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Cultural Diversity Instructional Challenges Faced by Junior High School Teachers in Calgary

Lumbesi Amanwi
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Lumbesi Amanwi

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Cultural Diversity Instructional Challenges Faced by Junior High School Teachers in

Calgary

by

Lumbesi Amanwi

MSc, London Metropolitan University, 2006

BSc, University of Yaounde 1, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

November 2022

Abstract

Many Canadian children under the age of 15 were born to at least one foreign-born parent, representing 37.5% or 2.2 million children of the total population of children. Although this cultural diversity provides opportunities for teachers to use as a strength, it also poses instructional challenges. Much research has focused on cultural diversity challenges, yet it is not known whether specific cultural diversity instructional challenges have been overcome or how. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use Gay's culturally responsive teaching (CRT) to overcome such challenges. In addition to Gay's pedagogy, the conceptual framework included elements of the Ladson-Billings's culturally relevant pedagogy. The research questions focused on understanding the cultural diversity instructional challenges and exploring how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. Purposeful sampling was used to select eight teachers in highly culturally diverse junior high schools in Calgary. Data were collected through interviews, followed by transcription and analysis to identify themes. Findings revealed that teachers face cultural diversity instructional challenges including the lack of resources, language barriers, lack of student motivation, and gaps in student learning. Teachers gave examples of self-developed CRT strategies they use to overcome the challenges, featuring intentional lesson planning amongst other strategies. All teachers also expressed their thirst for training on CRT. Insights from this study can help stakeholders in education identify and implement professional development sessions that promote effective strategies needed for a culturally diverse classroom.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated my father, Mr. Nsang Samuel Nebamunge, whose unending encouragement inspired me to take this work to completion. To my mom, Rebecca Ngum Nsang, thank you for your prayers. Special thanks go to my husband Mr. Isidore Tanda, and my two boys, Jevan Ngwakonwi and Nathan Nebafanwi – they understood the assignment and understood the reason for my “absence” even when I was at home physically. Thank you all for your patience, support, and for allowing me to take the time off to complete this program. I love you! To my siblings, Dr. Fred Atoneche, Mr. Fongeh Emmanuel, Dr. Kareen Siri, Mrs. Doreen Nchang Ngwakonwi and Mr. Albert Ambe, thank you for reminding me every day of the task that was ahead of me. Your questions regarding when I will finish the study kept me going and encouraged me to cross the finish line. You all motivated me to stay focused and make the family proud.

Finally, I dedicate this work to Dr. Jesse Richter, my first supervisor who bowed to COVID-19 in June 2020. I missed you in the process, but I also know you are proud of me for taking this work to the end after you were gone.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Canada represents a mosaic of diverse ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity, making it fair to say, “In many ways, Canada is the global village” (Chambers, 2008, p.222). Statistics Canada (2017b) projects that immigrants from more than 200 ethnic origins would represent between 24.5% and 30.0% of Canada’s population in 2036. Comparing this projection with 20.7% in 2011 and looking at past proportions, it is the highest proportion since 1871 (Statistics Canada, 2017b). This cultural diversity does not leave out the Indigenous populations of Canada who have experienced a population growth of 42.5% since 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2017a). As a result, the classrooms of today in most Canadian schools are far more diverse than ever before. An increase in cultural diversity underscores the importance of teaching and learning environments that reflect and support the pluralistic society that Canada is (Kowaluk, 2016; Volante et al., 2019). Raisinghani (2019a) put it clearly that the exponential increase in cultural diversity amongst students must not be ignored; making an education that takes cultural diversity into consideration an essential requirement in contemporary Canadian classrooms.

According to Kowaluk (2016), Canada has taken an aggressive approach to grow its population for the sake of the economy, thereby increasing Canada’s diversity. In addition to the culture of the original Aboriginal inhabitants of Canada, multiculturalism has seen an increase due to these diverse international cultures. Canada is attractive to many immigrants based on its perceived quality of life, peacefulness, and care extended to immigrants. Immigrants made up about 20.6% of the total Canadian population in

2011. In Alberta, the immigrant population in 2016 was about 845,000, which is over 21% of the total Alberta population. Suárez-Oroczo (2018) shared that mass migration is upsetting demographics, with the number of immigrant children growing exponentially in high income countries like Canada. In 2016, Canada had 2.2 million children under the age of 15 born to families with at least one foreign-born parent, accounting for 37.5% of the total population of children (Suárez-Oroczo, 2018). The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) saw an increase in the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) from 29,000 in 2017 (CBE, 2017) to over 30,000 in 2021 (CBE, 2021), which reflects the diversity in classrooms. The CBE (2021) confirms this current number in their ‘Supports for Students’ document by stating that “about one-quarter of our students are identified as English Language Learners (ELLs)” (CBE, 2021, para. 1). There are also over 5,300 self-identified Indigenous students in the school district (CBE, 2021). In one Calgary junior high school (Grades 6 to 9) of about 370 students, there are 27 different languages spoken by students, with a total ELL population of 227 students.

