Table 2. The four CRSPs were positively and significantly correlated with each other, with correlations ranging between .33 and .57. The two burnout subscales, emotional exhaustion and disengagement, were positively correlated ($r = .65$, $p < .01$), where higher emotional exhaustion was associated with higher disengagement.

Main Effects of Demographic and CRSP Variables

Results from the regression models are included in Table 2. For the demographic variables, results indicated that as years of experience increased, educators reported lower levels of disengagement ($B = .01$, $p < .05$). Findings demonstrated variation in how the CRSPs related to emotional exhaustion and disengagement. Higher reports of “I am able to use my students’ cultural background to help make learning meaningful” predicted lower levels of both

Table 2. Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations among Study Variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender (female)	-									
2. Race (White)	.05	-								
3. Years of experience	.06	.15**	-							
4. Grade (high school)	-.10	.03	.21**	-						
5. Examine curricula (CRSP1)	.02	.08	.10	.11*	-					
6. Consider bias (CRSP2)	-.09	.06	.02	-.03	.41**	-				
7. Consider racism (CRSP3)	-.05	-.06	-.04	.05	.48**	.57**	-			
8. Use cultural background (CRSP4)	-.04	-.18	-.02	-.06	.33**	.35**	.40**	-		
9. Disengagement	-.07	.05	-.14*	-.05	-.13*	-.08	-.05	-.17**	-	
10. Exhaustion	.01	.13*	-.08	-.01	-.06	-.02	-.06	-.11**	.65**	-
Mean	-	-	10.07	-	2.83	3.19	3.31	3.15	2.22	2.34
SD	-	-	7.59	-	0.71	0.54	0.55	0.58	0.33	0.71

Note. Female gender (0 = not selected, 1 = selected); White race (0 = selected, 1 = selected); high school grade level (0 = not selected, 1 = selected).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

disengagement ($B = -.09, p < .05$) and emotional exhaustion ($B = -.07, p < .05$). Conversely, higher reports of “I consider the impact of race and racism on experiences in school” predicted higher emotional exhaustion ($B = .10, p < .05$). There were no significant associations for reporting of “I am able to examine curricula to determine whether they reinforce negative stereotypes” or “I consider how bias may shape my interpretations of behavior” for disengagement or emotional exhaustion (Table 3).

CRSPs and Burnout: Demographic Factors as Moderators

Findings suggested that only grade level significantly moderated the association between CRSPs and burnout. High school teachers with higher reporting of “I consider how bias may shape my interpretations of behavior” reported greater emotional exhaustion ($B = .22, p < .05$). However, for PK/TK to eighth-grade teachers, higher reports of “I consider how bias may shape my interpretations of behavior” predicted lower emotional exhaustion (see Figure 1). Though nonsignificant for Pk/Tk to eighth-grade teachers (slope = $-.04, ns$), the slope for high school teachers was statistically significant from zero (slope = $.15, p < .05$).

Discussion

Empowering students and educators through the effective implementation of CRSPs is critical as U.S. schools become increasingly racially/ethnically diverse. While CRSPs were initially imagined as the foundation for transforming education for youth of color, critics argue that its current popularized implementation falls short of combating racism and White supremacy (Chang & Viesca, 2022). This suggests a need for training, ongoing support, and critical reflection to align CRSPs with their original intent. For many educators, when implementing CRSPs, the demands and resources across schools and broader sociopolitical contexts can “be a source of stress and frustration, but also a catalyst for a renewed agency and commitment to their students and their work” (Mirra & Rogers, 2020, p. 1047). Thus, we examined teachers’ reported enactment of CRSPs, not as a hindrance or source of stress, but as an opportunity to improve their own well-being. Guided by the JD-R model, we found that higher reports of “I am able to use my students’ cultural background to help make learning meaningful” predicted lower disengagement and lower emotional exhaustion, while “I consider the impact of race and racism on experiences in school” predicted increased emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, among high school teachers, there was a significant relationship between “I consider how bias may shape my interpretations of behavior” and emotional exhaustion. Our item-level analysis, although

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Demographic Factors and Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Pedagogies Predicting Burnout.

