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A Training Intervention for Middle School Teachers on Culturally Relevant Instruction and Culturally Relevant Classroom Management Strategies

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A Training Intervention for Middle School Teachers on Culturally Relevant
Instruction and Culturally Relevant Classroom Management Strategies

by
Vivian Yakpo Newton

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
and School of Criminal Justice in Partial
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Approval Page

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Statement of Original Work

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Vivian Yakpo Newton

Name

August 13, 2020

Date

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Abstract

A Training Intervention for Middle School Teachers on Culturally Relevant Instruction and Culturally Relevant Classroom Management Strategies. Vivian Yakpo Newton, 2020: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: Culturally Relevant Education, Cultural Diversity, Classroom Environment, Middle School Teachers, Cultural Awareness

This applied dissertation was designed to determine the effectiveness of the Middle School Teacher Training Intervention on the application of culturally relevant instruction and classroom management instructions by teachers in a Title I middle school in the southeastern United States. This school lacked culturally relevant instruction and behavior management, despite its teachers having undergone the training program. It also had significant identifiable gaps in the academic achievement of its students, which raised questions about the efficacy and inclusivity in its educational environment. The lack of cultural competence of middle school teachers and administrators contributes to the suboptimal performance of students from minority communities in the United States, which was reflected in the Title I middle school located in the southeastern United States.

The researcher conducted interviews and focus-group discussions with teachers in a Title I middle school in the southeastern United States with 808 sixth through eighth graders. Ten teachers participated. Their perceptions of the state and effectiveness of culturally relevant instruction and classroom management instructions in teacher training and teaching practice were explored.

The findings indicated that the training program had influenced the adoption of culturally relevant instruction and behavior management strategies in the school, although the teachers with more than 10 years of experience were influenced more than those with fewer years. More experienced teachers used more complex, diverse, and broader instructions and behavior management strategies than their less experienced colleagues. However, the prevalence of single strategies among all participants indicated the pervasiveness of underlying self-efficacy beliefs and indecisiveness in choosing multiple strategies due to reactance and inability to translate theory into classroom practice. Future interventions should focus on translating theory into practice to facilitate instruction and behavior management practices that are truly culturally relevant.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Cultural diversity in the educational sector connotes the extent to which learning needs, particularly those emanating from differential cultural beliefs and practices are met in a multicultural setting (Yuan, 2018). However, the educational landscape of the United States lacks a robust framework to accommodate the diverse learning needs of children who have not yet adequately assimilated themselves in American norms and mores (Williams, 2018). According to Williams, the lack of cultural competence among middle school teachers is one of the barriers to the implementation of culturally diverse programs in middle school education.

Williams (2018) stated that it is important that middle school teachers, as well as school administrations, align instructional environments in such a way that the learning needs of all the students, regardless of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds are properly identified and met. In this backdrop, the current study sought to explore whether the American educational system can offer equitable learning and developmental opportunities to all of the students and how cultural diversity can be strengthened in the educational environment.

Many countries consist of people of diverse cultures. Pluralistic countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa, Canada, and Australia, continue to experience high numbers of immigrants and their nations are faced with difficulties in providing opportunities for these diverse groups to be included in cultural, socio-political, and educational systems effectively while maintaining their uniqueness (Gabriel, Woolford-Hunt, & Matthews, 2010). Therefore, the increase of diversity in schools requires teachers who are trained in cultural responsiveness to play a central role in the

acculturation of immigrant students in society (Arslan & Rata, 2013). Arslan and Rata (2013) also stated that this would help teachers address the racial tensions, prejudices, and anxieties that are common in multicultural classrooms.

Research Problem

The problem explored in this study involved the lack of culturally relevant instruction (CRI) and culturally relevant classroom management (CRCM) strategies in a middle school located in the southeastern United States. Recent empirical research, for instance, Williams (2018) and Yuan (2018) indicated that lack of teachers' understanding toward cultural diversity leads to the discriminatory provision of learning opportunities in the American educational sector, which continues to obstruct learning paths for the children who belong to the immigrant as well as minority communities. Consequently, identifiable gaps in the academic achievement of middle school children remained persistent in a Title I school in the target state, which raises questions of efficacy as well as the inclusivity in the educational environment (Yuan, 2018).

In addition to these practical manifestations of the lack of CRI and CRCM strategies, Yuan (2018) noted that little attention had been directed toward the exploration of teachers' perspectives concerning this type of instruction. Yuan made suggestions on how the traditional teacher education programs can be reformed to meet the needs of the modern multiracial and multicultural student population. These include creating linkages between course work and field experiences.

Background and Justification

Several studies (Alghamdi, 2017; Beutel & Tangen, 2018) have presented justification for the proposed study. Alghamdi (2017) and Beutel and Tangen (2018) contended that the achievement gap in the academic performance of Caucasian and non-

Caucasian students is widened by the lack of CRI and CRCM strategies in middle schools. They noted that non-Caucasian (i.e., minority) students are lacking the support they need to excel. The National Center for Education Statistics (2017) indicated that, despite signs of growing diversity among teachers, nationwide statistics on the teaching force during the 2015-2016 school year revealed that most teachers (above 80%) were White, and more than 77% of the teachers at the elementary and secondary level were female.

Alghamdi (2017) and Beutel and Tangen (2018) revealed that learners belonging to minority communities persistently show lower performance on achievement standards, whereas those belonging to the majority and well-off classes score significantly higher on educational tests (Alghamdi, 2017; Beutel & Tangen, 2018). Williams (2018) argued that demographic attributes, cultural understanding, perceptions of school administrations and teachers toward cultural diversity, and the extent to which schools focus their attention on strengthening cultural competency were key underlying constructs that determined the extent of support that learners belonging to diverse cultures receive in American schools.

The No Child Left Behind Act and, more recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act envisaged an elaborative course for developing an expansive accountability framework for school and system leaders to help address the diverse needs of students belonging to different cultures (Sandell & Tupy, 2015). Williams (2018) added that, despite these legislative measures and many other institutional reforms, lack of cultural competence by the teachers continues to remain one of the major causes behind widening or, in some places, persistent achievement gaps (Williams, 2018).

Yuan (2018) commented on the linkage between a lack of cultural diversity and low student achievement. In his writings, Yuan advocated for further exploration of the

issue of deficient cultural competence in schools, especially from the teachers' perspective. The objective of the researcher was to explore ways in which schools as institutions can work toward enhancing cultural sensitivity among staff, teachers, and children, as well as parents of the children.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

The existing body of literature on lack of CRI and CRCM strategies takes into account factors, such as social prejudices, the stereotypical image of others, ethnocentrism, and economic considerations, which lead toward the negative perception of teachers and students belonging to majority classes (Alghamdi, 2017). Another strand of scholarly inquiries by Asowayan, Ashreef, Samar, and Omar (2017) focused on the implications of the lack of CRCM among middle school teachers especially concerning the deficient academic performance of the minority group learners.

Capitalizing on the findings on the factors and implications of the deficient cultural diversity in schools, scholars such as Sandell and Tupy (2015), Walker (2019), and Williams (2018), had also focused attention on formulating or, otherwise, identifying models and strategies. They revealed that models and strategies can be integrated into the school environment to boost the cultural competence of teachers, educational leaders, and learners, with the object to harness greater cultural sensitivity among these vital stakeholders (Sandell & Tupy, 2015; Walker, 2019; Williams, 2018).

A review of the existing literature revealed a dearth of teachers' and parents' perspectives on the causation and implications of the lack of cultural diversity in school staff and students. Conversely, Williams (2018) and Yuan (2018) asserted the need of further research to explore strategies that all the key stakeholders, including teachers, students, school administrations, and parents, favored as being most constructive toward

addressing issues emanating from culturally diverse classrooms and resultant behavioral patterns of these stakeholders. These authors demonstrated their support for the findings of other researchers, such as those of Sandell and Tupy (2015) and Walker (2019). These researchers sought to bridge this research gap and sought to explore the problem of the lack of culturally relevant instruction and culturally relevant classroom management strategies.

Audience

The study was designed to focus on middle school teachers with the underlying object to understand and improve their cultural competence and explore their use of CRI and CRCM strategies. In this backdrop, participants for this study included middle school teachers who teach in classrooms where students of mixed abilities and diverse cultural backgrounds attend the lessons. The intended audience also included middle school administrators, students, and parents with a focus on cultural diversity and work toward establishing a culturally responsive educational system.

It is expected that this study will increase awareness about the importance of CRI and CRCM. It is also hoped that teachers and administrators will become more accepting of training that espouses instructions that are culturally relevant and will close the student achievement gap. More specifically, it is expected that this empirical research study would benefit middle school students and their parents by increasing test scores and boosting students' academic achievement.

Setting of the Study

The setting of the study was a Title I middle school in the southeastern United States. The school had 808 students in Grades 6 to 8 with a student-teacher ratio of 16:1. The mission statement of the school expresses the providing of a diverse 21st-century

learning experience; therefore, it is expected to accommodate the diversity of the student populations, which is prevalent in contemporary society. The Title I program provides opportunities for parents to become partners with the school in promoting education for their children at home and at school.

Researcher's Role

The researcher is a Student Success Coach at a Title I middle school in the target state. The researcher has a master's degree in school counseling and is a dedicated student success advocate, with over 10 years of professional experience in academic support. The researcher also provides educational planning and career development assistance, as well as guidance to students in navigating their educational careers.

As a Student Success Coach, the researcher uses the early warning system to monitor students' progress and works with teachers and parents to make sure each student is successful. The researcher reviewed the linkage between deficient performances of students and their demographic features and explored opinions of teachers and school administrators regarding the effectiveness of CRI and CRCM toward reducing achievement gaps.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of a training intervention for middle school teachers on culturally relevant instruction and classroom management instructions. The central concepts or major variables in the study are based on the observations made by Fylkesnes (2018) regarding the individualized understanding of cultural diversity, cultural competence, teacher training, and intervention. This study explored the perception of teachers toward a lack of culturally relevant instructions and what classroom management strategies are found to be

productive toward boosting the middle school's cultural competence (Fylkesnes, 2018).

To explore this broader objective, the study focused on teacher respondents and sought to explore their perspectives on cultural diversity and its deficient state in the contemporary educational landscape. Furthermore, as suggested by Sandell and Tupy (2015) and Yuan (2018), the current study also explored further the various implications that the lack of CRI in an educational environment may have toward the academic performance of learners, especially those belonging to minority communities. Moreover, the researcher sketched out a comprehensive framework for strengthening CRI in middle schools and CRCM by identifying strategies that would support teacher respondents and school administrations to build a culturally responsive learning environment (Fylkesnes, 2018).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter discusses the existing literature by identifying and contrasting the different themes emerging from the studies. The sources used consisted of mainly peer-reviewed journal articles, although they also included books, organizational and government publications, expert opinions, and news items from reputable media houses and doctoral theses. The themes include the state of instruction and behavior management in classrooms, the theoretical framework, achievement gaps, discipline gaps, teachers and cultural competence, CRI, strategies for improving CRI, and CRCM strategies.

State of Instruction and Behavior Management in Classrooms

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), a majority of learners in the middle schools in the target state exhibited large achievement and discipline gaps. It is expected that integrating the achievement disparities and discipline gaps confronting the majority of learners in the state would be addressed by integrating CRCM and teaching practices in middle schools. Siwatu, Putman, Starker-Glass, and Lewis (2017) noted that the lack of cultural competence among educators resulted in low self-efficacy in the management of classrooms and minority learners. In turn, the behavioral sanctions imposed by these teachers often resulted in academic underperformance. In the same vein, Strauss and Ingram (2019) noted that teachers innately appreciated the essence of classroom management concerning student attainment, but little effort had been directed toward documenting the most useful strategies in Title elementary schools. Strauss and Ingram added that teachers in the target state faced multiple challenges, including low pay, coupled with a high cost of living. Also, students come to school with a range of hitches: poverty, abusive

environments, dysfunctional homes, and language barriers. Educators must find a means of managing these encounters to ensure that learners collaborate and learn (Strauss & Ingram, 2019).

Larson, Pas, Bradshaw, Rosenberg, and Day-Vines (2018) revealed that teachers, particularly those in urban settings, are often frustrated with running a classroom. The authors reported a mismatch of cultural norms between teacher and learners, inadequate multicultural training, and insufficient continuous professional advancement. They concluded that high control was needed among urban schools (Larson et al., 2018). Similarly, Strauss and Ingram (2019) indicated that teachers needed to study their ethnocentrism practices and assume a social justice mindset, along with antiracist habits in the classroom if they were to reduce the increased intellectual and discipline disparities in schools. Strauss and Ingram argued that, once these measures were taken, educators were noted to start desiring collaborative and diverse classes rather than well-coordinated ones. In the end, Strauss and Ingram concluded that handling classroom management from a diversity perspective was a broad and challenging process.

This study sought to explore the role and need of teacher-centered intervention for improving CRI and CRCM in a Title I middle school in the southeastern United States. To formulate the research framework and shape the study, an extensive review of existing literature on the lack of CRI in American schools was conducted as prescribed by Larson et al. (2018). The researcher conducted a search using online databases, including ERIC, Google Scholar, Ebscohost, and ProQuest to locate recently published (i.e., in the last 5 years) and accredited studies that focused on teachers' perspectives toward CRI and CRCM and how it can be improved under the domain of inclusive education (Strauss & Ingram, 2019).

Articles were examined for analyses relevant to critical concepts of this report: culturally responsive education, cultural diversity, achievement gaps, discipline gaps, teacher's cultural competence, and CRI. The rest of the chapter is organized as follows: theoretical framework, understanding cultural diversity, cultural diversity, competence, and American education, achievement gaps, discipline gaps, teachers and cultural competence, CRI, strategies for improving culturally relevant teaching, CRCM strategies, and student understanding of cultural diversity (Larson et al., 2018).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted an action research methodological framework. This approach was crucial in generating actionable insight for a Title I middle school in the target state. Action research seeks to solve a problem and at the same time elicit new knowledge and understanding (Marton, Cheung, & Chan, 2019). It allows the use of data-collection methods for concurrent triangulation. To enable a collaborative transformation, this study involved interviews (see Appendix A) and focus-group discussions of teachers at a local school in the target state. The study aimed at informing a professional training program to help teachers in delivering CRI and enhance their classroom management practices. As noted by Marton et al. (2019), the researcher expected that the training interventions would benefit teachers and learners by addressing the objectives, resources, and difficulties experienced in contemporary classrooms.