With this high diversity visible in classrooms, creating culturally responsive environments in schools where all children can learn means Canadian education will need to embrace and use strengths in diversity (Kowaluk, 2016). Educators are increasingly recognizing diversity and diversity-related educational needs in Canadian classrooms than they had done in previous years (Briscoe & Pollock, 2017, 2019). Although student populations are diverse in many other ways including class, academic abilities, and sexual orientation, the most visible diversity is associated with race, ethnicity, culture, some religious affiliations, and (dis)abilities (Briscoe & Pollock, 2017). Stakeholders in

education have responsibilities to bridge the learning and achievement gap so that learning is attainable and equitable for all students, regardless of culture, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, language, gender, or religious background. One way of providing equitable education for all students is to promote, train and encourage teachers to use culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and culturally relevant teaching (CRtT) strategies in their classrooms. According to Ladson-Billings (1995a), CRtT is a combination of teaching methods and practices that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural backgrounds and references in all aspects of learning.

Chapter 1 provides background information, a brief explanation of cultural diversity in Canadian classrooms, varying perceptions of the teachers, and the impact of teachers applying CRT strategies with diverse student populations. In addition, Chapter 1 includes a problem statement that details the gap in the study and the sparsity of knowledge of instructional challenges that junior high school teachers face in their culturally diverse junior high school classes. Finally, this chapter includes the purpose and nature of the study, the research questions, and the conceptual framework.

Background

This basic qualitative study sought to investigate specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. Diversity refers to differences in race, culture, and values (Hurtado, 2001; Tienda, 2013). One of the types of diversity is cultural diversity (Tienda, 2013), which is very much present in our schools today. Cultural diversity instructional challenges were examined in this study. CRT is the behavioral expressions

of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning (Gay, 2013). In an educational setting, CRT incorporates such concepts as multiculturalism, culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), culturally relevant teaching (CRtT), culturally relevant pedagogy (CRtP) as well as opportunities for teachers to use cultural diversity as a strength (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). I was specifically interested in investigating cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and exploring how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges.

According to Senge (1990), a learning organization is a comprehensive arrangement in which collaboration among all stakeholders is key, where stakeholders consistently work on expanding their capacity to create results. Because an educational system meets the criteria for a learning organization, Khamung et al. (2019) asserted that cultural diversity has benefits for educational systems, but also can pose challenges. Khamung et al. hold that educational systems, as organizations, are able to tap the benefits of the diversity and minimize its challenges. Cox (1993) presented the importance of educators genuinely considering cultural diversity in their practice, with increased cultural diversity in schools leading to higher levels of creativity and innovation (p. 33). However, higher levels of creativity and innovation, like any other good idea, do not come without challenges, including cultural diversity related instructional challenges. This study therefore investigated the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explored how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges.

Current literature establishes that diversity of any sort offers instructional challenges (Kowaluk, 2016; LaCroix & Kuehl, 2019) with many studies focused on teachers' CRT practices in culturally diverse classrooms (Bottiani et al., 2018; McKoy et al., 2017; Parsons, 2017). Common highlights of culturally responsive strategies include high expectations for learning while recognizing and tapping from strengths that a student's lived experiences and culture bring to the classroom. Researchers believe that more knowledge and awareness of cultural diversity instructional challenges will close the gap in research and provide all students with optimal instructional opportunities by using culturally responsive instructional strategies in classrooms (Bondie et al., 2019; Bottiani et al., 2018). The goal of this research study was to gain understanding of the specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. The results of this study may help point teachers to where they can gain access to increased support to promote cultural understandings in teaching.

When Dubbeld et al. (2019) examined multicultural attitudes of junior high school teachers and their perceptions of cultural diversity related to school policy and school climate, results revealed that teachers with limited assimilative attitudes have a positive attitude towards the interaction of students from different cultural backgrounds. Although these teachers showed a lower score on diversity-related burnout, burnout is not the only challenge faced by junior high school teachers in culturally diverse classrooms. Dubbeld et al. then concluded that all is not well with teaching culturally diverse junior high schools, pointing out the need for action to change the attitudes and perceptions of junior

high school teachers. Understanding cultural diversity challenges faced by teachers in junior high schools may lead to informed and meaningful action like offering training and setting higher expectations of teachers regarding their multicultural students. Such training could start in preservice teacher preparation programs as research indicates that intervention plays a huge role in motivating preservice teachers to consider the use of CRT strategies in their teaching (Chou et al., 2018).

Contemporary classrooms typically mirror the growing cultural diversity that is inherent in every aspect of life. Contrary to the commonly held belief that cultural diversity is a threat to the teaching and learning process, teachers recognize cultural diversity as both a strength and a challenge, acknowledging cultural diversity as something that should help them in promoting all students' learning (Raisinghani, 2018a; Warren, 2018). Although some teachers view their students' cultural diversity as a strength, most teachers also consider this cultural diversity among their student populations as a challenge, with reports of experiences of confronting gendered cultural practices, religious and cultural resistance, as well as difficulties arising from differing parental expectations (Raisinghani, 2018a, 2018b). However, as the cultural diversity in classrooms continues to increase, there is need to gain more understanding of cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers. Raisinghani (2018b) reported that teachers are willing to integrate cultural diversity related aspects like diverse Indigenous knowledge, including Aboriginal knowledge in their classrooms and use CRT strategies, but found it challenging to do so. The challenge of culturally diverse classrooms is not a new phenomenon in Canadian education, but what is new is

how to identify and overcome all specific instructional culture-related challenges and provide all students with optimal learning opportunities (Bondie et al., 2019).