	Disengagement			Emotional exhaustion		
	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
Demographic factors						
Gender	-.06	.04	.15	-.03	.04	.43
Race	.04	.04	.30	.06	.04	.10*
Years of experience	-.01	.003	.02**	-.003	.002	.15
Grade level	-.02	.05	.60	-.03	.04	.43
Culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies						
I am able to examine curricula to determine whether they reinforce negative stereotypes. (CRSP1)	-.02	.03	.55	-.03	.03	.27
I consider how bias may shape my interpretations of behavior. (CRSP2)	-.03	.04	.51	-.03	.04	.48
I consider the impact of race and racism on experiences in school. (CRSP3)	.05	.05	.29	.10	.04	.02*
I am able to use my students' cultural background to help make learning meaningful. (CRSP4)	-.09	.04	.02*	-.07	.03	.04**
Adjusted R ²	.03			.03		
F	2.19		.02**	2.01		.04**
Two-way interactions						
CRSP1 × Race	-.03	.07	.68	-.11	.06	.06*
CRSP1 × Years of Experience	.001	.004	.82	-.01	.004	.14
CRSP1 × Grade	-.09	.09	.31	-.06	.08	.46
CRSP2 × Race	-.04	.09	.68	-.05	.08	.56
CRSP2 × Years of Experience	-.01	.01	.31	-.003	.01	.64

(continued)

Table 3. Continued.

	Disengagement			Emotional exhaustion		
	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
CRSP2 × Grade	.12	.12	.29	.22	.11	.04**
CRSP3 × Race	.16	.10	.09**	.14	.09	.10*
CRSP3 × Years of Experience	.01	.01	.14	.01	.01	.15
CRSP3 × Grade	.01	.03	.82	.03	.03	.25
CRSP4 × Race	.06	.08	.42	.07	.07	.31
CRSP4 × Years of Experience	-.01	.01	.26	-.004	.01	.45
CRSP4 × Grade	.10	.10	.31	.07	.07	.31
Adjusted R ²	.02			.04		
F	1.36		0.14	1.64		0.04**

Note. CRSP = culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies.

* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$.

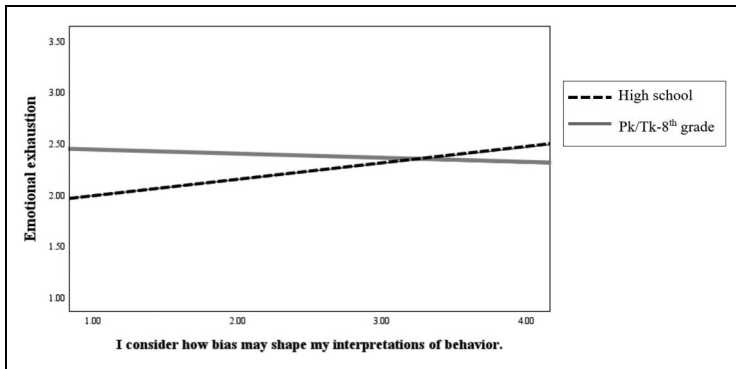


Figure 1. Two-way interaction between “I consider how bias may shape my interpretations of behavior” and grade level predicting emotional exhaustion.

exploratory, reveals specific CRSPs related to teacher burnout and have practical relevance for designing targeted supports.

CRSPs and Teacher Well-Being

Our initial findings indicated that teachers’ use of CRSPs significantly varied by race. Specifically, White teachers reported lower scores for “I am able to use my students’ cultural background to help make learning meaningful.” According to the JD-R model, these findings may be explained by the cultural mismatch between a steadily White teaching force and an increasingly racially diverse student body in California. Many may find this unsurprising, as research has found that compared to White teachers, teachers of color often report being more prepared to use CRSPs and adept at understanding students’ cultural codes (Gaias et al., 2019). It is not uncommon that teachers, particularly those of color, may feel immense responsibility to ensure students of color thrive (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). Thus, any emotional toll of working to transform schools—and unequal structures—can be seen as a symptom of broader institutional conditions that require change.