Larson et al. (2018) noted that three models formed the basis for CRI and CRCM strategies: social constructive, social learning, and critical race theories. The latter is intended to address racist habits in society (Larson et al., 2018). It can enable teachers to challenge unwarranted practices in workplaces and create safe environments for individuals to convey their diversity of ideas and capabilities. The social constructive

model centers on how people acquire new concepts. It appreciates the social component of learning, which stabilizes cognitive, interactive, and environmental factors. Balancing these concepts forms a basis for a culturally receptive classroom. Thus, Larson et al. concluded that the social constructive theory shared a similar perceptive with the social learning model.

Given the grounded nature of the research problem (i.e., lack of CRI and CRCM), this study employed a framework of the culturally responsive education, drawing upon the works of Ladson-Billings (2014), who envisaged the core elements of culturally relevant pedagogy and suggested evaluation of these constructs be evaluated through the academic achievement of the learners, cultural competence of the instructional environment, and sociopolitical consciousness of the teachers and administrators. Likewise, the concept of locus of control is relevant in this discussion since it influences the perception of an individual toward a certain behavior (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Teachers' perceptions toward cultural diversity, their acceptance, and readiness to implement interventions to enhance cultural competence in classrooms were explored in this study to reveal the expectancies of the teachers toward the intervention.

Critical race theory. Ledesma and Calderón (2015) revealed that the critical race theory was initiated by activists and researchers seeking to identify the connection between power, opportunity, community, and racism. When the Civil Rights Movement became incapacitated in the 1970s, critical race theory was developed to continue advocating for racial reforms. Critical race theory involves five tenets: inter-centricity of ethnicity and racism, prevailing ideology challenge, devotion to social justice, the significance of firsthand knowledge, and the use of interdisciplinary strategies.

Ledesma and Calderón (2015) noted that the ideals associated with critical race

theory can be simplified into two sobering insights. Racism can be perceived as a regular component of American culture, which is often expected. It manifests in housing favoritism, employment habits, and learning opportunities. Ledesma and Calderón revealed that, previously, scholars had identified that ethnic equality could only be accepted if it happened while sustaining the existing economic, informative, and social requirements. They also observed that there had been far-reaching disparities among different races within American society (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015).

Ledesma and Calderón (2015) supported the notion that inadequate social capital was the reason behind low attainments by students of color that had been questioned severely. Studies have not proven the truth of this concept. However, cultural wealth possessed by communities of color has not been appreciated as a valuable resource by schools. Ledesma and Calderón argued that such a lack of cultural recognition keeps these students from high academic achievements. These researchers classified the realms of cultural wealth as aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigation, social, and resistance resources.

Ledesma and Calderón (2015) noted that these capitals often lead to the development of a capacity to navigate in harsh and unaccommodating environments, boldness, bilingual abilities, healthy family relations, support networks, resiliency, and inspiration to handle oppressive structures. Ledesma and Calderón concluded that many scholars had used the power of narrative to confront the dominant American mentality by highlighting the experiences of people of color to recognize and challenge racism.

Social learning theory. Proposed by Bandura (1986), social learning theory highlights the importance of observational learning, attitudes, and the emotional reaction of others. Bandura explained that individuals could hardly learn anything on their own,

rather it is the observational modeling of others that predicts the adoption of behavior.

According to Bandura, the observed information shapes individuals' perceptions and, at a later stage, serves as the guide for action.

Bandura (1986) noted that individuals could better retain the modeled behavior by coding it into words, labels, pictorial form, or actions by observing the behavior of others. According to Bandura, social learning theory also explained that adaption of modeled behavior was more likely to happen when the behavior was more likely to lead toward valued outcomes, had functional value, and had an admired status for the observer. Constructs from social learning theory were employed in the conceptual framework of this study to better understand the perceived efficacy of the training intervention and predict the adaption of behavior that is likely to improve the cultural competence of teachers.

Social constructivist theory. This model provides another theoretical consideration for realizing CRCM. Constructivist frameworks are related to the process of learning. According to Amineh and Asl (2015), the social constructive theory advanced by Lev Vygotsky varied from those of his early counterparts. Amineh and Asl argued that Vygotsky supposed that cognitive functions resulting from social interactions, and learning was more than mere assimilation and adaptation of new information by learners; it was a process through which students are incorporated into a society of knowledge. Amineh and Asl summarized the social constructivist theory by noting that the primary premise of the model was that learning entailed a collaborative process.

Also, Amineh and Asl (2015) noted that the social constructive theory addresses the concept of motivation, both extrinsically and intrinsically. Extrinsically, learners are motivated by rewards offered in the close learning community. Conversely, intrinsic

inspiration entails an internal motive by the student to undergo the learning process (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Thus motivation is inevitable for effective learning. This observation agreed with Bandura (1986) who noted that the social constructive theory was related to the social learning model. Social learning theory argues that humans learn through observation, replication, and demonstration.

According to Amineh and Asl (2015), intellectual, interactive, and environmental factors need to be balanced for authentic learning to occur. Therefore, social learning theory linked to behaviorist and cognitive frameworks. Amineh and Asl concluded that Bandura's perceptions supported those of Vygotsky's perception of the learning process as a social event that involved various parties. The social learning methodology is described as being a learner-focused, multifaceted, research-based, interactive, and erratic. Amineh and Asl revealed that teachers practicing a social constructive approach often employed collaborative groups, student-led events, as well as project-based culture. According to Amineh and Asl, a majority of novice educators had classroom management knowledge and at the same time promoted student-generated research. However, these authors noted that this theoretical view positions the teacher in a facilitator role and often needs reculturing because the approach is rarely utilized. The authors concluded that culturally responsive educators needed to appreciate that constructivist learning was more appropriate in preparing students to be teammates, critical thinkers, promoters of democratic practices.

A constructive learning approach seems like an evolutionary course, through which knowledge is constantly reinvented, reprocessed, and shared among teachers and students. Amineh and Asl (2015) noted that classrooms that were run using the constructivist approach enabled learners to work jointly toward educational and cultural

achievement. The social constructive model provides teachers with a frame for appreciating the contribution of learners' unique culture to the learning society. However, some communities may feel that this theory is contradictory to their cultural beliefs. For instance, it argues that mistakes are crucial to the learning process. However, Amineh and Asl noted that this observation may be opposed by societies that believed that faults caused a loss of expression. Nevertheless, the model remains relevant in this study to inform strategies that can help in realizing culturally relevant instruction and classroom management.

Culturally Responsive Education

Ladson-Billings (2014) asserted that the framework of culturally responsive education offers a global perspective to the researchers and scholars and helps them consider global identities with a comprehensive yet targeted view. Building further upon the perspective of culturally sustaining pedagogy, Ladson-Billings highlighted the need for expanding the scope of research and reform efforts to multiple racial and ethnic groups. Ladson-Billings went on to note that culturally relevant educational environments worked toward the establishment of linkages and connections between learners' cultural references and align those with their academic skills and concepts.

Furthermore, culturally competent instructional environment and support mechanisms engage learners in critical reflection, focusing majorly on their individual lives in the broader context of their contemporary society. Ladson-Billings (2014) also elucidated that culturally relevant instructors are the key actors that strengthen cultural competence; their ability to align different cultural identities with the learning faculties of students relies on their individually acquired cultural competence. According to Ladson-Billings, capitalizing upon these assertions, the present study sought to explore teachers'

perceptual perspectives regarding lack, or otherwise prevalence, of cultural diversity and competence in a contemporary educational environment.

Locus of Control Perspective

Individuals tend to adapt to a behavior or harbor a positive perception of something as and when their locus of control on their expectancies is greater. While explaining the social learning processes, Rotter (1966) propounded that locus of control rests on the position or scale of reinforcement of what the cause of events or conditions a person is undergoing at a particular time. According to Rotter, individuals having an internal locus of control attribute positive happenings to their abilities, skills, and efforts, rather than environmental and nonpersonal factors. Rotter emphasized the importance of personal as well as environmental elements in predicting behavior and further explained that expectancies of an individual toward a specific event or behavior tend to become generalized. Generalized expectancies, according to Rotter, are significant predictors of a person's perception as well as an understanding of the potential benefit, utility, and effectiveness of a behavior. Rotter noted that the perception of teachers toward cultural diversity, their acceptance, and readiness to implement interventions to enhance cultural competence in classrooms was explored about their expectancies toward the intervention.

Understanding Cultural Diversity

Defined in broad terms, the concept of culture has diverse underpinnings; however, most of the scholars exploring dimensions and implications of culture agree that culture exerts a profound impact on the lives of humans (Rotter, 1966).

Notwithstanding the variation among discipline-specific explanation of the culture, it is a set of norms, mores, beliefs, and ideas that individuals either inherit or assimilate thorough their life course, and their actions, behaviors, and reactions are majorly defined

by the respective adherence to their culture (Banks, 2014).

In education, scholars explain culture as a way of life, which predetermines the sense as well as the manner of being and doing things, that a particular group of people who have distinctive ways and norms value as their own culture (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Fylkesnes (2018) regarded culture as a lens that shapes individuals' perceptions toward life and serves as a flexible framework that helps individuals shape their life courses and structure their routine practices. This particular understanding of individuals regarding their respective cultures shapes their and their families' behavior while they interact with members of other cultures.

Despite the normative prevalence of the concept of cultural diversity in the educational sector and teacher education research, Fylkesnes (2018) took note of the significant variations in its understanding. Fylkesnes' review of the use and meaning making of the term cultural diversity revealed that cultural diversity is pervasively undefined, has been explained mostly in terms of other related, yet undefined terms, and has been employed mostly in form of binary oppositional discourse on racial divide, which tends to produce the dichotomy of racialized other.

While noting that meaning making and understanding of socially relevant terms works through curricula as well as language-based social practices, Fylkesnes' (2018) study concurred that the use of term cultural diversity in educational discourse has predominantly assumed racial connotations. African Americans continue to witness discriminatory attitudes from Caucasians who, triggered by the apprehensions about means of production and financial dominance, view non-Caucasian communities as others (Fylkesnes, 2018). This kind of xenophobic attitude is apparent not only in terms of attitudes but also in the distribution and allocation of available resources.

Cultural Diversity, Competence, and American Education

Cultural norms predetermine the ways and practices of individuals in their respective fields of life, and the educational sector is no exception, concluded Yuan (2018) from an expansive review of an existing study on cultural diversity in teacher education and training programs. Given the demographic attributes of the American polity, the country's educational sector is also populated by the stakeholders hailing from diverse cultural groups. Statistics reveal that more than 80% of the teachers in the American educational system hail from White classes, whereas a meager share of their population comes from non-White factions (Yuan, 2018). Despite repeated stress on increasing the number of minority teachers and increasing awareness of the positive role that teachers from minority communities can play toward improving cultural diversity in the education system of the country, the United States has still a long way to go to see many colored teachers working in schools proportionate to their population in the society (Yuan, 2018).

Consequent to the sustained inflow of immigrants, the population of the United States has become increasingly diverse, with a visibly wide variety of linguistic, racial, ethnic, and religious communities (Sandell & Tupy, 2015). Furthermore, Sandell and Tupy (2015) noted that diversity in the American landscape, including the country's education system, also manifests itself in terms of variation in socioeconomic standing, the extent of giftedness, the prevalence of learning or developmental disabilities, and varied gender as well as sexual orientations. The characteristics of learners enrolled in public schools have gradually undergone identifiable changes in terms of home language, socioeconomic status, the ratio of learners with special needs, and their level of participation in education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

A report by the National Center for Education Statistics (2013) revealed that participation of American learners in English-language programs had witnessed an increase up to 9.1% during 2011-2012, which was recorded as 8.7% during 2002-2003. Likewise, enrollment in elementary and secondary schools of the traditional public sector had also undergone a shift; Whites were more than 64% in 1995, which had been reduced up to 51% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). More importantly, the ratio of Hispanic and non-White learners was recorded to be a mere 13.5% in 1995 and had surged up to the level of 23.7% in 2011. Sandell and Tupy (2015) maintained that, given the contemporary trends in community-wise birth rates and immigration currents, the ratio of non-White learners was likely to grow further in the coming years.

Similar to the shifting patterns of student ratio, the diversity in terms of teacher population is also changing. In a nationwide survey, encompassing a representative sample of 40,000 teachers, the National Center for Education Statistics (2017) conducted a survey using mailed and online instruments to collect data on cultural diversity in America's educational system. Though the survey revealed a slight increase in cultural diversity in the educational sector, the national picture of the teaching force offers clear insight into the fact that white teachers continue to dominate the workforce.

Encouragingly, the survey also recorded that the percentage of Hispanic teachers in growing (i.e., an upward growth from 8% in 2012-2013 to 9% in 2015-2016, whereas the population of White teachers has slightly decreased from 82% in 2012-2013 to 80% during the 2015-2016 school session (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Another notable aspect that surfaced from the survey pertains to the unchanged ratio of African American and Asian teachers: 7% and 2% respectively, same as that of 2012-2013 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). The slight increase in the

proportion of non-White teachers signals a move toward diversity, yet the pace of increase is slow as compared to the increase in several culturally diverse students.

In the above referred qualitative study on community-based teacher education, Yuan (2018) reviewed contemporary issues that matter in preparing teachers for cultural diversity in a classroom environment and observed that, despite recurrent training and teacher education programs, American teachers still lack the required level of cultural competence. Yuan also identified problem areas that exist in contemporary curriculum, course contents, pedagogical strategies, and practicum of traditional teacher training programs. To address these overarching issues that hamper teachers' capacity to deal with culturally diverse classrooms, the researcher stressed the need for a multicultural teacher education regime which must take into account the diverse range of needs of culturally diverse students (Yuan, 2018).

Recent trends toward a community-based education system also epitomize a quest for meeting the requirements of cultural diversity in schools. Yuan (2018) also highlighted the exigency of integrating community-based teacher education and training programs in preservice teacher training to ensure that new teachers are better prepared and well equipped to understand and meet the needs of the learners who hail from different cultural groups than that of the teacher himself or herself. By incorporating a community-based instructional paradigm for teachers and aligning teachers' training programs with the needs and requirements of multicultural classrooms, Yuan concluded the literature review by asserting the instructional context of the American education system has essentially become multicultural; therefore, the stakeholders must work toward preparing teachers accordingly.