Vidwans (2016) surveyed 76 teachers and interviewed 10 teachers of kindergarten to Grade 12 in Ontario on their perceptions of their self-efficacy regarding teaching science in a diverse classroom, with one of questions asking for their attitudes towards cultural diversity and ELL inclusion. Vidwans found that among the many challenges faced by teachers amidst diverse classrooms, cultural barriers are also noticeable, with increasing cultural and linguistic diversity calling for aspects of curriculum and instruction to mirror the diversity and be appropriately inclusive. Culturally responsive educators could be better equipped to reach minority students in the classroom by bridging differences to ensure an effective teaching and learning process (Bottiani et al., 2018). The work by Bottiani et al. is a reminder that strategies and policies employed by high achieving nations like Singapore ensure culturally relevant lessons for students (Wiggan & Watson 2016). As Canada strives to emulate the example of some high achieving nations, it is incumbent on each District to engage its teachers in culturally responsive and culturally relevant practices.

It is clear in the CBE website under its 3-year education plan that teachers are encouraged to provide every student the opportunity to succeed personally and academically no matter their background, identity, or personal circumstances (CBE, 2021). Teachers are encouraged to consider culturally responsive instructional strategies when they plan lessons and assess students. Although the CBE calls on teachers to honor Indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and histories in this process, recognizing and

embracing other cultures in their increasingly culturally diverse classrooms is not a bad idea if the goals of inclusivity, engagement, and rigorous learning task designing are to be met fully. However, the effort put by teachers to complete this culturally responsive teaching work does not come free of challenges. A likely cause of instructional challenges in culturally diverse classrooms is a lack of cultural understandings by teachers (Bartz & Bartz, 2018).

Bassey (2016), in his article titled “Culturally Responsive Teaching: Implications for Educational Justice,” raised the overriding question: “How can we realize the goal of educational justice in the field of teaching?” He examined CRT as an educational practice and concluded that it is possible to realize educational justice in the field of teaching because in its true implementation, CRT conceptualizes the connection between education and social justice and creates the space needed for discussing social change in society. Bassey’s work is important because it maintains that CRT activates civic citizenship of all students, keeps students awake, and makes them active participants in the fight for social change, calling for initiatives to promote teachers’ knowledge of, and application of culturally responsive teaching strategies in their classrooms.

Ladson-Billings (1995a) and Gay (2010) both highlighted that an approach to CRT empowers students intellectually, socially, and emotionally by creating a classroom, which affects students through a holistic approach to the implementation of culturally responsive instructional practices. Kowaluk (2016) found that the use of CRP holds educators accountable to ensuring cultural responsiveness is alive during classroom instruction. He then supported a holistic approach to the implementation of CRT.

Kowaluk's 2016 report is in line with what Ladson-Billings (2009) claimed, that "teachers who practice culturally relevant methods not only see themselves as professionals but also strongly identify with teaching" (p. 37). To live up to this responsibility, teachers must be aware of existing culture-related instructional challenges, some of which this study identified. As teachers feel that cultural diversity makes it hard for them to reach their students, many teachers have expressed the need for increased teacher support to promote cultural understandings in teaching (Bartz & Bartz, 2018; Kowaluk, 2016; Larson et al., 2018; Raisinghani, 2018a). This study helps fill the gap in research by focusing on investigating specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and exploring how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges.

Finally, according to Zoch (2017), CRT motivates students and teachers, confirming that culturally responsive educators are better equipped to reach minority students in the classroom. Educators implementing culturally responsive educational practices have a positive influence on students' academics and students' psychological well-being (Bartz & Bartz, 2018). As teachers are often encouraged to pay attention to equity and social justice in their classrooms, one way to do so will be to consider inclusivity and equitability by being intentional in how students from different cultural backgrounds will engage in learning (Lopez, 2011; Sanders et al., 2016). According to Ladson-Billings (1995a), teachers engage students more when they have a good understanding of students' home cultural patterns. Although CRT is a multifaceted fluid concept with no script or equation for teachers to make their learning environments

culturally responsive, cultural responsiveness encourages “academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 75). As to why this study was needed, CRT thereby presents instructional strategies that give confidence and guidance to teachers to improve the academic achievement of students from diverse backgrounds.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study was that although much research has focused on CRT, all specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers are not known due to the fluid nature of diverse populations in classrooms. It is known that diversity of any sort offers instructional challenges for students (Kowaluk, 2016; LaCroix & Kuehl, 2019; Raisinghani, 2018a). Much research has focused on teachers’ CRT practices in culturally diverse classrooms (Larson et al., 2018; McKoy et al., 2017; Parsons, 2017); yet there is sparsity of recent research on specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by teachers. This gap in research was identified by Raisinghani (2019a) based on a national teacher survey during which teachers identified the concern that student cultural diversity is one of the greatest challenges as they work to provide all students with optimal learning opportunities. Raisinghani (2019a) reported that teachers reaffirmed the concern that student cultural diversity is one of the greatest challenges as they work to provide all students with optimal learning opportunities. Participating teachers in Raisinghani’s work felt that cultural diversity makes it hard for them to reach their students. However, because not all cultural diversity instructional challenges teachers face are known, researchers believe

this gap can be closed if teachers are aware of such instructional challenges and provide all students with optimal instructional opportunities by using culturally responsive instructional strategies in classrooms (Bondie et al., 2019; Larson et al., 2018; Raisinghani, 2018a).