The emotional toll, or sense of accomplishment, that teachers experience as they are held accountable for meeting the standards of CRSPs and urban student learning makes this study an important step in understanding teacher burnout. A few studies have found that increased CRPs and CRT self-efficacy are associated with lower reports of burnout among teachers (Chahar Mahali & Sevigny, 2022; Siskin et al., 2023). Aligning with the JD-R, these may be the result of resources that help educators feel more motivated and engaged, thus reducing burnout. However, we illustrate specific pedagogical practices

related to burnout. Teachers who implement CRSPs are found to be more equity minded (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019), are confident in building relationships with students (Cruz et al., 2020), and report higher levels of satisfaction (Castro-Olivo, 2017), which may explain our results that using students' cultural backgrounds was associated with decreased emotional exhaustion and disengagement. Despite teachers often experiencing pressure to "solve systemic and institutional challenges ingrained in school districts" (Milner, 2016, p. 417), Bonner et al. (2018) found that educators report feeling excited to learn more about multicultural issues and help students better connect with their environments. Per Gay (2010), culturally relevant approaches should be emancipatory, that is, a means for releasing individuals from the constraints of mainstream knowledge, thus evoking pride and psychological liberation. Engaging with CRSPs can help educators "deconstruct standard epistemologies and challenging institutional systems of discrimination" (Alleman-Ghionda, 2012, p. 485). Perhaps, this psychological liberation permits teachers to take pride in their practice and display confidence in their work (Pasternak, Evans, et al., 2023; Pasternak, Harris, et al., 2023; Rutter & Jacobson, 1986), which can subsequently reduce burnout. However, we caution that those educators who may lack the necessary knowledge or skills, particularly in practices such as "considering race and racism" where they are less likely to receive adequate pre-service training, are at risk for diminished agency, which over time can limit their ability to adapt to work-related pressures and place them at risk for burning out (Hogan & White, 2021; Min et al., 2022).

Beyond Celebrating: The Need for More Criticality When Centering Student Culture

Recognizing student culture is an important component of CRSPs. It allows for teachers to center students' cultural funds of knowledge, assets, and lived experience to make learning meaningful (González et al., 2005). However, as others have written, embracing cultures—while important—still falls short of closing equity gaps (Evans et al., 2020). While teachers in this study demonstrated relatively high reports of "using students' cultural backgrounds," it was weakly, positively correlated with the other CRSPs. This may be because appreciating cultures and "celebrating differences" may be done in the absence of ongoing racial equity efforts (Gorski, 2016) or in place of much needed *critical* multicultural content (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Furthermore, having the skills to bring culture into the classroom alone does not prepare teachers to "recognize and respond to the racism and other injustices" (Gorski, 2016, p. 221). Thus, there is a need for educators to consciously confront their biases about racially/ethnically diverse students (Evans et al., 2020), engage in self-reflection to address

their own privileges (Nganga, 2015), and possess the critical consciousness needed to align these beliefs with their teaching practices (Pagán, 2022).

Beyond seeing CRSPs as a way to integrate culture into classrooms, we must consider what teachers' need in order to use CRSPs as a mechanism to combat racism. We found that higher reports of "I consider the impact of race and racism on student experiences" were related to increased emotional exhaustion. This aligns with existing literature suggesting that burnout is common among those engaged in anti-racist work (Gorski & Chen, 2015). Additionally, given that the work of teaching is one of the helping professions associated with increased burnout (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2023), educators may experience heightened levels of emotional exhaustion not only due to the inherent demands of the work but also because they are working to interrupt racism to support their students of color (Quaye et al., 2020). Considering the impact of race and racism on student experiences is tied to teachers' deep "commitment to supporting students of color and to confronting injustice" (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020, p. 976), and this responsibility is most often placed upon the shoulders of teachers of color who are viewed as experts (Gaías et al., 2019). Shifting from color-blind or color-evasive mindsets towards one that actively engages with issues of racism and power may be particularly emotionally and professionally taxing. Teachers of color have reported feeling on high alert and hypervigilant as they prepare for the next racist encounter that may impact them and their students (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018) and reported increased burnout (Mahatmya et al., 2022). However, it is important to note that for our mostly White sample, developing an understanding of privilege, power, and the skills to identify and interrupt racism may contribute to increased emotional exhaustion. Thus, it is incumbent upon the system of education to support and provide resources for the work teachers do.