In another recent study, Childs (2019) contemplated on the lack of racially and

culturally diverse teaching faculty in schools of the United States and posited that it is critical to increasing diverse teacher-to-student ratios in classrooms given the fact that teachers of color provide a broad range of benefits to schools as well as the society.

Childs identified that a culturally competent and diverse teaching force, especially teachers of color, not only serve as role models and advocates of cultural competence, but also work as mediators who help bridge gaps between racially diverse students as well as the teaching force.

An increased presence of culturally diverse teachers in schools also leads toward higher expectations and produce a positive effect on the retention as well as academic achievement of minority students (Alghamdi, 2017; Childs, 2019; Yuan, 2018). Such teachers not only address diverse needs of culturally diverse classrooms effectively, but also work toward strengthening of students' resolve to score high and become competitive stakeholders in their society, thereby inculcating a sense of belongingness and productivity.

In an inquiry on the underrepresentation of African American and Hispanic students of America and country's gifted education programs, Gillard (2018) explored the relationship between the representation of Hispanic and African American in professional-development initiatives, teacher training programs, teacher referrals of the students to gifted programs, and the ratio of such students in existing gifted programs. To broaden the scope of research, Gillard included administrators, gifted education specialists, and general education teachers from Title I and non-Title I elementary schools as research respondents and gathered their views and opinions using adapted and modified instruments. Childs (2019), Alghamdi (2017), and Gillard observed that Hispanic and African Americans are the most underrepresented portion of the American

population in gifted education programs. In the mixed-method study, Gillard explored that perceptions of teachers toward the gifted education program affect the teacher referral rates negatively relating to gifted programs.

Furthermore, the study also found that the dearth of professional training and deficient teacher training are also significant factors that contribute toward a lower representation of Hispanic and African American students in gifted education programs. Gillard's (2018) study highlighted that lack of cultural competence, either learned or acquired, not only influences the academic performance of students, but also leads toward the disadvantageous treatment of minority students who, consequently, fail to meet their respective learning needs.

Achievement Gaps: A Manifestation of Lack of CRI

Racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and sociocultural differences among learners have been a major predictor for identifying achievement gaps in America (Alghamdi, 2017). The United States as a nation can no longer be satisfied with the better academic performance of some of its students, as the success of the part of the country's learning population suggests that its educational system lacks adequate tools and means to help all the learners achieve better academic performance (Williams, 2018).

Alghamdi (2017) also highlighted that the prevalent ratio and the persistence of achievement gaps in students belonging to White and non-White communities remain a crucial concern for teachers, parents, educational policy makers, school administrations, and legislators, all of whom express the need to refine and improve the offerings of the country's instructional and learning environment (Williams, 2018). The visibly lower performance of minority students than those of their Caucasian counterparts, particularly in math, reading, writing, and comprehension standards, not only push policy makers and

researchers to follow the agenda of improving diversity-based training of teachers, but also have triggered decision level reform efforts from federal, state, and local agencies (Williams, 2018).

Alghamidi (2017) observed that some of the empirical studies on achievement gaps preconceptualize varying academic performance of Caucasian and non-Caucasian students as a natural as well as a systemic consequence of void in terms of opportunities, resources, and stereotyping, which owe much to the cultural stereotyping, social segregation, and differences in socioeconomic status. The study by Alghamdi underscored that gaps in academic performance of Caucasian and non-Caucasian students can hardly be fully explained through the exploration of personal characteristics or cognitive or behavioral disabilities of minority students; rather, the connection between sociocultural background of minority students and the elements of their academic environment, including teachers' preparedness, account for the factors which hinder such learners from achieving better academic outcomes.

Not only do the learners belonging to minority students show lower academic results, but they also suffer higher rates of other impediments in their learning course (Williams, 2018). Apart from lower scores on standardized tests, other indicators are an overrepresentation of Hispanic and especially African American children in special education classes, high dropout rates, and increased grade retention (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017, 2018). According to Sandell and Tupy (2015), the students who are enrolled in high-poverty suburbs or the ones where the concentration of non-Caucasian learners is high are more likely to have comparatively less qualified teaching staff.

Moreover, on almost every other indicator—from access to technologically

advanced learning opportunities to the nature and design of curriculum—the schools that serve the larger populace of colored children have comparatively scarce resources (Banks, 2014). Although prevalent inequities of the American social fabric can hardly be attributed directly to the failure of schools, the underlying deficiency in the provision of quality education to all the American learners without any regard to the color or socioeconomic status signifies an intolerable crisis in country's educational system (Fylkesnes, 2018). Above-mentioned and several other empirical studies have highlighted the importance and relevance of teachers' training and improved teacher education programs to increase their cultural competence, which eventually translates into better support for minority students and they become able to show better performance (Fylkesnes, 2018).

The Discipline Gap

There has been a disparity in discipline among different students in American schools. For instance, about 20% of African American learners are suspended on behavioral matters, whereas only 10% of Whites or Asians are found guilty of discipline-related issues (Lopez, 2018). In similar studies, 10th graders are found to have higher levels of discrepancies. Over 50% of African Americans and only 20% of Whites are expelled from school due to their discipline (Lopez, 2018). This inequality represented a concern for this study due to the diversity of the target state's population. About 53% are pure White, 26% are either Hispanic or Latino, 17% are African American, and 2% are Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Other ethnic groups include American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and Native American communities. These data alone show the need for CRI, which becomes more crucial in matters about discipline. Discipline sanctions lead to missed learning time. Learners with lessened instructional time are likely to

underperform academically (Houchens et al., 2017). School suspension is among the predictors of school dropouts and late graduations.

Therefore, it is essential to ensure that students remain at school as much as possible. There is a troubling trend associated with the various explanations of why students of color and the White ones are summoned to the office. For instance, White learners are mainly accused of objective faults, such as indecent language, destruction, or leaving without consent. Conversely, African American students are censured for subjective habits, including loitering, affronting, or defiance (Houchens et al., 2017). Characterization of African Americans' behaviors as dangerous has resulted in fear and hesitation among teachers while handling these students. Schools identifying this tendency have taken measures to curb it. Some have devoted time and resources to effect research-centered behavior programs, such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (Houchens et al., 2017).

In such interventions, learners are provided with positive behavior tags for showing justice, esteem, accountability, and understanding, or negative labels for a deficit in the same fields. In an effective behavioral support program, there is a disparity based on gender and race (Houchens et al., 2017). Boys and African American students are more likely to be summoned for bad conduct, whereas girls often receive positive cards for demonstrating respect. However, African American girls face the same discipline issues as boys. A recent study indicated that African American girls are more prone to suspension than White boys and girls (Lopez, 2018). This trend is attributed to the perception of African American girls as adults; they are considered older than same-aged White girls, thus requiring less protection and support. This observation endures into presuming that African American girls should be held culpable for misbehaving in

school. Consequently, a disparity ensues in how the African American girls are handled at school (Lopez, 2018).

Cultural Differences

Nganga (2016) stated that a single teacher is assigned a classroom with students from multiple cultures. This cultural mismatch is among the many reasons why African American students are oversanctioned for discipline appointments, as mentioned earlier. Cultural differences occur in culturally diverse classrooms. The disparities are revealed through speech, behaviors, body language, dressing, and participation in class, among other factors affecting the learning setting (Nganga, 2016).

A cultural mismatch may limit the efforts of implementing culturally relevant instruction and classroom management (Nganga, 2016). In this view, to create a culturally responsive atmosphere, the cultural disparity between teachers and students should be addressed first and the educator should be urged to examine his/her ethnocentrism (Lopez, 2018). Teachers tend to judge the behavior of students through their cultural biases. Such a trend can cause misunderstanding. Also, teachers lack cultural exposure. Most preservice educators are White, monolingual, and unadventurous females, with narrow intercultural proficiencies (Nganga, 2016).

This limitation is worsened by the context of the places where these teachers work. Whereas 81.9% of educators in public schools are White, 49% of students in public elementary and secondary institutions are African American, 44% are from low-income earning households, and 9% cannot speak English proficiently (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). These statistics describe the aspect of cultural mismatch in these classrooms. Failure to address this issue can hinder the cultural responsiveness of an institution or educator.

Teachers often react to learners' behaviors through the view of the majority, sociocultural standards. Instead, they should see behaviors as a replication of the cultural norms of the community (Gay, 2013). A cultural disparity between educators and learners can lead to teacher bias against students from deferent races, estranging and sidelining some learners while favoring others. An individual's brain neurons are responsible for identifying actions that are related to him or her. Students falling outside this typical expectation may be considered as disruptive, stupid, or disconnected. Learners who differ from the educator are faced with difficulty: either conform to his or her viewpoints or be dismissed as a disruptive student (Gay, 2013).

Bergmark and Westman (2018) and Gay (2013) argued that the differences in ethnic communication styles can confuse the classroom. In the passive-receptive discourse model, students listen as the teacher issues instructions. Conversely, a participatory-interactive approach involves an active, voiced engagement between the teacher and learners. They argued that White students were acclimatized to passive-receptive communication, whereas the African Americans, Latinos, and Hawaiians preferred a participatory-interactive model. Gay noted that these inclinations to different discourse styles may pose a challenge to the teacher as he or she tries to balance the various communication approaches. Likewise, some students may feel as if they are alienated if the teacher inclines to one model more than others.

Gay (2013) noted that the cultural detachment between a teacher and learners leads to classroom clashes. The disparity between family and school settings can be extremely diverse such that it causes marginalization of African American students. Also, there is a lack of consciousness of racial identity in schools. Teachers need to connect with learners' unique cultural practices and train them to be flexible for a range of

situations. Students feel stressed when in a culturally disproportionate environment and may develop more complex issues in their learning process. Learners may have challenges handling pressures, academic contests, and aversive emotional states. Reducing stress is a crucial way of enhancing learners' capacity to cope with adversities (Gay, 2013).

Teachers and Cultural Competence

Beutel and Tangen (2018) observe that the diversity of the student population is on the rise consistently and that this rise is way more than that in the teachers' workforce. Increasing numbers of minority students in classrooms require teachers and school administration to be more proactive toward identifying the needs of diverse students who may not be satisfied with the framework of support that has been designed from the need perspective of a specific cultural group. The study by Beutel and Tangen focused on the experiences and preparedness of preservice teachers and highlighted the lack of preparedness on the part of preservice as well as new teachers to address the growing needs of learners who do not belong to the community of the teachers themselves.

Drawing on Hammer's Intercultural Development Continuum, Beutel and Tangen (2018) explored the impact that the perceptions of preservice teachers may have on preparing to become effective teachers of diversity in a culturally diverse environment. This study highlighted the needs of improvement in teacher training programs, focused primarily on expanding and refining the intercultural experiences of the newly inducted teachers. Moreover, to enable the teachers to engage diverse learners in a better way, Yuan (2018) stressed the need for increased cultural competence among teachers.

In a comparative study that focused on cultural competence among the students at the university level before and after they participate in cross-cultural undergraduate

courses, Sandell and Tupy (2015) elucidated that such courses helped participants improve their understanding of cultural diversity, and, resultantly, they were better able to value the need for improving their cultural competence. Analysis of the data suggested that participants had an equivalent sense of cultural diversity as well as cultural competence before they partook the cross-cultural course and their ethnocentric views were the major trigger that worked toward minimizing differences between themselves and the others.

Sandell and Tupy (2015) asserted that their lack of exposure to individuals belonging to other cultures was the factor that made them overestimate their cultural competencies, as they were more prone toward minimizing the differences and emphasizing more upon cultural commonalities. After the implementation of high-impact activities of the course, such as cross-cultural partnerships, Sandell and Tupy were able to observe statistically significant gains in participants' orientations toward cultures that were essentially different from their own. From these observations, the study by Sandell and Tupy concluded that the integration of domestic or community-based intercultural experiences of individuals encourages them to gain more and more knowledgeable exposure with others but also motivates them to learn from those others.

There are essential insights that an educator must contemplate to develop cultural adeptness. It is crucial to appreciate that different cultures have varying value systems from the White, middle class alignment dominating the American schools. According to Sandell and Tupy (2015), teachers should recognize the existence of cultural, ethnic, and racial variation among people. Also, they should appreciate that schools are representations of the broader community in that they mirror and extend the same biased practices, just like the people around them. To interact efficiently in a culturally assorted

setting, a school's policies, processes, and staff values must reflect cultural proficiency. Consequently, Sandell and Tupy concluded that a culturally competent teacher should have the ability to evaluate culture, respect diversity, cope with diversity, handle the dynamics of variations, and implement cultural knowledge.

The CRI Approach

Ladson-Billings (as cited in Rajagopal, 2019) explained culturally responsive or relevant teaching as a system of education that empowers learners “socially, intellectually, emotionally, and politically” (p. 238) by employing cultural referents to disseminate knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In other words, teachers customize the content of the course material and their teaching approach as well as methodology in such a way that contents and curricula are made comprehensible and accessible to all the learners. To this end, instructors are required to incorporate relatable concepts that students can trace back to their daily lives and cultural contexts, such as the use of language jargon or slang, extracurricular activities such as music and sports, and already acquired a knowledge base of the students (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Once students get accustomed to the content as well as teaching methods and strategies of a teacher and can establish linkages between instructional environments with their cultural context, they feel more confident and make deliberate efforts to focus and try to learn the course content (Maxwell-Stuart, Taheri, Paterson, O’Gorman, & Jackson, 2016). Teachers, as well as parents, tend to confuse the concept of culturally responsive education as something that necessitates instructional material to be taught in native language and manner of the non-White students and waste a significant amount of time and energy in doing so (Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2016). Nonetheless, to become culturally responsive and teach diverse classrooms effectively, educators do not need different

kinds of curriculum or teaching methodology that have to be strictly based on the race and the culture of the learners (Rajagopal, 2019).

Rather, all that is needed to develop a strong understanding of the cultural context of the learners and align the teaching methodology and course content with the culturally relevant experiences of the learners. Empirical research has established that culturally responsive relationships between students and teachers (Gillies, 2016), culturally responsive curriculum, and culturally relevant delivery mechanisms are key factors that enable teachers to live up to the expectation of students' parents concerning the impartation of knowledge and socializing skills (Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2016).