Insights from a study of four Alberta school districts including the CBE called for boards to promote CRT in schools (Ngo, 2012). To promote CRT, Ngo identified the need to integrate cultural content and run training programs that will enhance teachers' understanding of cultural diversity. The need to integrate cultural content and run training programs is still in place as Statistics Canada reports that Canada admitted 313,580 immigrants in 2018/2019 (2017b). Although this is one of the highest levels of immigrant numbers in Canadian history, the numbers are likely to see an increase as the years go by. This tendency to see increased immigration is supported by Canadian Immigration and Citizenship (2017), which holds that immigration into Canada from all continents is ongoing. In 2015/2016, Canada received 323,192 permanent immigrants, including nearly 30,000 Syrian refugees. Furthermore, the City of Calgary acknowledges that Calgary is currently the fourth largest city in Canada with the highest immigrant population, peaking almost half a million in 2020. A combination of the growing number of refugees in Canada and Calgary receiving a high number of these refugees makes sense for the CBE to address the unique learning, cultural, and socioemotional needs of school-aged immigrant children by encouraging their teachers to use CRT strategies. The overall problem is that although there exists significant research on cultural diversity and CRT in classrooms, there is sparsity of research on specific cultural diversity

instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers in Calgary. As Calgary junior high schools have seen a high growth in cultural diversity, this study may lend better understanding of challenges teachers face in teaching culturally diverse classes. Since understanding the problem is often the starting point for a solution, teachers and stakeholders in education may work together to find ways of addressing identified challenges as they work to meet the needs of every student.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. It is hoped that the results of this culture-related study may provide much-needed insights into the awareness of all cultures in a classroom and help develop best practices for teachers, helping teachers create an atmosphere of a respectful and rewarding learning environment. Insights from this study may aid stakeholders working with teachers in identifying and implementing teacher professional development sessions that promote effective strategies needed for a culturally diverse classroom.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are based the conceptual framework and the literature review. The following central research questions will guide the research:

Research Question 1 (RQ 1): What are the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers?

Research Question 2 (RQ 2): How do teachers use CRT to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided this study was the CRP theory (Gay, 2000), including elements of the CReP theory (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This conceptual framework was the gateway to capture cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. The CRP theory proposed by Gay is “a means for unleashing the higher learning potentials of ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their academic and psychosocial abilities” (Gay, 2000, p. 20). Gay’s (2000) and Ladson-Billings’ (1994) respective CRP and CReP provide cultural context for the study as student culture is important in the classroom. The smart teacher takes the responsibility of tapping from the culture of students to provide meaningful curriculum and pedagogy (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Kieran & Anderson 2019; Bonner et al., 2018). Gay made it clear that the foundation for effective teaching and learning is cultural relevancy, with CRP teaching all students the importance of success and how to achieve it. If teachers operate from the mindset of empowering all students through pedagogy, then, they can provide appropriate support and respond to their students’ needs most effectively. In this framework, students are not considered as consumers of knowledge, but students work in partnership with teachers to also become producers of knowledge.

The use of CRT is a useful way to comprehend what cultural-related knowledge students bring to the classroom, thereby making the classroom environment more

relevant to and useful for students (Hilliard, 2019). Gay (2010) noted that educators typically benefit from building positive relationships and considering cultural diversity as a strength rather than a challenge. As it is clear in Gay's write up that CRT empowers both educators and students in education, results from this study may help teachers and other stakeholders further understand instructional challenges resulting high diversity in classrooms, while making suggestions on strategies that could support CRT. Gay used the concept of CRT to raise awareness of establishing a collaborative relationship.

Nature of the Study

This study employed a basic qualitative approach to investigate specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. A qualitative approach, in which data was collected through interviews, made it possible to gather the experiences of teachers as they relate to cultural diversity instructional challenges and strategies they use to overcome the challenges. A basic qualitative study allows researchers to explore the experience of participants (Patton, 2015), which, in this study, was participants' experiences with cultural diversity instructional challenges. My choice of a qualitative design as opposed to a quantitative design allowed for participants' experiences to be gathered.

I interviewed eight participants who had at least 5 years teaching experience in a highly culturally diverse school or a combination of highly culturally diverse schools. Saturation was attained with these eight teachers who were interviewed over the phone. Cultural diversity instructional challenges were the phenomenon being studied, and

teachers' experiences with cultural diversity instructional challenges was the object. A qualitative approach was appropriate because through interviews, I attempted to understand teachers' cultural diversity instructional challenges as they work in their culturally diverse classes. I analyzed data and sought to identify codes and themes to develop an understanding of teachers' cultural diversity instructional challenges.

Definition of Terms

Several key terms were used throughout this study and are defined as follows.

Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP). CRP engages students and challenges them to use their cultural references to develop skills and draw meaning from their experiences and knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). CRP is a pedagogy designed to empower students by using their rich cultural history, their own perspective of reality, and the lens through which they view their current academic studies (Bartolome, 1994). CRP encourages students to connect with their cultural identities (Howard, 2001) as they pursue positive academic outcomes. CRP supports empowered learning (Sleeter, 2011) by drawing on the recognizable cultural heritage of each individual student. CRP is also known in academic circles as culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive instruction (Cole et al., 2016).

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT): Using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. CRT is the behavioral expression of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. (Gay, 2010, p. 31).