Equipping Teachers with Skills to Implement CRSPs

As we have explored, there are important nuances to understanding the work of teachers implementing CRSPs. To be clear, the problem is not CRSPs. The challenge lies in the limited opportunities to infuse equity into pre-service and in-service training, curricula, and the daily structures and routines of school. Two central elements of CRSP are: (1) teachers' critical reflection on their own racial identity, and (2) an understanding of the social inequities that impact racially and ethnically diverse students. Interestingly, teachers in our study reported the highest mean scores for items related to considering bias ($M = 3.19$) and considering racism ($M = 3.31$). Pagán (2022) argued that "without this awareness, teachers' own biases can subvert their capacity to execute CRP practices" (p. 1). These two elements—considering bias and racism—

can be cultivated via teacher training and professional learning opportunities (Pagán, 2022) but require a balance of theoretical knowledge, space for reflection, and practical modeling (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Lambeth & Smith, 2016). Yet existing training opportunities may not provide educators sufficient opportunities to explore power, privilege, and internalized assumptions that are critical for transformative learning (Coppersmith et al., 2019; Lambeth & Smith, 2016)—and implementing CRSPs. For instance, Lambeth and Smith (2016) found that many teachers, particularly those who are White, recognize the importance of relating to their students but report feeling unprepared to translate this into their classroom practices. Thus, talking *to* teachers about social issues is insufficient; in PD, teacher educators “must model anti-racist, anti-oppressive practices for their students” (Borrero et al., 2016, p. 29).

Finally, we found that emotional exhaustion was highest among high school teachers with higher scores on the item “I consider how bias may shape my interpretations of behavior.” Beyond initial pre-service training, in-service educators continue to experience intersecting interpersonal and structural challenges that compete with their ability to take up CRSPs. These can include a lack of knowledge and skills (Min et al., 2022); social justice views that conflict with the color-blind racial attitudes in their school (McCarthy et al., 2023); personal hostility and defensiveness in response to training (Vaught & Castagno, 2020); underpreparedness in meeting the demands of a changing political climate (Coppersmith et al., 2019); and most notably, limited time and resources due to large class sizes (Bonner et al., 2018) and pressures to teach to test (Brown et al., 2022; Mirra & Rogers, 2020; Moore, 2024). The JD-R model has been used to explore prominent contributors to burnout, such as high workloads and role conflict. However, we acknowledge these factors and extend previous work by accounting for how structural characteristics associated with teachers’ grade level may also contribute to increased burnout. For example, Ramsay-Jordan (2020) found that the obsessive practices associated with standardized testing for high school students often conflicted with teachers’ efforts to use CRSPs. This suggests that these competing demands, not CRSPs themselves, may be the impetus behind burnout among teachers.

Implications

While CRSPs are most often lauded for transforming student learning, our findings also emphasize its relevance to teacher well-being. Our findings suggest that there are opportunities for teacher educators, school leaders, and policy makers to make systemic changes that support teachers’ implementation of CRSPs.

For Teacher Educators. By reimagining their curricula, teacher preparation programs can equip future teachers with the skills necessary to transform their classrooms (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) to be more culturally relevant and sustaining. Teacher educators can develop curriculum focused on cultivating teachers' social consciousness, practicing critical self-reflection, modeling anti-racist practices, and utilizing student and family engagement strategies (Pagan, 2020; Kumashiro, 2000). Through student and family engagement, teachers can learn practical skills for understanding and incorporating students' culture and background into the classroom and thus avoid superficial, assimilationist misappropriations of CRSPs (Evans et al., 2020). PD can be enhanced through sustained, collaborative, problem-centered, and contextually relevant opportunities that deviate from the one-stop workshop formats and instead encourage reflection, application, and collaboration (Allen et al., 2017). Such effective PD opportunities may incorporate active learning, provide follow-up support or coaching and ongoing workshop series, and support collaborative problem-solving through professional learning communities and teacher communities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2011).

For School Leaders. School- and district-level leaders, like principals and administrators, can help set priorities related to CRSPs and encourage teachers to integrate these practices into their year-long curriculum. Principals are well positioned and accountable for promoting school-wide reforms; without their support, CRSPs risk becoming temporary or disconnected from broader school-wide efforts (Khalifa et al., 2016). Leaders can support teachers' implementation by incorporating CRSPs into their school vision, aligning CRSPs with existing goals, and alleviating pressures related to competing priorities (e.g., high-stakes testing) and accountability measures (Moore, 2024). Importantly, school leaders are also well positioned to engage with teachers and families particularly amid political backlash and resistance to teaching on SEL, CRSPs, and equity (Finley & Esposito, 2022). School leaders can address teacher resistance "as a multilevel learning problem that stems from (a) limited understanding and belief in the efficacy of [culturally relevant education] and (b) a lack of know-how needed to execute it" (Neri et al., 2019, p. 197). To create a supportive climate for CRSPs, school leaders can educate teachers and families on CRSPs and their benefits (Sleeter, 2012). Leaders can also work to combat the feelings of emotional exhaustion that could accompany CRSP implementation. Structural changes like reducing class sizes, funding, adequate support, and a collaborative work culture could all buffer potential burnout—both in general and in relation to confronting racism.