In cases where teachers lack an understanding of the students' native culture, they are unable to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the learners. And their inability translates into teachers' failure to implement the effective and constructive instructional methodology, targeted particularly on addressing the needs of culturally diverse students (Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2016). Resultantly, uninformed delivery of uniform content through one-for-all methodology restricts the academic performance of some of the students, especially those belonging to impoverished and poor factions of the society, due to failure to comprehend the content and lesser relevance of teaching approach with students cultural and ethnic background (Gillies, 2016).

Kirsch and Braun (2016) revealed that teachers needed to adjust their teaching approaches to build upon the strengths, identities, and standards of the students. Normalization of curriculum and testing can supplant cultural responsiveness efforts. Minority students become worse with standards-based changes than when with desegregation. For instance, reading grades for elementary African American and Latino learners fell after the introduction of standardized reforms in 1990, recovered faintly, and

then leveled. According to Kirsch and Braun, these results were attributed to the prevailing cultures' racist insistence to retain control over power and possessions. These biased practices extend beyond the educator, but ensue from national and state strategies, and trickle down to the office of the superintendent, to the school principal, and finally into the classroom.

In the same vein, Emdin (2018) argued that culturally responsive instruction could be implemented effectively through the creation of robust and caring relations with learners. According to Emdin, such associations should be founded on mutual reverence, as well as firm beliefs. Also, they should gather student thinking on their learning essentials and cultural settings to inform the syllabus, as well as train cognitive competences and strategies in various formats. Emdin also concluded that multiple cultural aspects could be integrated into the learning process to meet the needs of the student from different backgrounds.

Emdin (2018) went on to observe that it was crucial to provide learners with a voice on how the class functions, have valid discourse with students on their views on the structure of the class and teacher's approach, and incorporate prevalent styles, such as music, into teaching and evaluations. For instance, a project dubbed Bring Attention to Transforming Teaching, Learning, and Engagement in Science integrates the influence of hip-hop music, along with battle culture to stimulate learners about the science field (Emdin, 2018). Educators who have employed these culturally matching instruction approaches have a deeper insight into the strengths of their students. Also, they report enhanced participation in the classroom, as well as student academic achievement.

Emdin (2018) concluded that culturally receptive education is a multidimensional endeavor, including syllabus, classroom ambiance, student-teacher interactions, teaching

methods, evaluations, and classroom management. A culturally responsive educator is committed to developing relationships with learners, parents, and the community.

Teachers working in a new society must plunge into their students' worlds to learn their new setting (Emdin, 2018). Such a deliberate relationship-building effort can help to reduce the cultural mismatch between the community and the school. In this way, teachers can bring a logic of household and care into school (Emdin, 2018).

Strategies for Improving CRI

Childs (2019), Gillies (2016), and Slavin (2013) conducted empirical researches on instructional approaches to highlight and to strengthen cultural relevance, teachers and school administrators are required to identify effective strategies concerning the school context and demographic attributes of the children and implement those strategies with fidelity. According to Slavin, Lake, Hanley, and Thurston (2014), instruction based on the culture of the learners signifies not only modification of the course content in regard to the cultural and ethnic context of the learner, but it also necessitates the integration of targeted techniques to strengthen student-teacher rapport as well as the willingness of the students to learn. Explicit instruction in linguistic and behavior codes has been ascertained effective strategy to address the learning needs of English-language learners, especially regarding the acquisition of a second language.

Instructional scaffolding. Jumaat and Zaidatun (2014) characterized instructional scaffolding as signifying the support that teachers and instructional environment provided to the learners and was tailored in such a way that every student had an opportunity to benefit from the support to one's learning needs. A recent study by Childs (2019) revealed that a culturally competent educational environment stressed the need for culturally congruent interaction in classrooms, wherein teachers were well aware

of the cultural backgrounds of the students. Another study by Gillard (2018) indicated that teachers needed appropriate skills and knowledge in culturally responsive teaching, and Yuan (2018) reiterated the importance of implementing those skills with prudence to appeal the willingness and efficacy of students. Teachers use instructional scaffolding to customize the content and enable the learners to have sustainable exposure and an understanding of the course content (Cho & Cho, 2014). Cho and Cho (2014) further highlighted that perceived goals of teachers guide the impact of scaffolding on students of diverse cultures given the fact that very goals shape the approach and manner in which a teacher implements scaffolding in a classroom setting.

Cooperative learning. Cooperative learning capitalizes upon the organization of classroom activities into social and academic learning experiences, also maximizes the impact of culturally relevant instruction, and enables the learners to have a broader exposure of behavioral as well as academic improvement (Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2016). Interactive learning opportunities, classroom collaboration, and group work have long been regarded as effective strategies to promote cooperative learning. Gillies (2016) observed that merely placing students in group settings and asking them to partake in collaborative interactions may not promote cooperation necessarily as the members are likely to struggle with tasks as well as how the task at hand has to be performed. To address this loophole, Gillies asserted that the creation of positive interdependencies among group members, by making them understand that their success is linked to the performance of the group as a whole, leads toward enhanced and productive cooperation and, thereby, maximizes learning.

A second important element in this context is the extent of promotive interaction that manifests in the form of members' willingness to facilitate fellow group members to

perform and achieve group goals (Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2016). Closer proximity among group members when engaged in a task enables them to avail increased chances of mutual interaction, understand each other's perspectives effectively, and collaborate more robustly (Gillies, 2016). In their quantitative study on multicultural teaching efficacy and cultural intelligence of teachers, Kang, Kim, and Park (2019) recently examined the impact of learning goal orientation and training readiness among teachers. Kang et al. analyzed responses from teachers working in the midwestern and southern areas of the United States and employed hierarchical regression to analyze those responses.

Kang et al. (2019) found that the higher the learning orientation of teachers, the greater is their multicultural teaching efficacy and the greater cultural intelligence they are likely to have. In this regard, teacher education and teacher training programs should capitalize on these findings, and, as Kang et al. stressed, these programs should be based on comprehensive need analysis, conducted on program participants in advance, to identify what teachers want and what they need before implementing a training program. In another study on the psychological needs of minority students, Li, Ni, and Stoianov (2015) underscored the importance of multicultural competence and training of school psychologists.

Li et al. (2015) acknowledged certain weaknesses in the contemporary framework of multicultural education; however, they asserted that these loopholes should not overshadow the researchers' resolve to decipher psychological and behavioral attention that learners hailing from minority factions of the society need from their educational environment. Therefore, Li et al. asserted that conceptualization and integration of multiculturalism, cultural diversity, and targeted teacher education and teacher training programs are foundational pillars that enable the teachers in particular and the

instructional environment, in general, to live up to the needs and expectations of culturally diverse classrooms.

Researchers, such as Gillard (2018), Childs (2019), and Li et al. (2015), regard responsive teacher training programs and integration of evidence-based practices in these programs as effective tools to equip teachers with requisite skills and knowledge base for customizing an instructional approach to support equitable learning for all the children. An important assertion made by Li et al. suggested that, instead of abandoning the notion of multiculturalism and multicultural instructional support, there is a need to improve and broaden the scope of multicultural research, teaching, and integration of multicultural practices in the instructional environment.

Steinfeldt, Steinfeldt, and Mathew (2014) explored the need and impact of a multicultural training intervention in American schools regarding the American Indian stereotype and highlighted that established mascots in schools, as well as athletic teams, emanate from corresponding imagery and use of verbal expressions. The authors evaluated the tripartite model of multicultural counseling and development that revolves around awareness, knowledge, and skill of individuals toward improving cultural diversity. To align the model with their research framework, Steinfeldt et al. studied perspective taking to broaden and facilitate awareness among individuals toward native-themed mascots, the specificity of knowledge regarding the prevalence of race-based mascots, and the skills that can strengthen the concept of social justice. For the skills, the researchers focused on social justice to empower school counselors, teachers, and school psychologists to come forward as agents of change and spearhead the course of multiculturalism in the educational environment (Steinfeldt et al., 2014).

Strategies for Effective CRCM

The CRCM model is an inclusive approach toward running classrooms wherein all the children, not merely minority students, are accorded culturally responsive educational facilities and instructional support (Duez-Curry, 2017). Duez-Curry (2017) noted that, as a pedagogical approach, CRCM guides and shapes the managerial decisions that teachers make to implement instructions equitably and ensure that all the learners, including high-performing as well as low-performing students, are availed equitable learning opportunities. As an extension of the culturally responsive teaching, Gillies (2016) and Maxwell-Stuart et al. (2016) found that CRCM also capitalizes upon backgrounds of students, their prior knowledge, their respective social experiences, and their learning needs. Teachers remain active toward the identification of potential biases and seek to figure out how these biases influence the selection of teaching strategies as well as customization of the course content (Gillies, 2016; Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2016).

Recognition of cultural lenses and biases. Exploration of the factors that lead teachers toward the creation and maintenance of assumptions, biases, and attitudes, as well as understanding of the areas from where these factors take strength, can be important aspects for teachers to move toward inclusive education (Duez-Curry, 2017). Research studies have revealed that biased attitudes of teachers give rise to situations wherein teachers resort to referrals to special education despite the absence of actual need or disability (Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2016; Steinfeldt et al., 2014).

To understand their inclinations and potential bias, Steinfeldt et al. (2014) suggested that teachers can self-evaluate their assumptions by writing a personal identity story to identify how their identities have been constructed socially and how can they modify these socialized identities to fit in a multicultural environment. Additionally, the

Cultural Proficiency Receptivity scale was also been structured in such a way that, by using it, teachers would be able to examine policies and practices of their institution in addition to the self-reflection upon one's cultural context and affiliations.

Knowledge about learners' cultural background. In addition to the identification of biases, Duez-Curry (2017) and Emdin (2018) indicated that teachers are required to have and develop a comprehensive awareness of learners' cultural awareness to develop the required skills for effective cross-cultural interactions in the classroom. They also stated that the objective study of general norms and mores of culture enables teachers to develop an understanding of the potential reactions and behavior of the students, their etiquettes as well as their communication style, and learning style. To gain deeper insight into learners' cultural context, the authors suggested that teachers can formulate study groups to explore culturally responsive literature, work with learners to establish latter's family history, and conduct home visits to explore the educational background, interpersonal relationships, and patterns of communication, and other related aspects.

Understanding the broader sociopolitical context of education. According to Emdin (2018), teachers are required to enhance culturally diverse elements and establish a learning environment through the lens of cultural diversity. It is upon teachers and educational managers that they identify and implement ways and techniques to communicate respect for diversity, reaffirm connectedness, and propagate a sense of community, and discourage marginalization and disparagement of minority learners (Emdin, 2018; Li et al., 2015).

To this end, affixations of world maps showing learners' native countries, welcome signs and banners, posters representing people of various cultures along with

homogenizing elements, the arrangement of desks in cluster form, and setting up of kindness boxes are some of the evidence-based strategies and tools that, when implemented effectively and carefully, strengthen cultural diversity (Emdin, 2018). Furthermore, Duez-Curry (2017) suggested that teachers must establish behavioral expectations from students clearly and communicate these expectations to the learners elaborately. For this purpose, instructors are required to model the behavior that they expect from students, provide ample opportunities for students to practice expected behavioral norms, engage learners actively in classroom discussions about behavioral norms, remain cognizant of potential inconsistencies (Duez-Curry, 2017; Emdin, 2018).

Building caring communities. To strengthen a sense of belongingness and connectivity among the learners, teachers and educational managers build a caring and cooperative environment wherein learners can harbor positive and respectful relationships between themselves as well as with their teachers. A large body of research, including studies by Cho and Cho (2014), Gillies (2016), Emdin (2018), Li et al. (2015), and Slavin (2013), has evidenced that strong and positive mutual relationships between teachers and students enhance learning significantly as these relationships reduce negative implications emanating from culturally diverse classrooms.

The Chicago Teacher Educator Pipeline (2019) designed an instructional program that explores and conforms to all the elements of CRCM and enables teachers and students to explore their own biases, become aware of the history of discrimination and oppression in the educational system, and actively participate to identify and implement strategies for equitable educational opportunities. Other teacher training and education programs that guide teachers toward refining the implementation of the CRCM approach instructional environment help them improve the pedagogy and enable the students to

perform better on academic standards.

Behavioral interventions that help students refine their behavioral norms and value the needs and concerns of their minority peers are effective tools to build a caring student community (Li et al., 2015; Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2016). According to Duez-Curry (2017), teachers and school administrators can implement behavioral modification strategies to reduce the impact as well as the prevalence of negative behaviors that majority students or even teachers may occasionally elicit. Positive behavior support has been recognized as one such behavioral support framework that emphasizes the need for culturally appropriate interventions per the individual learning history and respective needs of the students, their families, and teachers, as well as the community (Duez-Curry, 2017).

Students and understanding of cultural diversity. In a systematic review, Asowayan et al. (2017) explored the effect of the next generation science standards on student achievement, with a particular focus on cultural diversity and its relationship to the students' excellence. Attributes of teachers' cultural competence, students' ascribed value to the manifestations of cultural diversity, and the capacity of teachers as well students to deal with the negative factors emanating from culturally diverse classrooms surface as the major themes in terms of cultural diversity. Asowayan et al. used qualitative evidence from 52 academic journal entries, including case studies as well as quantitative studies, which focused on the students' orientations toward the standards.

Thematic analysis of the collected chunks of data highlighted that students enrolled in contemporary schools have an increased understanding of science-related values, their respective social presence, simplicity as well as the responsiveness of teaching methodology, and universally accessible learning material and aids.

Researchers, including Williams (2018), and Sandell and Tupy (2015), also observed that the learners value cultural diversity and are in optimal readiness to work toward harnessing increased gains from learning in a culturally diverse instructional environment. To this end, Asowayan et al. (2017) stressed that teachers should develop their cultural competencies, become increasingly attentive toward cultural sensitivities of the students, have a gut feeling toward the power distance between them and their students, and enhance their social presence to learn and practice new forms of engagements with students of other cultures.

Summary

The review of existing studies by Duez-Curry (2017) on the lack of cultural diversity in the U.S. educational system, the consequent prevalence of achievement gaps, CRI, CRCM, and perspectives of teachers as well as students toward the importance and lack of cultural diversity in the educational system highlighted the role that cross-cultural teacher training and teacher education programs can play in improving the preparedness of educators for addressing diverse learning needs of minority students. It also becomes evident that contemporary students are cognizant of cultural differences, and they readily partake in courses and opportunities that help them increase their cultural competence (Duez-Curry, 2017).