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CReP): Pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 16–17).

Culturally responsive (CR): Being culturally responsive entails having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families.

Assumptions

Multiple assumptions were associated with this basic qualitative study. An example of an assumption that was made is that I assumed all participants who willingly agreed to participate gave truthful and unbiased responses related to the research questions. Another assumption was that junior high school teachers who teach in highly culturally diverse schools face cultural diversity related instructional challenges in their classrooms. It was also assumed that although participants may or may not be applying CRT strategies in their classrooms, they were aware of CRT and its strategies. The next assumption was that the findings of this study would allow for transferability to other school districts in Alberta, and in Canada as a whole, as Canada becomes highly culturally diverse. The last assumption was that this study may help future researchers to inform other teachers who work in culturally diverse classrooms.

Scope and Delimitations

Through this basic qualitative study, I investigated cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explored how teachers use CRT to

overcome such challenges. This study involved a thorough exploration of these educators' challenges and strategies used to overcome challenges to contribute to knowledge about teaching in culturally diverse classrooms from junior high school teachers' perspectives. This basic qualitative study involved eight junior high school teachers from highly diverse schools in Calgary.

Limitations

A key limitation in this qualitative study was the sample size of eight teachers, which is considered a small sample size. This small sample size was not also diversified to include all races as none of the participating teachers self-identified as black. Examining the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers may not have given a broad view of other teachers' experiences with cultural diversity related instructional challenges in other parts of Canada. It may have also been short of the experiences of teachers who identify as black. An additional limitation was the restriction of the sample to junior high school teachers in highly culturally diverse schools. Another limitation was related to the use of the snowball sampling strategy. This strategy can pose potential problems such as the likelihood of the participants being mirror images of one another and not a true variation. Another limitation was my own bias as a researcher. My role as a teacher and my experiences had the potential to affect the data collection process. I was intentional to address this potential bias by applying my experience to recognize other teachers' challenges while keeping my own interpretations and ideas aside. I also kept a memo to ask myself questions in the data collection process

so that I could separate myself from infusing self-interpretations to participants' responses.

Significance of the Study

This basic qualitative study adds to the current body of literature in that junior high school teachers in culturally diverse schools had the opportunity to describe the instructional challenges they face in the classroom. Identifying the instructional challenges in the classroom is a first step toward devising a teaching strategy or implementing a learning technology that can help students and teachers overcome those instructional challenges. This research fills a gap in understanding by focusing specifically on investigating these instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and exploring how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. This project is unique because it addressed an under-researched area of education identified by Raisinghani (2018a) and Ngo (2012) among the many diversity-related challenges teachers encounter in their daily practice.

The CBE is committed to inclusive learning environments for students and making schools safe, caring, welcoming, and respectful. Its mission statement states that "each student, in keeping with their individual abilities and gifts, will complete high school with a foundation of learning necessary to thrive in life, work and continued learning" (CBE, 2019, para. 2). With this mission comes three values: "Students are first. Learning is our central purpose. Public education serves the common good" (CBE, 2019, para. 3). The results of this study were shared with the CBE alongside any recommendations as to how CRT can be used to maximize the accomplishment of the

above mission and meet their common good goal. The results of this culture-related study may provide much-needed insights into the awareness of all cultures in classrooms and help develop best practices for teachers. Best practices for teachers may contribute in fostering an atmosphere of a respectful learning environment. Insights from this study may aid various stakeholders working with teachers in identifying and implementing teacher professional development sessions that promote effective strategies needed for a culturally diverse classroom.

Summary

Chapter 1 has presented a summary of the study's outline, which includes an introduction to the study, background information about the topic, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the conceptual framework, the nature of the study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 will include the literature review, the literature search, the conceptual framework, research gaps in the literature, a conclusion, and a summary.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem related to this study was that although much research has focused on CRT, not all specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers are known due to the fluid nature of increasing diversity in classrooms. Common highlights from research on culturally responsive pedagogical strategies in many developed countries include high expectations for learning while recognizing and tapping into strengths that a student's lived experiences and culture bring to the classroom. Current literature establishes that diversity of any sort offers instructional challenges (Kowaluk, 2016; LaCroix & Kuehl, 2019) with many studies focused on teachers' CRT practices in culturally diverse classrooms (Larson et al., 2018; McKoy et al., 2017; Parsons, 2017). As all the specific cultural diversity instructional challenges teachers face are not known, researchers believe this gap can be closed if teachers are aware of all cultural diversity instructional challenges and provide all students with optimal instructional opportunities by using culturally responsive instructional strategies in classrooms (Bondie et al., 2019; Larson et al., 2018). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. The goal of this research study was to gain understanding of the cultural diversity instructional challenges by investigating cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. The results of this study may help point teachers to where they can gain access to increased support to promote cultural understandings in teaching.

I begin Chapter 2 by describing the literature search strategy and providing an overview of the conceptual framework, which is the CRP theory (Gay, 2000), including elements of CReP theory (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In addition to elaborating on how CRP and CReP have been applied to previous research, I also discuss the benefits of CRP and CReP and the relationship between the two pedagogies. The relationship between CRP and cultural diversity is presented as revealed by recent literature. Next, the work of teachers of culturally diverse classrooms as presented by research is discussed with the perceptions and perspectives of teachers on CRT and multiculturalism. This literature review ends with a look at the hard re-set of CRT and CReP post pandemic.