For Policy Makers. California has recently revised its standards for the teaching profession, now explicitly integrating CRSPs. Importantly, education policy leaders can support the alignment of various standards to develop “an integrated, coherent system by extending them across a teacher’s career” (Muñiz, 2019) and allocate funding to CRSP PD efforts. Funding, which can be utilized for PD, coaching, and stipends, is essential for providing educators with the tools to actively integrate CRSPs into the structures and routines of schools. Educators with more resources to effectively implement CRSPs may feel more empowered and supported to implement CRSPs, thus less likely to burn out. By prioritizing CRSPs in school, district, and statewide goals, policy makers can allocate resources required to better support CRSP implementation ranging from developing culturally relevant curricula to integration of CRSPs into teacher certification and school accountability measures. Through increased training, ongoing support, funding, and political will, actors across the K–12 school system can help implement CRSPs without the burden of doing so in siloed, unsupportive environments.

Limitations and Future Directions

Findings from this study are not without limitations. First, data are from California educators enrolled in a graduate-level course. Considering the unique teaching standards in place in California, in addition to the demographic of students, findings may not generalize to educators in other contexts. Second, there may be selection bias based on who may enroll in a graduate-level course, although there were no out-of-pocket costs to educators (they received an enrollment subsidy), and some County Offices provided financial stipends for educators to enroll the course, which could have incentivized individuals who may not have otherwise done so to enroll. Thus, it is unclear how self-selection biases may impact the generalizability results. Future studies may consider investigating these relations among a sample of educators who have not enrolled in graduate-level PD. Third, the demographics of our sample consisted of predominantly White females, which limited our ability for in-depth examination into the moderating role of gender or varying racial groups. Future research should prioritize exploration into these processes among teachers of diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds, particularly given the documented hidden labor that educators of color face in schools. Furthermore, we did not include other sources of data, such as interviews or observational assessments, to assess teachers’ reported CRSPs. Future research should include observational assessments and triangulate self-report data to (1) understand how teachers’ practices relate to the cultural needs of students and (2) identify whether

differences between teachers' reported and observed behaviors explain their experiences of burnout.

In this study, we included only data for educators who had pre- and post-survey responses, therefore excluding educators who dropped, withdrew, or failed to complete one or both assignments. While a previous study did not find significant differences at pretest between teachers who enroll and complete the course and those who do not complete the course (Authors, 2025a), it is possible that unmeasured differences between these groups biased our results. This study was not designed to assess the impact of the course on CRSPs or well-being, as there was no relevant comparison group. However, prior work suggests that teacher burnout may decrease from pretest to posttest (Authors, 2025a). Finally, we did not test for differences by teachers' school site, racial composition, or other relevant school contextual characteristics, as school names were not collected.

Conclusions

Although CRSPs are traditionally leveraged as a mechanism for improving student outcomes, we found evidence that CRSPs are also associated with teacher well-being. Considering the growing diversity of students and the persisting social inequities in schools, CRSPs must be considered in relationship to student learning *and* the well-being of those tasked with implementing said practices in their classrooms each day. However, given the increasing demands educators face, simply urging teachers to implement CRSPs is insufficient. Our findings support the need for further examination of specific approaches to CRSPs. We found that using student's cultural backgrounds predicted decreased burnout, which makes an important contribution to the research literature. We also found that considering the impact of race and racism is related to increased emotional exhaustion. These findings suggest a need for improved training and support for educators implementing CRSPs, in order to embody the true vision of CRSPs of disrupting racial injustice and resisting practices that center Whiteness (Chang & Viesca, 2022). Ultimately, we write to highlight the *promise*, not burden, of CRSPs for promoting educator well-being and urge researchers, policy makers, and educational shareholders to recognize the urgency of this issue and collaborate for meaningful change in schools.

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