However, it is important to note that school administrations and teachers are key stakeholders who can establish and lead an environment wherein diverse and growing needs of minority students who do not belong to mainstream culture are adequately identified and addressed (Duez-Curry, 2017). Therefore, training and education programs for teachers require attention to make them more closely aligned with the demands of enhanced cultural diversity and inclusive education in classrooms (Alghamdi, 2017).

Research Questions

To explore middle school teachers' perceptions toward the lack of CRI and CRCM in middle schools and its implications for educational outcomes, this study focused its premise on the following research questions:

1. How and in what ways did middle school teachers integrate CRI and behavioral management strategies after taking part in the Middle School Teacher Training Intervention (MSTTI)?
2. To what extent did the MSTTI change the CRCM practices of teachers?
3. To what extent did the MSTTI influence the culturally relevant instructional practices of teachers when years of teaching experience were considered?
4. How and in what ways did the MSTTI influence the culturally relevant management practices of teachers?

The following subquestions were also established to support the four research questions:

1. Will the MSTTI change the culturally relevant instructional practices of teachers?
2. Will the MSTTI change the culturally relevant management practices of teachers?
3. Will the MSTTI influence the culturally relevant instructional practices of teachers when years of teaching experience are considered?
4. Will the MSTTI influence the culturally relevant management practices of teachers when years of teaching experience are considered?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Aim of the Study

Students from different cultural backgrounds experience cultural dissonance. Unfortunately, educational administrators and instructors from the mainstream culture misinterpret and disregard their cultural learning patterns and communication. Cultural sensitivity can be achieved by being empathetic of the thoughts, actions, and feelings of every group (Davis, 2016). Teachers can accomplish the task through developing awareness of cultural values, assumptions, biases, and prejudice, ensuring that they eradicate stereotypical responses, attitudes, and behaviors. Instructors are, therefore, challenged with finding innovative ways reflecting the needs of a diverse population (Davis, 2016). Addressing the issue of diversity management begins with training and educating teachers.

The study aimed to understand how teachers perceive insufficient cultural instructions. It helped identify relevant classroom management strategies that are more productive in enhancing cultural competence in middle school. Consequently, this research explored the viability of training intervention for middle school teachers on the dynamic cultural instruction and classroom management strategies (Davis, 2016). The study recommended relevant guidelines for strengthening CRI in middle schools and culturally relevant classroom management. The findings pointed out approaches to support instructors and administrators to build and encourage a culturally supportive learning environment (Davis, 2016).

Qualitative Research Approach

A case study design is an appropriate methodology to understand and investigate complex real-world problems. The approach has its origin in qualitative techniques to

research in history, anthropology, sociology, and psychology disciplines (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017). In the 1970s, educational research adopted the case study method in the evaluation of curriculum innovation and design to explore different topics, such as the influence of socio-political issues and respondents' perspectives on curriculum success and nonperformance (Harrison et al., 2017). The application of the case study method in the education sector has evolved significantly; it is used to determine the impact of teaching programs and to provide appropriate evidence for practice and policy decisions that support educational changes (Harrison et al., 2017).

According to Yin (2014), the method involves collecting multiple sources of evidence using a range of qualitative techniques (e.g., observations and focus groups). Using multiple data sources through data triangulation increases the internal validity of the research. Because the approach is used to obtain an indepth understanding and appreciation of issues in their natural, real-life aspect, the intended results entail developing conclusions that can be applied in mitigating real-life issues. Case studies answer the why, how, and what questions (Yin, 2014).

This qualitative research adopted a case study approach. Yin (2014) stated a case study research is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined” (p. 16). It is an efficient method for studying a phenomenon that is difficult to recreate. In this regard, the MSTTI for the teachers was difficult to recreate due to some contextual factors, such as prior experiences of the teachers with incorporating CRI in their lessons among others (Yin, 2014).

The data-collection methods adopted in the case study approach allowed for a thorough and deep understanding of a phenomenon, which then created opportunities and

ideas for further research in the future. In this regard, the use of a case study approach in examining the perspectives of teachers after the MSTTI was aimed at gaining a deep understanding of how teachers comprehend cultural competence (Yin, 2014). Also, it sought to identify the changes that teachers might make after the training, the limitations the teachers experience while using culturally relevant classroom management, and how they overcame them (Yin, 2014).

Participants

This research design concentrated on middle school teachers, understanding and improving their cultural competence, and reviewing their application of culturally relevant classroom management strategies. Its primary participants were middle school teachers. In this backdrop, its potential participants consisted of Title I middle school teachers who tackled classrooms with students of mixed abilities and diverse cultural backgrounds. The selected site allowed the researcher access to the participants.

Therefore, access was a central consideration in a case study because researchers ought to familiarize themselves with the site and work cooperatively with it. Study sites were preselected by the researcher with the key stakeholders who influenced major decisions. The setting was a middle school, which had 808 students in Grades 6 to 8, with a student-teacher ratio of 16:1. For the sake of diversifying their attitudes, participants of different ethnic backgrounds and gender were picked. Besides, participants were to have taken part in the MSTTI and must be teaching 5 years or more in a middle school.

Teaching experience of 5 years or more allowed a teacher to have enough experience to offer insightful perspectives regarding the practice. The expected number of participants was 10. The researcher observed that, although a higher number was desirable, it would have caused difficulties during data analysis, and, hence, a small

number of participants was deemed to be suitable. The researcher employed purposive sampling based on the inclusion criteria to ensure a diverse sample in terms of gender as well as the range of subjects taught by the teachers. For instance, the researcher avoided using only English-speaking teachers in the study.

Purposive sampling helped to avoid such homogeneous samples to incorporate several points of view in the study. The participants received an invitation, which was sent through both email and letters. Those willing to participate were informed about other details after contacting the researcher. If the respondents were fewer than the preferred number of respondents, the researcher made follow-up calls in an attempt to get more participants.

Data-Collection Tools

The primary data-collection instruments for this study were interviews and focus groups. Interviews were conducted using a semistructured approach (Faklaris, 2013). The semistructured interviews allowed the researcher to probe deeper into various topics as they arose while staying on the topic at the same time. The researcher also utilized focus groups to make a follow up on various topics that arose during the interviews. The data-collection methods and instruments were based on the findings of Guest, Namey, Taylor, Eley, and McKenna (2017) in a study comparing interviews and focus groups. The study found that, although interviews enabled researchers to collect data broadly on a certain topic, focus groups enabled them to gain an indepth perspective regarding the issue. In this case, discussions during focus groups enabled the participants to provide their personal experiences in the context of the discussion, which may provide the deep knowledge that this study sought to uncover (Guest et al., 2017).

Focus groups were useful for the study because detailed information about the

feelings, opinions, and perceptions of the middle school teachers could be obtained. The arrangement saved money and time because the focus groups were conducted in teams compared to individuals. On the contrary, interviews helped to achieve a higher response rate. Both approaches provided a broad range of information and allowed the researcher to seek clarification (Guest et al., 2017).

Procedures

After respondents contacted the researcher, they were given complete information about the research and its purpose. The respondent and the researcher then agreed on a time and place for a personal interview. The researcher recommended that the participants suggest the place and time that would be convenient for both for the interview to be successful. Participants were asked to set aside 1 hour, which was the estimated time for completing the interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Consent forms were signed by participants before commencing with the interviews.

The 10 interviewees were participants in a focus group that was led by the researcher. Focus groups met on Mondays for a month in the morning before class. Discussions were conducted using prompts derived from the research questions. Specifically, discussions were initiated according to the prompts that were aligned with the research questions and subquestions. The emerging themes and main points expressed by the participants were noted down for further analysis.

Because the study encompassed human subjects, permission was acquired from the school district as well as the university's Institutional Review Board to conduct the study before contacting the respondents (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The school principal was asked for consent to conduct the study in her school. The recruitment

period was expected to take 3 weeks and included developing a timetable for collecting data using all the methods to be used for the study. The data-collection process was expected to take 2 months due to the scheduling involved. The researcher then transcribed the answers and analyzed the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Data Analysis

The qualitative data-analysis strategy that was used involved emergent thematic coding (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Emergent coding is used when a researcher reads a text in an interview transcript, several times to identify the themes. The analysis entailed five processes. The first step was the preparation of data for analysis and notes will be organized in a coherent narrative. The second step involved determining the unit of analysis. For example, depending on the data the unit of analysis was a sentence or a specific answer to a question (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The third step required the researcher to read through the data and identify clear and unique codes that were appropriate. The fourth step consisted of preliminary coding to test the viability of the developed codes, and then the researcher attempted to code a section of the data to verify whether the codes area was suitable before actually coding the data. Finally, the researcher identified possible patterns and developed relevant themes from the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher then prepared a narrative report to describe the findings of the study and discuss any potential issues that emerged from the research. An NVivo software program was used to assist with the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

For the protection of the participants, suitable ethical principles must be applied in all research studies. Given the indepth nature of the process, the ethical considerations of

qualitative studies possess a specific resonance (Lewis, 2015). Some common ethical issues therein include anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, and false representation. However, for this study, ethics were both practiced and maintained in numerous capacities. First, the participants were briefed on the study's purpose to ensure informed consent as participation was voluntary (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Additionally, those who decided to partake in the study could withdraw when desired.

Furthermore, the anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality of the participants' identities are of essential priority. To ensure its realization, access to the data materials was restricted to the researcher. Moreover, it was stored on a protected computer, secured by password encryption, and kept in a safe space. Consequently, 3 years after completion, all the research materials used would be destroyed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The participants' identity and names were not divulged during the analysis process, data collection, and reporting of the findings. The study did not offer any compensation in terms of finances to the respondents. Still, the findings of the research were of the utmost value to the institution and the educational sector as well (Lewis, 2015).

Trustworthiness

The study was an analysis of the firsthand information obtained from a Title I middle school in the southeastern United States. To establish the trustworthiness of the findings of the study, the researcher relied on triangulation, member checking, and expert review (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The interviews were the first approach then was followed by a focus group. The focus group helped verify responses from the interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher then presented the findings of the study to a sample of the respondents to verify that they captured their perspectives. Finally, the researcher also asked for an expert in the field to verify the findings of the study

(Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The utilization of this process ensured the phenomenon being studied was examined from multiple perspectives. Alternative and potential explanations were sought during analysis, and the researcher was explicit about how conclusions and interpretations were reached to increase trustworthiness (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Potential Research Bias

The researcher's assessment of the research topic was that training interventions for middle school teachers were critical in determining the strategies that the teachers applied when integrating culturally competent classroom management (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). As a counselor, the researcher's interactions with middle school teachers had shaped my view and opinions about their training. Working to provide professional academic support for more than 10 years had influenced the researcher's beliefs regarding training interventions for middle school teachers and created potential bias regarding the research topic. Although the research addressed different issues, the researcher's worry was concentrated on the efficiency of the training toward the delivery of CRCM (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), research bias is crucial to the validity and integrity of data related to a research study. It is critical for a researcher to be transparent with the data collected and must recognize the potential for research bias. Therefore, the researcher took various steps to ensure credible results from the study (Lewis, 2015). First, during the interviews, bracketing was employed to ensure the participants' opinions did not affect the responses. Second, during the research process, a reflective journal was maintained to describe the experiences, perceptions, and beliefs to guarantee that they did not heavily impact the findings of the study. Finally, the services

of a peer reviewer were required to ensure the findings of the studies were not biased (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Limitations

Although the research design that was used was appropriate, many limitations were bound to interfere with the dissertation's outcome. First, the sample size was small, with the research concentrating on a Title I middle school in the southeastern United States. The possibilities of outcome variations were high between this study and that which may be carried out in another Title I middle school. Consequently, the outcome was entirely dependent on the researcher's skills, which could readily be swayed by the various idiosyncrasies and biases (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The research was conducted with teachers in a Title I middle school in the southeastern United States who had completed the MSTTI. The sample size was small due to labor constraints, which limited the data collected. Because the data were collected only in one school, the information did not capture the overall perspectives of the state regarding the topic. Thus, the findings of the study were limited in some ways (Lewis, 2015). Therefore, the case study technique lacked scientific rigor and provided a modicum basis to generalize the findings. Ways that were tried to address this concern included transparency throughout the research process, using theoretical sampling by drawing from a specific conceptual framework and participant validation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the interviews and focus-group discussions. The findings are arranged according to the responses provided by the interviewees for each question. Although the overarching major themes that emerged from each response are summarized, unique sentiments expressed by individual interviewees are provided separately as quotes. Both narratives and tables have been used to present the findings. This study sought to answer the following primary research questions:

1. How and in what ways did middle school teachers integrate CRI and behavioral management strategies after taking part in the MSTTI?
2. To what extent did the MSTTI change the culturally relevant classroom management practices of teachers?
3. To what extent did the MSTTI influence the culturally relevant instructional practices of teachers when years of teaching experience were considered?
4. How and in what ways did the MSTTI influence the culturally relevant management practices of teachers?

The transcripts recorded during the interviews were inspected for completeness and accuracy of the statements before identifying the common ideas that were presented in each question. These ideas were then condensed into theme statements, and the unique statements that deviated from these themes were flagged. Ten teachers were interviewed for the study. The demographic details that include gender, ethnicity, age, years of teaching experience, and grade and age of students taught are summarized in Table 1. The mean age was 46.5, and the mean for years of teaching experience was 15.7.

Table 1

Demographic Details of the Interviewees

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Years teaching	Age of entry into teaching	Grade	Student ages
1	Female	AA	38	5	33	6	11-12
2	Male	Caucasian	48	15	33	8	13-14
3	Female	Caucasian	51	23	28	7	12-13
4	Female	Hispanic	41	17	24	6	11-12
5	Female	AA	45	12	33	7	12-13
6	Male	AA	57	26	42	8	13-14
7	Female	Caucasian	35	7	28	6	11-12
8	Male	Hispanic	42	11	31	8	13-14
9	Male	Caucasian	53	21	32	7	12-13
10	Female	AA	55	20	35	8	13-14

Note. AA = African American.