Literature Search Strategy

While cultural diversity related instructional challenges were the foundation for this study, other disciplines are important for understanding the study's context in relation to the literature and practice. I conducted literature searches on topics related, but not limited, to the perspectives and perceptions of teachers implementing CRT strategies from published reports and peer-reviewed journal articles. The scholarly publications were accessed through such subject-specific databases, using the Walden University's library to access databases such as ERIC, ScienceDirect, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, and SAGE journals. I also used Google Scholar links to Walden University to retrieve relevant studies related to the research topic. I used links with index, topics, more, or more search options. Clicking the links allowed me to search the indexes using commands like (a) go to more search options and select an individual index and (b) click the topics tab and search all directories at one time. The Directory of Open Access

Journals (DOAJ) was handy for article searching. I also used general databases like ProQuest Central and Gale's Academic Search Complete. While in the online library, I used the Boolean terms AND, OR, and NOT to get more specific and refined articles. I went through a series of word and term sieving to determine which words and terms to use for my searches (Walden University Library, 2019). Keywords and related search terms that were used to search for articles published within the last 5 years included *cross-culturalism, cultural diversity, diversity, ethnic inclusiveness, multiracialism, pluralism (pluralistic society), multicultural education, culturally responsive teaching/instruction, culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally relevant teaching, cultural responsiveness, ethnicity, attitudes and beliefs, racial diversity, minority groups, mainstream culture, cultural boundaries, cultural differences, multicultural schools, language diversity, school climate, cultural proficiency and equity.*

Close examination of articles in each source led to the discovery of more articles relevant to the study, which were downloaded, saved in my documents, and backed up with a synchronised OneDrive account. While gathering and reading the articles, I drew inspiration from sample-annotated bibliographies in Walden's writing center to document studies by creating an annotated bibliography of methodologies and findings. I worked on the annotated bibliography alongside a literature review matrix, which helped me organize the articles into categories based on methodology and findings while noting implications for practice and implications for research. I was able to use article references to find more articles for the study. Reoccurring themes and names of same authors popping up was an indication that saturation had been reached.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study, which was to investigate specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges, revealed cultural diversity instructional challenges and CRT as the phenomena that were explored. A major framework that was suitable for this study was the culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) theory (Gay, 2000, 2010), including elements of the culturally relevant pedagogy (CReP) theory (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a). This conceptual framework was the gateway to capture the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome challenges. Yin (2017) supports the idea of using a conceptual framework to investigate a concept in a qualitative study; hence, the CRP, including elements of CReP framework is relevant in investigating cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by teachers in their culturally diverse classrooms. Combing through literature related to CRP revealed common and general tenets of such practice. Adapted from Gay (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1994), the culturally responsive teacher:

- Takes to account diverse perspectives when planning lessons, with room for relating students' academic knowledge and cultural knowledge including but not limited language and values.
- Takes the initiative to connect effectively with students by educating them about the values of diversity and its strengths.
- Encourages collaborative learning while instilling a sense of community in students.

- Makes the teaching and learning process more interesting and meaningful by learning from and about students' culture, language and learning styles.
- Motivates all students to take ownership of their learning and to become more proactive in class.
- Creates awareness of different forms of discrimination in society; and how individuals struggle against discrimination.
- Diversifies learning activities for the sake of inclusiveness in terms setting challenging tasks that foster cooperative and hands-on learning skills. Rote memorization and lecture formats are not his/her style at all.

In response to making learning relevant to all students regardless of their culture and background, the CRP (Gay, 2000, 2010) theory and CReP theory (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b) were conceived. These theories have proven to be predominant frameworks that have gone a long way to shape education while closing educational opportunity gaps. Ladson-Billings (1995b) refers to CReP as “a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (p. 469). Ladson Billings (1995a) revealed three central tenets of CReP: social critique, academic success, and cultural competence. The culturally responsive teacher must demonstrate pedagogies that engage students in critical examination of content, provide students with rigorous academic tasks, and take into account students' home cultures.

When Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) used Gay's (2000), Ladson-Billings' (1994) and Nieto's (1999) works to collect and categorize evident themes across major works on CRP, they fleshed out five themes: identity and achievement, equity and excellence, developmental appropriateness, teaching the whole child, and student teacher relationships. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) found that culture does not always take into account racism. This finding justified their integration of the tenets of CRP to "incorporate the significance of race and racism within the discussion of culture".

Application of CRP and CReP in Previous Research

As work on the CRP theory evolved over the years, Gay (2010) researched and documented that educators typically benefit from building positive relationships and considering cultural diversity as a strength rather than a challenge. According to Phuntsog (2001), the true test of CRP "may lie in its ability to create classrooms where race, culture, and ethnicity are not seen as barriers to overcome but as sources of enrichment for all" (p. 63). As it is clear in Gay's write up that CRT empowers both educators and students in education, her CRP theory is "a means for unleashing the higher learning potentials of ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their academic and psychosocial abilities" (Gay, 2000, p. 20). Gay's and Ladson-Billings' respective CRP theory and CReP theory have been used globally as a lens in studying and applying CRT strategies at all levels of education. In Wachira's and Mburu's (2019) work on teacher preparation for diverse classrooms, they applied the CRP theory to their study while exploring CRP, and what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher. Wachira and Mburu emphasized that increased diversity in school

populations increases the need for more responsive practices that take into consideration the cultural capital of students with different ethnicities, cultures and languages they bring to the learning process. They found that a constructivist approach to teaching and CRT both require continued partnership in the form of interaction between students and teachers, with social interaction playing a critical role in learning.