Of the 10 teachers, four of them (40%) were male and six (60%) were female. Also, the teachers were drawn from diverse ethnicities, with the African Americans and Caucasian composing 40% each ($n = 8$), and the remaining 20% ($n = 2$) were of Hispanic descent. The teachers were aged between 35 and 57 years with their teaching experience ranging between 5 and 26 years. In this respect, three teachers (30%) started their teaching careers when aged below 30 years, and the rest were over 30 years when they started teaching. They taught children aged between 11 and 14 years in Grades 6, 7, and 8. In this respect, three (30%) teachers taught sixth graders, three (30%) taught seventh graders, and the remaining four (40%) taught eighth graders.

Interview Results

The teachers responded to eight questions during the interview session, except for Interviewees 2, 5, and 7, who did not respond to Interview Question 8. However, this question had asked for participants to make any further suggestions or comments about the interview, with most of them having no additional information to offer. Nonetheless,

all interviewees discussed Interview Questions 1 to 7. This section also presents a discussion of the findings in the interviews based on years of teaching experience, complexity and diversity of CRI and CRCM strategies, and the self-efficacy of interviewees in implementing CRI and CRCM strategies.

Interview Question 1. How do CRI and CRCM meet the overall objectives of improving students' learning outcomes? Briefly, elaborate on your response. The overarching themes that emerged from the responses to this question included (a) improving the cultural awareness among students, (b) using culturally relevant materials and backgrounds to improve understanding among students, (c) enabling the students to interact in a non-prejudicial and non-judgmental manner to encourage the development of trusting relations between students and between the students and teachers, (d) helping students eliminate negative stereotypes and biases about different cultures, and (e) boosting the confidence of students. These themes are demonstrated in some of the sentiments expressed by the interviewees regarding the use of CRI and CRCM in achieving the overall objectives of improving the learning outcomes of their students, as summarized in Table 2.

Additionally, specific issues were identified by individual participants. The use of cultural artifacts was common with some teachers in making their classes culturally relevant. For example, Interviewee 2 stated, "I incorporate relatable aspects of my student's daily lives into the lesson by using familiar aspects of their culture including prior knowledge, and extracurricular interests such as music and sports." Interviewee 6 added, "I mostly teach in English; I speak Spanish as well. I use plenty of visuals of different cultures, such as videos, multimedia presentations, Google Translator, and Google Classroom, to help organize instructional resources, sometimes in multiple

languages.” Interviewee 9 stated, “I have a word wall in my classroom with pictures from different cultures.”

Table 2

How Culturally Relevant Instruction and Management Support Student Outcomes

Theme	Participant	Sentiments
Culturally relevant materials and backgrounds	3	“Creating an environment that is conducive to culturally diverse information and concerns can establish a foundation of understanding and can, therefore, build upon their prior knowledge.”
	6	“I use a lot of visuals of different cultures to help students learn.”
Development of trusting relations	7	“I encourage my students to research and share information about their ethnic background as a means of fostering a trusting relationship with classmates.”
Elimination of negative stereotypes and biases	5	“Can improve students’ learning outcomes by eliminating biases and negative stereotypes that often hinder the learning process, thus level the playing field for all students.”
Boosting confidence	4	“While living in a society that is referred to as a ‘melting pot,’ embrace and implement classroom management strategies that foster confidence and academic success in every learner, despite his or her culture.”
	8	“Teaching from a culturally relevant instruction background has allowed my students to be involved in discussions and have shared background information without reservation that they will be judged.”

However, Interviewee 1 faulted the use of teaching guides for cultural instruction and classroom management because of their ineffectiveness in delivering the intended outcomes when the teachers were unaware or did not understand their own cultural

beliefs and their negative influence on students' achievements. Her specific sentiments was as follows: "I also believe that a cookie-cutter guide to cultural instruction and classroom management will not be effective without a teacher's understanding of their own cultural beliefs and how it may hinder or foster various student achievement outcomes." Also, misinterpretations of the objectives of CRI and CRCM in fostering inclusivity in the classroom were evident among some teachers. Interviewee 9 noted, "I find that having students in homogeneous groups allows them to adapt to speaking and understanding each other without judgment."

Interview Question 2. How will you provide all students with a representation of themselves in the lesson (i.e., through literature, lesson examples, etc.)? The overarching representations of students that the teachers would provide during their lessons included stocking the classroom with books from diverse cultures, music, world maps, and stories. More specifically, Interviewee 1 responded that she would use real-world experiences to link to the students' own experiences as a way of representing themselves. In the same vein, Interviewee 2 revealed that he would use sports, and Interviewee 3 would use Know-Want-Learn charts to provide students with the representation of themselves during lessons. Interviewee 7 revealed that she would use a multilingual approach for the same purpose. Altogether, the interviewees appreciated the use of diverse modes of representations that would suit all their students during their lessons.

Interview Question 3. How will your lessons help to address the cultures of your students? Although the interviewees revealed that they would use different strategies in their lessons to address the cultures of their students, the common lesson strategies that emerge include the creation of an inclusive environment in which different cultural experiences could be shared, the use of culturally diverse teaching materials, application

of diverse cultural representations and utilization of students own experiences. However, unique ways that individual teachers would use also emerged.

For instance, Interviewee 1 revealed that she would use students' names to introduce culturally oriented engagements, and Interviewee 7 revealed that she would use the dictions of students in the classroom to address the various students' cultures.

Interviewee 2 revealed that he would use the findings from students' questionnaires and surveys to create a culturally inclusive class environment while Interviewees 6 and 9 would use the different cultural heritages of the students and compare them to that of the United States to bring out the cultural diversity in their classes (see Table 3).

Table 3

How Lessons Address Student Cultures

Theme	Participant	Statements
Inclusive environment	1	"Incorporate student's names, ask them to add to the scenario and what they have experienced or believe will occur in the environment in which they know."
	2	"Make time to talk with each of them, and encourage them to share information about themselves and this will allow me to create an environment that is culturally inclusive for all students to understand the lesson."
	7	"I will use student diction to capture attention and build understanding before using academic terms."
Culturally diverse teaching materials and content	6	"By comparing the history of their country to the history of the United States."
	9	"I will use information about different cultural and ethnic heritages that are not in the curriculum to build lesson plans."
Utilization of students' own experiences	6	"If there is something in the lesson that is familiar to something that they have gone through or that is similar to home."

Interview Question 4. How have you built/promoted your classroom community so that students feel comfortable participating in the class discussions? Seven of the teachers (70%) revealed that they encouraged the sharing of cultural experiences by creating a classroom environment that guaranteed safety to all students. In their classes, students were free to interact without being judgmental, thus creating an inclusive classroom culture. However, in this respect, Interviewees 1 and 4 noted that they also created rules of engagement that were to be followed during engagements and interactions. Respect for each other’s opinion was emphasized to facilitate inclusive discussions (see Table 4).

Table 4

Strategies Used to Promote Student Community

Participant	Statements
1	“Create an atmosphere of acceptance and mutual respect; allow for students to share freely but set guidelines that are relatable to the collective community.”
4	“Students are encouraged to participate in classroom discussion because there are no wrong answers. My students have to acknowledge each other with a ‘thank you for sharing’ after a classmate shares his or her response during the classroom discussion.”
5	“I have established a classroom culture where students feel safe to be themselves and express themselves.”
8	“Students are asked to share something about their culture that the class can learn from.”
9	“I allow students to interact with each other diverse groups so that they can learn to value diversity and use it problem solve. This allows them to work effectively with their diverse peers.”

Some teachers used unique strategies to promote a sense of community in their classrooms. Interviewee 3 revealed that she had created a cultural day in her class in which the diverse cultures of students were showcased and celebrated. Moreover, she used Channel One News to generate discussions about contemporary cultural issues in society. Interviewee 3 stated, “I created culture days within the classroom to create an

atmosphere of diversity. We use Channel One News as well to generate topics for writing.” In the same vein, Interviewee 5 noted that he engaged with his students and their parents to discover their backgrounds and build ethnographies of his class. He then shared this information to inform his lesson plans and facilitate classroom engagements and stated, “In my classroom diversity is highly valued and respected. I make sure I get to know about my students’ backgrounds.”

Interview Question 5. What will you do to overcome biases that may be present in any of the teaching materials, student ideas, etc.? The interviewees revealed that they looked out for any biases either before or during their lessons and addressed the issues rather than ignore them. Moreover, the teachers encouraged a diversity of opinion without being prejudiced or judgmental to encourage students to be knowledgeable and respectful of each other’s cultures. However, a variety of techniques were used by teachers to address the cultural biases in teaching materials and students’ opinions. For instance, Interviewee 2 avoided projecting how personal viewpoint, preferring instead to collate and integrate the diverse viewpoints of his students to generate a collective perspective. He stated, “As a culturally responsive teacher I teach by using student-centered stories, vocabulary, and language that will benefit my students. I try not to teach from my point of view but a collective view.”

Regarding the cultural biases that may be embedded in the teaching materials, Interviewee 5 revealed that she provided her students with supplementary learning materials that presented diverse perspectives to address any biases that were revealed in class. Similarly, to address ideological biases, Interviewee 2 noted that he integrated the diverse students’ language and stories in his classroom to provide opportunities for addressing any biases that emerged. Similarly, Interviewee 5 brought in guest speakers

into her classes to provide different cultural perspectives and address any biases that the students had. However, Interviewee 4 avoided cultural biases by remaining objective using culturally neutral materials and ideas.

Interview Question 6. What information do you anticipate learning about/with your students while engaging in this lesson? The overarching themes that emerged about what the teacher would learn about their students included ways of keeping them engaged in the lessons and the cultural diversity of the students. Similarly, the major themes on the lessons the teachers would learn with their students included the diverse problem-solving approaches of world issues and the different ways of having engaging class experiences. However, specific lessons, which teachers anticipated to learn about and with their students, emerged. For instance, Interviewee 2 hoped to discover and develop a new model that incorporated the students experienced into the traditional curriculum to increase its impact on individual students. Similarly, Interviewee 3 anticipated discovering the different perspectives held by her students regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Likewise, Interviewee 5 hoped to learn, alongside her students, the inaccuracies in the diverse learning materials and sources used in her class. Also, she expected that her students would appreciate the use of diverse learning materials and sources to enhance their learning experiences. Interviewee 6 hoped to learn about being culturally responsive to each other. The specific statements about the lessons that the teachers and students would learn while engaging in classroom lessons are sampled in Table 5.

Interview Question 7. What opportunities will your students have to collaborate to foster a well culturally relevant managed classroom? The single overarching theme emerging from the participants' responses regarding the collaboration opportunities in

class is working in groups (see Table 6). The various activities that would be undertaken within these groups include engaging in group discussions. Interviewees 4 and 5 revealed that they would create projects that allowed students to engage in collaborative work that had cultural components.

Table 5

Lessons That Teachers and Students Anticipate to Learning

Participant	Statements
2	“I anticipate keeping my students engaged by creating a model to integrate the traditional curriculum with material that is relevant to students’ lives.”
3	“I anticipate learning and reviewing the effects of COVID 19 from the student’s perspective.”
5	“Through this lesson, my students will learn the importance of analyzing multiple sources for information. They will learn to not rely on one source alone as the information can sometimes be inaccurate.”
6	“I anticipate being culturally responsive to make positive changes on instructional materials, student-teacher relationships, classroom climate, and self-awareness to improve learning for my students.”

Table 6

Use of Group Activities

Participant	Statements
1	“Team learning, accountable talk, and partnering occurs to foster collaboration in a culturally sensitive environment.”
3	“Students will participate in small groups with varying roles of participation which will include sharing of cultural diversity.”
4	“Throughout the school year, my students complete and present a group project that represents the various cultures within the classroom.”
5	“My students will have opportunities to engage in small group discussions such as reading and analyzing texts. They will also be assigned group projects periodically, especially hands-on activities.”
8	“Students are assigned group assignments that will allow them to learn from each other.”
10	“Students are assigned group assignments that will allow them to learn from each other.”

Specific individual strategies that teachers would use to facilitate collaboration also emerged. For instance, Interviewee 7 revealed that she would present culturally oriented problems that would allow her students to collaborate while seeking their solutions. Similarly, Interviewees 2 and 9 noted that they would use class-wide dialogues to facilitate collaboration in the entire class. Interviewee 2 revealed that she could encourage and facilitate interactions in her classes, although she did not elaborate on the activities in which such interactions would be structured.

Interview Question 8. Do you have any suggestions and comments to be added to this interview? Although five of the participants had no further information to add to the interview, the rest made specific comments to add on to what had been discussed. Specifically, Interviewee 3, who was a 51-year-old female Caucasian teacher with 23 years of teaching experience, underscored the need to improve the cultural intelligence of teachers when she said, “Teachers should avail themselves to better understand diversity in cultures or at least have the mindset to be flexible and tolerable to others.” Interviewee 4, who is a 41-year-old female teacher of Hispanic descent and has taught for the last 17 years revealed her concerns when she commented, “I hope to see a better representation of students’ cultures within the instructional setting.”

Interviewees 8 and 10 gave similar sentiments about their broader perception of the importance of culturally relevant instruction and management practices. Interviewee 8 said, “As a culturally relevant teacher, I support the social consciousness of my students and I do engage in conversations that they care about.” Interviewee 8 was a 41-year-old male teacher of Hispanic descent, and Interviewee 10 was a female African American teacher aged 55 years. Both teachers had teaching experience spanning over 10 years. However, only one teacher, a 53-year-old Caucasian male with 21 years of teaching

experience, expressed the wish to learn more about CRI and CRCM.

Interviews based on years of teaching experience. The teaching experience of the interviewees ranged between 5 and 26 years, with all but three teachers having started their teaching careers at age 30 and above. In this respect, the years of teaching experience corresponded to the age of the interviewees. Therefore, these findings are divided into three categories based on the teaching experience of the interviewees. These are the responses of interviewees with less than 10 years of teaching experience, interviewees with a teaching experience spanning between 11 and 20 years, and interviewees who had taught for over 21 years (see Table 7).

Table 7

Categories of Years of Teaching Experience

Group	Years of teaching experience	No. interviewees	%
1	0 to 10	2	20
2	11 to 20	5	50
3	Over 21	3	30

Complexity and diversity of CRI and CRCM strategies. The interviews revealed that teachers with over 10 years of teaching experience used more diverse strategies of CRI and CRM compared to those of teachers with a lower experience period. Similarly, teachers with experience of 10 years and below used simpler strategies of seeking culturally relevant teaching strategies such as using students' names and diction, while those with over 10 years of experience used broader more structured strategies such as sharing cultural heritages and studying their students qualitatively through surveys to understand their cultural orientation (see Appendix B).

Self-efficacy of interviewees in implementing CRI and CRCM strategies.

Teachers with experience of 10 years and below had higher self-efficacy in their ability to implement CRI and CRCM in their classes because they faulted the inadequacies in teaching guides. This was demonstrated by Interviewee One who questioned the teachers' guides to culturally relevant instruction and behavior management for teachers that lacked cultural intelligence by terming them as "cookie-cutter guide(s)." However, when the complexity of CRI and CRCM strategies are considered, teachers with more than 10 years can be said to have a higher self-efficacy because of their confidence in using diverse strategies regardless of the challenges presented (Bandura, 1986).

Focus-Group Results

The results from the focus-group discussions were arranged according to the responses given by the members of the focus group. They were guided by discussion prompts based on the research questions.

How and in what ways teachers had integrated culturally relevant instruction and behavioral management strategies after taking part in MSTTI. The discussions revealed that the participants endeavored to change their instruction and management strategies to make their classes more culturally accommodative. They agreed that it was easier to use culturally relevant strategies when dealing with an ethnically homogeneous class than in a class with students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Banks, 2014). They discussed that it was easier to instruct and manage the behaviors of a class whose students were of the same cultural background as that of the teacher than when the teacher and the students differed in cultural backgrounds. The participants noted that with the increasing number of students from African American and Hispanic descents, among other cultural backgrounds such as Asian and Arabic

descents, their classes were increasingly becoming more diverse culturally, which challenged their CRI and behavior management strategies. Altogether, the participants unearthed specific themes related to the approaches of integrating CRI and behavior management, which included cultural sensitivity and strategy diversity (Banks, 2014).

Cultural sensitivity. The teachers revealed that they had become more culturally sensitive about cultures that were different from their own. They also, revealed that they were already conversant with the dominant American culture. Similarly, teachers from ethnic minorities, in this case, the teachers of African American and Hispanic descent, were culturally-sensitive to their ethnic cultures as well as the dominant American culture. In this regard, the Caucasian teachers were more informed about African American and Hispanic cultures (Emdin, 2018).

Consequently, they were using the knowledge gained from MSTTI to learn more about the minority cultures and implement culturally relevant strategies in their classes with students from the three cultures, namely, the Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic cultures. Similarly, the teachers from ethnic minority communities (i.e., African American and Hispanic Americans) were using their skills from MSTTI to make their classes more inclusive. In this respect, the teachers agreed that their classes were more culturally responsive after having taken the time to learn about the diverse cultures in their classes.

Strategy improvement. The participants revealed that they had developed better strategies for integrating culturally relevant instruction and behavior management in their classes after attending MSTTI. These strategies were premised in the recognition that cultural diversity was an asset rather than a distraction to the effectiveness of the learning processes, which when embraced, led to more culturally sensitive behavior in class

(Emdin, 2018). In this regard, the interviewees were using the cultural knowledge and awareness of their students to enrich classroom learning experiences. Also, their classroom strategies had improved after realizing being open-minded about different cultures was helpful and strongly-held ethnic prejudices were injurious to a culturally inclusive learning environment.

Strategy diversity. The interviewees disclosed that MSTTI has increased its arsenal of strategies that could be used in a culturally relevant classroom. In this respect, although the teachers had their perceptions on how to create a culturally inclusive environment in the classrooms, attending the MSTTI not only helped them refine their strategies but also equipped them with new strategies. That way, the interviewees felt that they were equipped to deal with many culturally related issues in a multicultural classroom that affected instruction and behavior management.

Integration challenges. Although MSTTI had equipped the interviewees with a multiplicity of new strategies, integrating them into their classrooms was challenging because it was time intensive, and needed to be customized to different multicultural circumstances, and challenged some strongly held cultural beliefs of some teachers. In this respect, some teachers observed that preparing for culturally inclusive classrooms was cumbersome because it required the teachers to spend more time devising ways to integrate cultural reliance into their instruction and behavior management practices. Much of the time was spent on choosing culturally relevant materials, inspecting the learning materials for potential biases and advancements of a single cultural perspective at the expense of other cultures, and watching out for culturally induced statements and behaviors of students while in class and addressing them immediately.

Although all of these occasions presented valuable teachable moments for

advancing the cultural competence of students, the time spent competed with that spent on academic matters. Moreover, this called for much introspection of the cultural beliefs and biases of the teacher to avoid projecting them through their classroom practices. The teachers agreed that it was a continuous learning experience beyond that provided during MSTTI. They also argued that, although MSTTI has equipped them with diverse skills for implementing culturally inclusive classrooms using culturally relevant strategies, it did not provide the opportunity to try out these strategies in different classroom conditions, and the practicums were performed only at their school.

In this case, the challenge was that the school population was dominated by students with Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic descent, with those of Asian and Arabic heritage being very few. Therefore, some classrooms had Asian students while others did not have any Asian students. Moreover, learning materials, artifacts, and experiences related to this ethnicity were few and rare, and the Asian ethnicity was very diverse as well. Therefore, many teachers felt challenged when including students of Asian descent's culture because they had to not only narrow down to the specific cultural orientation of the students, which often ranged between Arabic, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese ethnicities. The teachers disclosed that they found these cultures very complicated because they differed significantly from the dominant American culture.

The extent to which MSTTI had changed the teachers' CRI and CRCM practices. The teachers noted that MSTTI had influenced their class instruction and management practices, mainly by changing their attitudes and self-efficacy belief about implementing culturally relevant education. They employed the skills and strategies they had acquired during the professional development program, although they had to figure out exactly how the learned strategies would apply in their classes. In this regard, the

discussion revealed that the teachers were experimenting with different approaches to manage their multicultural classes because students presented different cultural challenges all the time. In this respect, the attitude toward these challenges had changed after attending the MSTTI program.

The changed attitude helped the teachers accept the intensive effort required to prepare culturally inclusive and relevant lessons, which took a considerable time for their lesson-planning activities. They noted that they often had to work beyond school hours, especially to evaluate the cultural relevance of the educational materials, such as books and stories, to identify whether they contained cultural biases. The participants also mentioned the need to be conversant with the cultural diversity of all the students in their classes to avoid being culturally insensitive and inappropriate during discussions. To them, this was a learning curve because new but subtle culturally referenced perspectives often emerged unexpectedly in the classroom during discussions.

The most challenging discussions were those related to the on-going events in the country, which were often widely reported in the mass media and featured in the discussions at the homes of the students. For instance, the recent riots and protests against police killings, political rallies, and school shooting incidents across the country in different occasions revealed different cultural-based opinions and commotions that undermined the cultural tolerance in their classrooms. According to the interviewees, addressing these sociopolitical issues required the teachers to be updated in not only the current affairs in the country but also the different cultural-based perspectives across the different ethnicities represented in their classrooms.

The teachers also revealed that the MSTTI had improved their confidence in implementing culturally relevant instruction and behavior management strategies in class.

Confidence was boosted when the teachers realized that a culturally diverse class was an asset rather than a risk, which the teacher could leverage to build and enhance the cultural competence of the teacher and the students as well. In this respect, teachers were more willing to try out diverse culturally relevant strategies in their classrooms to determine the approach that worked best for each circumstance and environment.

The extent to which MSTTI had influenced the teachers' CRI and behavior management practices when their years of teaching experience were considered. The interviewees agreed that the length of teaching years influenced the competence of the teachers, and in turn, their effectiveness in helping students improve their academic achievements. However, they divulged that the experience related to culturally relevant education was dependent on the cultural diversity of the schools that one taught in during the teaching career. It emerged that the teachers that had taught ethnically heterogeneous classes at any point in their career were better positioned to deal with culturally relevant pedagogy compared to those that had taught in ethnically homogeneous classes. Moreover, teachers that experienced culturally diverse classes early in their careers embraced multicultural practices early, thus facilitating cultural competence early in the teaching career.

However, the differences emanating from years of experience about the influence of the MSTTI program generated much debate and yielded no consensus views. Some teachers felt that MSTTI has only increased their classroom strategy arsenal, which required teaching experience to implement effectively. The younger teachers felt that they were more eager to try out the strategies learned from MSTTI and often did not get much support from their older colleagues or the school administration. Sometimes their experimentation was taken as a burden by the school. In the same vein, the teachers with

many years of experience noted that students had become more expressive over time, making cultural sensitivity higher in the classroom, and a challenge to culturally inclusive education. In this respect, older teachers revealed that they had to change their strategies to accommodate the contemporary multicultural class, and MSTTI provides valuable skills that were suitable for modern class environments.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter contextualizes the findings from the previous chapter to create the meaning of the CRI and CRCM strategies employed by the teachers that participated in the study. The discussion is structured along with the research questions and subquestions. The preconceptions and ideas about CRI and CRCM strategies are analyzed before placing the findings in the results in the context of the existing literature and practice. Thereafter, the similarities and differences of the results with the previous research findings are discussed.

Integration of CRI and CRCM Strategies

Whitaker and Valtierra (2018) investigated if and how the Master of Arts in Teaching offered by the education department at Mountain View College in the southwestern United States changed the motivation of preservice teachers to teach multicultural and multilingual classes and found that the academic courses given therein enabled teachers to acquire concrete skills and improve their existing ones, thus enhancing their ability to teach their classes using culturally inclusive approaches. Also, the researchers noted that the effectiveness of the academic professional development courses was enhanced by reflective opportunities. In this regard, the courses challenged the teachers to assess their readiness to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students through continuous reflections of their roles and responsibilities in such contexts along with experiential learning opportunities.

They argued that teachers appreciated the value of multicultural education despite feelings of incapacity to teach some specific subdivisions of students. However, Whitaker and Valtierra (2018) noted that the changes in the motivations of teachers were not

influenced by any specific component of the Master of Arts in Teaching program but rather by a combination of several small elements therein. Carrington, Mercer, Iyer, and Selva (2015) applauded the effectiveness of critical service-learning programs in transforming the value system of teachers and in instilling values of social justice that encourages them to adopt inclusive teaching in their classes. They noted that that the transformational learning experience in such programs facilitated the development of values, attitudes, and practices that laid the foundation for implementing inclusive learning in the classroom.

Regarding the achievement of the educational objectives that are emphasized by the state-mandated high-stakes testing, Ladson-Billings (2014) argued that culturally relevant pedagogy needed to transform into culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy to achieve the dual objective of improving academic performance and developing cultural competence among students. Moreover, Siwatu et al. (2017) argued that educators needed to be culturally competent to manage the behaviors of students from minority ethnicities, which was often found to be problematic by many educators. Similarly, Larson et al. (2018) recommended that teachers interrogate their ethnocentrism practices, adopt a social justice mindset, and address antiracist behavior in class promptly to address the increasing disciplines and intellectual differences in schools.

According to Larson et al. (2018), although teachers may be equipped technically from teacher training and professional development programs to implement culturally inclusive education, other factors beyond the skillsets influence the implementation and integration of cultural inclusivity and relevance. In this respect, occupational and sociopolitical factors have been cited in the literature. For instance, Larson et al. revealed that insufficient continuous professional advancements, deficient multicultural training,

and disparities in the cultural norms of teachers and learners were prevalent in urban schools. Strauss and Ingram (2019) noted that teachers in the target state were lowly paid against the backdrop of high living costs in the state. Similarly,

Sociopolitical factors have been implicated in the implementation of culturally inclusive education in the United States. For instance, Yuan (2018) noted that the American educational system was predominated by the Caucasians who made up 80% of the country's teachers, with the non-White ethnicities being disproportionately underrepresented, thus presenting a significant disparity between the number of teachers and students from ethnic minority groups. In the same vein, National Center for Educational Statistics (2018) and Sandell and Tupy (2015) indicated that, although the American student demographics have changed to reflect those in the country's population, the proportion and diversity of ethnic minority groups in the United States were increasing.

The ethnic composition of the teaching fraternity did not reflect these realities. Similarly, Nganga (2016) and Lopez (2018) decried cultural mismatch among teachers and students in schools and teacher training institutions as a significant limitation on the implementation of culturally relevant instruction and classroom management. In this regard, Alghamdi (2017) recommended the increases of teachers of color in the teaching workforce in schools because they advocated cultural competence, served as positive role models and mediated between racially diverse students and teachers.

Contextualization of findings. The integration of CRI and CRCM practices has been influenced significantly by MSTTI. The study evidenced that the teachers had acquired skills from MSTTI that had enabled them to explore and apply diverse strategies to integrate CRI in their classes. Besides becoming more sensitive to their own cultural

biases, teachers were also sensitive to the different cultures that their students brought to class. In this regard, rather than seek what was wrong with the different students in their classes, they focused on what was right about their cultures that could be used to enrich the learning experiences of their students.

This pedagogical attitude was emphasized by Ladson-Billings (2014) who argued that cultural competence and sociopolitical awareness were critical in integrating culturally relevant pedagogy to the multicultural classroom environment. Going by views of Ladson-Billings, the teachers took the time to learn about the cultures of their students and inspect the teaching materials for cultural biases that would undermine class instruction. Similarly, the teachers appeared to appreciate the cultural diversity that students brought to class by encouraging the sharing of experiences between learners to identify the teachable moments that could be used to advance the learning objectives.

To integrate CRCM strategies in their class, the teachers created an atmosphere of cultural tolerance by increasing the cultural awareness of their students. By facilitating engagement and interaction between their students while being respectful of each other's cultures helped to keep students focused on learning rather than conflicting with each other. In other words, rather than being culturally blind, the teachers encouraged their students to celebrate the diverse cultural knowledge that each student brought into class (Larson et al., 2018). Altogether, the teachers impressed their students to treat all cultures equally thus enabling constructive engagement that facilitated the learning processes in their classrooms. This reinforces the observations of Larson et al. (2018) who revealed that culturally responsive teaching enhanced proactive behavior management practices in a multicultural class, which, in turn, led to positive behaviors of students in these classes.