The CRP theory has also been applied to culturally inclusive and responsive curricular learning environments. In a mixed methods study carried out by Kumar et al. (2019), students' perceptions and experiences of school culturally responsive generated perceptions of teachers, curriculum, intergroup relationships, and school administrative policies/practices as major themes. These themes confirm that CRP is the unwavering conviction that learning is culturally grounded, further confirming Ladson-Billings (1994) definition of culturally relevant pedagogy to include an education that aims at empowering "students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 382). Furthermore, Vidwans and Faez (2019) used Gay's and Ladson-Billings' CRP theory while comparing Ontario teachers' self-efficacy perceptions of general pedagogy and CRP. Their study revealed that Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs) reported significantly higher self-efficacy for providing CRP. Additionally, when Abacioglu, Volman and Fischer (2020) explored teachers' multicultural approach as a possible factor influencing students' motivation and relationship with peers, the CRP theory related to multicultural education, which describes various approaches and practices pertaining to multiculturalism was taken into consideration. Abacioglu, Volman and Fischer found that a multicultural approach is

directly connected to student motivation for both ethnic majority and minority students. Collectively, the above studies provided a precedent for the use of Gay's CRP and Ladson-Billings' CReP theories in exploring concepts related to teaching culturally diverse students in various educational settings, and gave a categorical lens to the perspectives of teachers implementing CRT strategies in culturally diverse classrooms.

Gay's (2000) and Ladson-Billings' (1994) respective CRP and CReP provide cultural context for the study as student culture is important in the classroom. According to Gay and Ladson-Billings, the smart teacher takes the responsibility of tapping from the culture of students to provide meaningful curriculum and pedagogy. Gay made it clear that the foundation for effective teaching and learning is cultural relevancy, with CRP teaching all students the importance of success and how to achieve it. If teachers operate from the mindset of empowering all students through pedagogy, then they can provide appropriate support and respond to their students' needs most effectively. In this framework, students are not considered as consumers of knowledge, but students work in partnership with teachers to also become producers of knowledge.

Benefits of the CRP Theory

Gay (2013) posited that although discussions around cultural differences may be difficult for stakeholders in education, such discussions could also empower teachers and students in the classroom. This study may be a call for teachers to show consistency in considering cultural responsiveness as a tool for success in the teaching learning process, without allowing the culture and socio-economic status of students to stand in the way. Gay (2003) also claimed that teachers with a good understanding of students'

backgrounds always communicate effectively with their students in a collaborative classroom environment. With the above points in mind, Gay's (2000) and Ladson Billings' (1994) respective CRP theory and CReP theory contributed a lot to this study as they gave a categorical lens to the perceptions and perspectives shared by junior high school teachers implementing CRT strategies in culturally diverse classrooms. This lens was used when collecting and analysing data on cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers as they apply CRT strategies in an effort to reach every student. Looking at data through the lens of CRP and CReP theories helped in the identification of themes in interview data and made visible discrepant data emerging from the study. Additionally, I used the principles of CRP discussed earlier to answer the research question by gaining an understanding of the challenges teachers face as they relate to each principle in their classroom.

The research questions for this study were the following: (1) What are the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers? (2) How do teachers use CRT to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges? These research questions were influenced by Gay's (2000) and Ladson-Billings' (1994) respective concepts of CRP and CReP respectively. I demonstrated extensive support of the research questions in this literature review section. As a researcher, I understood that to carefully investigate cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by teachers, a clear understanding of CRT was necessary; hence, I used the research questions to develop and address themes in this literature review. Finally, the outlined phenomenon, namely

cultural diversity instructional challenges and CRT in junior high schools in Calgary was better understood while I explored the perspectives and perceptions of teachers on CRP.

The Relationship between CRP and CReP

The relationship between CRP (Gay, 2000, 2010) and CReP (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a) is that both theories are anchored on the role played by culture in learning. Ladson-Billings (1994) was very intentional and specific that these theories apply particularly to students of color when she described CReP as assisting students in “the development of a “relevant black personality” that allows African American students to choose academic excellence yet still identify with African and African American culture” (p. 17). Since teacher student relationship is paramount in CReP, Ladson-Billings (1995a) documented that three essential outcomes in diverse student populations could be strengthened. These outcomes include academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Ladson-Billings’ work ties with Gay’s (2010) idea that the use of “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students” makes learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them (p. 31). Although care, respect, and unending commitment to students are common amongst CR teachers, cultural competence must be accompanied by academic success.

Despite all the commonalities, there exists a distinction between CRP and CReP. While Ladson-Billings’ work on CReT focused on characterizing the knowledge and practices of effective teachers of diverse students, Gay (2013) saw curriculum enhancement through the inclusion of students’ background to be the most valuable asset in the education of diverse students. Gay’s CRP has since evolved to include the fact that

while the central focus of CRP is teaching, curriculum content remains one of its components. To this end, CRP and CReP provide a source of rich, evidence-based views of good culturally responsive teachers (Brown & Crippen, 2017).