However, some teachers expressed the need for further introspection about their

belief systems and cultural awareness to embolden their beliefs and capacities to integrate effective CRI and CRCM strategies in their classroom. This was evidenced by the sentiments of some teachers that indicated that they learned something new every day about cultures different from their own and the effect such new knowledge had on their prior viewpoint about those cultures. This indicates that, although MSTTI had managed to instill culturally relevant skills in the teachers, it was yet to build the teachers into confident implementers of CRI and CRCM strategies in class. This was further evidenced by the preference to use one approach that they had found effective and leaving out several other alternatives.

For instance, teachers who found group work and exposure to culturally diverse materials effective hoped that it would allow their students to learn and become more tolerant of each other culturally, whereas others inspected the learning materials for cultural bias beforehand to identify and eliminate or avoid any cultural biases therein that would be offensive to some students. These findings are echoed by Siwatu et al. (2017) who argued that, although teachers may have the skills of culturally sensitive pedagogy and class management strategies, their translation of theory to practice may be hampered by their self-efficacy beliefs about being successful or achieving the desired outcomes. Similarly, they conform to concerns raised by Gay (2013), who decried the limitations of the dominant social and cultural paradigms in implementing culturally inclusive education in the United States. The author argued that the contemporary school environment provided an expansive context concerning how knowledge is will be created and understood.

The notion of being culturally responsive specifically emphasizes the critical need for the teachers to know who they are as people, understanding the contexts in which they

teach and questioning their knowledge and assumptions. In the same vein, using the theory of reciprocal determinism by Bandura (1986) explained that self-efficacy beliefs predicted the teachers' behavior and decision making, influencing the choice between either acting alone or seeking the assistance of other teachers when confronted with a cultural dilemma in class. In this regard, the teachers in the study relied more on their skills and decisions, as there was no evidence that they collaborated to address culturally challenging instruction and behavior management strategies.

Implications of findings. The integration of CRI and CRCM strategies in American middle schools was a complex and time-intensive undertaking that required highly skilled and motivated teachers. In this regard, professional-development programs, such as MSTTI, needed to focus more on teacher motivation and expanding the experiential landscape for teachers, to make them better implementers of culturally inclusive education in the country (Siwatu et al., 2017). Although imparting knowledge about culturally relevant strategies was critical in the professional development of teachers, more opportunities to translate this knowledge into practice is pertinent and urgent. Middle school administrators and professional development programs in Central Florida needed to support teachers after attending the programs to help them implement the skills and strategies they had learned into their classrooms.

Influence of MSTTI on CRI and CRCM

Podolsky, Kini, and Darling-Hammond (2019) investigated the effect of teaching experience on the effectiveness of teachers and found a general increase in teacher effectiveness and the teachers' years of teaching increased. Also, the academic performance of students increased as teachers became more experienced. However, the teachers' effectiveness increased at a higher rate in the first five years of their teaching

career than in the subsequent years, with the rate of improvement becoming constant after the fourth year while the student's outcomes remain the same in this period. Similar findings were reported by Ewetan and Ewetan (2015) who found that students in schools with teachers with over 10 years of teaching experience performed better in mathematics and English compared to those in schools with teachers with fewer than 10 years of teaching experience. In this regard, retaining skills and experienced teachers in the teaching profession was beneficial to the students' academic outcomes.

Moreover, Cruz, Manchanda, Firestone, and Rodl (2019) reported that the years of teaching experience were associated positively with high levels of self-efficacy in practicing culturally responsive teaching. Teachers who had taught for a long time felt more confident in building trusting personal relations with their students, although they were less confident about their cultural knowledge related to native cultural languages of their students and the infusion of different cultures into the education curriculum.

Contrastingly, Cardona-Moltó (2011) reported that younger and less experienced teachers were more positive about the importance and benefits of inclusion in school compared to their more experienced colleagues, while Chiner and Cardona (2013) did not find any significant difference in inclusivity perceptions based on the years teaching experience. Furthermore, Loreman, Sharma, and Forlin (2013) noted that, although many years of experience and a high level of education before teacher training influenced the teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive education positively, excessive training and very high knowledge had a moderating effect because of the realization of the enormity of the task of implementing inclusive class environments effectively.

In the same vein, while Loreman et al. (2013) acknowledged that preservice teachers became less confident about their ability to conduct inclusive classes as the

number of practicums increased, Whitaker and Valtierra (2018) echoed the importance of training program practicums that provided multiple opportunities for teachers to experience various cultural settings during their professional development course because they facilitated the choosing and adopting instructional strategies that suited the unique needs of students.

From a different perspective, Abacioglu, Volman, and Fischer (2019) reiterated the need to change a preexisting frame of mind to make it open to culturally sensitive classrooms. They noted that the teaching experiences of teachers were malleable and could be improved, despite the challenges presented by strongly held beliefs. Although the cultural responsiveness of the teachers did not differ by age specifically, it differed with the prior experience with culturally related encounters and the diversity of those experiences. Moreover, Glover and Harris (2016) highlighted the need for collaboration between novice teachers of color and teacher educators to improve teacher retention.

Contextualization of findings. The findings revealed that all teachers, regardless of their years of teaching experience, adopted some strategies of making their instruction and behavior management more culturally responsive. However, the study also revealed that MSTTI appeared to influence the teachers with more years of teaching experience than those with fewer years. This is an interesting observation considering that older teachers are expected to have well-established teaching pedagogies and philosophies, which are harder to change, compared to their younger counterparts. Moreover, more teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience used a broader and more complex arsenal of strategies, indicating that they were able to translate the skills learned from MSTTI to broader classroom contexts.

These findings concur with those of Loreman et al. (2013) who found that many

years of teaching experience went along with higher self-efficacy levels because they were more confident in using diverse culturally relevant instruction and behavior management strategies in their classrooms. Similarly, the study findings agreed with those of Ewetan and Ewetan (2015) and Podolsky et al. (2019) who associated improved academic outcomes in inclusive classes with the more years of teaching experience. The findings contradict those of Podolsky et al., who noted that teachers experienced most changes during their first 4 years of their teaching career. In this respect, the findings of the study indicated otherwise based on the narrow and few strategies used by the younger teachers, indicating a minimal change in their instruction and behavior management strategies.

However, the same findings contradict those of Cardona-Moltó (2011) who found that teachers with a higher level of experience based on their years of teaching experience were less positive about the benefits accrued from inclusivity in their classes compared to their less experienced and younger colleagues. However, the concerns raised by some teachers in the study with more years of teaching experience about the difficulty of implementing culturally relevant instruction and behavior management strategies are consistent with the findings of Loreman et al. (2013) who revealed the moderating effects of much training on inclusivity. More experienced teachers were likely to have undergone much training during their lengthy teaching careers spanning over 20 years.

In this respect, they had become more aware of the increasing cultural diversity in the school environment and the challenges presented by students from diverse and sometimes, conflicting cultures, which made their work more complex and challenging. Nonetheless, the findings from all the teachers across the different years of experience are echoed by Abacioglu et al. (2019), who emphasized the need to change the pre-existing

frame of mind to different cultures and to enable the implementation of culturally sensitive and relevant education in the country. In this respect, many teachers in the study agreed that as the cultures students became more diverse, strongly held opinions and cultural worldviews were increasingly being challenged.

Implications of findings. Teaching experience should be beneficial to teachers and students. This means that as teachers practice for more years, they should become increasingly adept at creating culturally inclusive environments in the classrooms and implementing culturally responsive education in their schools. In this regard, the retention of highly skilled, experienced, and qualified teachers was beneficial for the advancement of culturally inclusive education in the middle school, the target state, and the country. However, more collaboration between teachers of different career experienced needed to collaborate in teams to embolden their culturally relevant and inclusive strategies. Moreover, experienced teachers needed more experiences beyond what they had encountered in the schools to broaden their cultural frames of reference and worldviews and become more alive to and conversant with the emerging cultural issues in their increasingly diverse classes and schools. In this respect, teacher exchange programs would be beneficial in increasing opportunities for experiencing different school and classroom cultural diversity.

Change in CRCM Practices After MSTTI

Geerlings, Thijs, and Verkuyten (2018) revealed that native Dutch teachers had feelings of less efficacy when dealing with ethnic minority students compared to when dealing with native Dutch majority ones in their classrooms. This disparity emanated from the strong internalization of the teachers when dealing with students of different ethnicities from their own, and the ability to treat children as individuals rather than

viewing them from a generalized ethnic lens. In turn, Debnam, Pas, Bottiani, Cash, and Bradshaw (2015) noted that the assessment of cultural responsiveness in classrooms was challenging due to the lack of standardized tests and the variations in the findings from self-reported and observed assessment methods.

Teachers rated their self-efficacy higher using self-reporting compared to observations using the Assessing School Setting: Interactions of Students and Teachers, which is an external classroom observation program. In the same breath, Gillard (2018) revealed that teachers from Title I and non-Title I schools lacked learned and acquired cultural competence due to deficient teacher training and professional development. In turn, this disadvantaged African American and Hispanic students because teachers were not well skilled in dealing with ethnic minority students.

Contextualization of findings. The findings revealed that teachers have improved their culturally relevant strategies after attending MSTTI. The MSTTI program has imparted new skills in dealing with culturally diverse student bodies, had encouraged the need to build cultural competence alongside sociopolitical competence, and had debunked many culturally oriented myths and misconceptions. In this respect, the findings correlate with those of Geerlings et al. (2018) who noted that, despite the low efficacy experienced by teachers when dealing with ethnic minority students, their efficaciousness increased when they became more knowledgeable about the minority ethnicities and became more adept at using culturally relevant and inclusive practices.

However, the study revealed the difficulty in assessing the level of change in the teachers' use of CRI and CRCM strategies after attending the MSTTI program. Moreover, the teachers in this study did not allude to having high self-efficacy when dealing with African American and Hispanic students considering that they experimented

with several culturally relevant strategies in their classrooms but did not reveal which one was more effective or best suited for their classroom circumstances. These findings can be explained by Gillard (2018) who found deficiencies in teacher training and professional-development programs aimed at improving cultural competence and implementing culturally relevant and inclusive strategies in the classroom. Moreover, the difficulty in evaluating the effectiveness of and the change imparted by MSTTI resonates with the findings of Debnam et al. (2015), who implicated the differences from the results of self-reporting and observation assessment approaches. Moreover, Siwatu et al. (2017) noted that the effectiveness of professional-development programs could be measured using the level of self-efficacy in implementing culturally inclusive and responsive practices in the classroom.

Implications of findings. Teacher training and professional-development programs aimed at improving the understanding and implementation of CRI and CRCM practices in the classroom. Above imparting skills and knowledge, these programs should influence the attitudes and self-efficacy of the teachers when dealing with culturally diverse students, and especially those from ethnic minority communities (Siwatu et al., 2017). However, this study demonstrates the importance of evaluating professional-development programs aimed at enhancing the knowledge, skills, and strategies for creating culturally relevant and inclusive instruction and behavior management practices.

Conclusions

Gillard (2018) noted that CRI and CRCM in middle schools is critical for the advancement of inclusive and culturally sensitive education in the United States. Middle schools across the country are increasingly multicultural, which reflects the changing demography in the country. In a bid to understand the lack of culturally relevant

instruction and behavior management in middle schools, the perceptions of teachers from a Title I school in the southeastern United States was sought (Gillard, 2018).

The study reinforced the existing observations that American schools and teachers were unable to implement culturally relevant education effectively. This is based on the low level of skills and self-efficacy demonstrated by the teachers, even after attending training and professional-development programs that claimed to instill such competencies. The reasons behind this deficiency can be attributed to internal factors related to the teacher, and external factors related to the working environment around the teachers and the quality of teacher training in culturally relevant education (Bandura, 1986).

The lack of self-efficacy among teachers, and demonstrated by the few classroom strategies used, indicated that they lacked sufficient opportunities to practice their skills and knowledge. These deficiencies were aggravated by limited opportunities to expand their experiences during professional development. Moreover, teachers lacked adequate support from the school administrators, who were constrained by limited resources. In this respect, culturally relevant instruction and behavior management practices can only be advanced in schools if professional-development programs provided experiential opportunities in which teachers could collaborate and share experiences, more experienced teachers could mentor the novice ones, and all teachers could encounter varieties of multicultural school and classroom settings (Bandura, 1986).

Recommendations for Future Research

Several opportunities to expand and extend this study exist. For instance, future studies could incorporate observations in their methodologies to identify the correlation between observed and self-reported practices of implementing culturally relevant

education after attending professional-development programs (Larson et al., 2018). In the same vein, future studies should focus on the students as the recipients of the CRI and CRCM strategies of their teachers. The students may help to gauge how effective their teachers had become at managing diversity and making their classes culturally relevant.

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Appendix A

Teacher Interview Instrument

Teacher Interview Instrument

I. Directions

The researcher will elucidate the purpose of the interview to the participants and will explain each interview question and answer any questions the participants might have for the researcher. At the end of the interview session, all instruments will be collected and recorded. Participants will be acknowledged with a thank you note for their participation.

II. Participants' Interview Questionnaire

1. How does Culturally Relevant Instructions (CRI) and Culturally Relevant Classroom Management (CRCM) meet its overall objectives of improving students' learning outcomes? Briefly, elaborate on your response.
2. How will you provide all students with a representation of themselves in the lesson? (i.e. through literature, lesson examples, etc.)
3. How will your lessons help to address the cultures of your students?
4. How have you built/promoted your classroom community so that students feel comfortable participating in the class discussions?
5. What will you do to overcome biases that may be present in any of the teaching materials, student ideas, etc.?
6. What information do you anticipate learning about/with your students while engaging in this lesson?
7. What opportunities will your students have to collaborate to foster a well culturally relevant managed classroom?
8. Do you have any suggestions and comments to be added to this questionnaire?

Appendix B

Complexity of CRI and CRCM Strategy Based on Teaching Experience

Complexity of CRI and CRCM Strategy Based on Teaching Experience

Strategy	Complexity	#	Teaching experience	Above/below 10 years (%)
Using students' names	Low	1	5	1 below (100)
Using students' diction	Low	7	7	1 below (100)
Using culturally diverse materials	High	2	15	1 below (11) 8 above (89)
		3	23	
		4	17	
		5	12	
		6	26	
		7	7	
		8	11	
		9	21	
		10	20	
		Sharing cultural heritage	High	
4	17			
6	26			
7	7			
8	11			
9	21			
Studying students	High	2	15	1 above (100)
Using multiple languages	High	2	15	1 below (33) 2 above (66)
		6	26	
		7	7	