“The notion of equity as sameness only makes sense when all students are exactly the same” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 33). Since students will never be the same, Parhar and Sensoy (2011) underscored that CReP has been successful in filling the gap between students from diverse backgrounds and native students. A thoughtful teacher captures the interest of students, pushes students to higher academic achievement and supports their social well-being by taking into consideration students’ differences in their planning and instruction. This is possible when CReT practices and CRT practices are in place in the classroom. As the framework for CReP is sometimes referred to as culturally compatible (Jordan, 1985), cultural appropriateness (Au & Jordan, 1981), culturally congruent (Au & Kawakami, 1985, 1994; Mohatt and Erickson, 1981), and culturally responsive (Erickson, 1987; Gay, 2000, 2010), CReP is based on principles that bring optimistic and concrete guidance to educators. This guidance is especially meaningful to educators who are committed to meeting the academic and social achievement goals of all students in culturally diverse classrooms.

CRP and CReP have been used, are being used, and can be used interchangeably, even though they do not exactly mean the same thing. Gay (2000) defines CRP as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 29). Gay makes it clear that the CRP “teaches to and through” the strengths of

students who are culturally diverse (p. 29). On the other hand, Ladson-Billings (1992, 1994, 1995, p. 18) expressed that “CReP empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes”. Since cultural referents, otherwise known as “cultural content” include experiences, knowledge, events, values, role models, perspectives, and issues that arise from the community and culture from which the student comes (Pang, 2001), CRP and CReP are closely related in the sense that in order to use cultural referents to impart knowledge, CRT strategies must be applied during classroom instruction.

Review of Literature

This review of literature starts with an explanation of what the contemporary Canadian classroom looks like. Next, teacher quality is discussed as a significant quality for teachers of culturally diverse classrooms. Thirdly, characteristics of CRP and the merits of CRT as they apply to culturally diverse classrooms are discussed. Since different teachers have different perceptions and perspectives on CRT, these perceptions and perspectives of teachers revealed by literature are presented next. I continue this literature review by comparing CRT with multiculturalism and multicultural education, which are usually confused with each other. This confusion then calls for the examination of any misconceptions and stereotypical beliefs of CRT in culturally diverse classrooms. Following the misconceptions and stereotypical beliefs of CRT is the Ready for Rigor framework for CRT. I then provide some context to the hard re-set of CRT and CREt that awaits teachers in their culturally diverse classrooms and other stakeholders in education post pandemic. A summary and conclusion ends Chapter 2 of the study.

The Contemporary Canadian Classroom

Contemporary Canadian classrooms represent a cross section of racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. Bennet et al. (2018) encouraged teachers to reflect on their classroom practices to make sure they are culturally responsive. A good starting point, they suggested, will be asking important questions such as (1) How do we create a CR classroom? (2) What does the classroom look like? (3) What are the students engaged in? The above questions, when carefully considered and answered by teachers confirm that culturally responsive teachers are thoughtfully reaching their students by learning about and embracing their cultures while using cultural knowledge to guide instruction (Gunn et al. 2014, p. 175). In the same way that students arrive in the classroom with their unique and exceptional experiences, teachers also bring their backgrounds, understandings, opinions, and feelings with them (Schauer, 2018).

Diversity in classrooms, including cultural diversity, has long been a force for social change by addressing inequities in education. Several authors have offered definitions for CRT, but for the purpose of this study, Gay's (2010) definition of CRT is considered: "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for students" (p. 31). Because all students benefit from CRT, supporting teachers' understandings of instructional challenges and ways of overcoming them allows for an important relationship between culture and education because the culture of teachers and students affect education processes. In line with the ideas of supporting teachers' understanding of CRT, Bradshaw et al. (2018) observed

improvements in coached teachers' use of responsiveness to student needs. Despite research on preparing teachers for culturally responsive education, there has been little research, with little recent research published on all instructional challenges in multicultural classrooms. Insights developed through this study may spark or re-ignite dialogue between teachers in wider Canadian and other international societal contexts that value multicultural, intercultural and cross-cultural educational perspectives. By investigating specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and exploring how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges, a better understanding of the challenges may be obtained, thereby leading to possible strategies and best practices that may help teachers overcome the challenges.

Highlighted in the article on worldview diversity by Bartz and Bartz (2018) is the need to increase teacher support to promote cultural understandings. Bartz and Bartz also noted that educators implementing culturally responsive educational practices have a positive influence on students' academics and students' psychological well-being. A clear understanding of challenges faced by teachers as they work in their highly culturally diverse Calgary schools may go a long way to meet the needs of Calgary's diverse classrooms. Results from this study could support Ngo's (2012) recommendation of offering intentionally planned sustainable professional development opportunities for all teachers to ensure cultural competence. Universities with preservice teacher programs could use challenges identified and documented in this study to ensure that cultural competence is integrated in their preservice education and educational leadership programs. Researching and reporting on cultural diversity challenges will create more

awareness on CRT, a model of teaching that motivates students in the teaching and learning process (Zoch, 2017). Finally, better understanding of specific cultural diversity instructional challenges through this study will help identify areas teachers need to focus on in their classrooms. Professional development training sessions can support teachers to become CR as they work to overcome challenges in their instructional spaces.

Teacher Quality and Teachers of Culturally Diverse Classrooms

Amongst other factors, teacher quality is arguably a significant factor when it comes to adding effectiveness and meaning to the work that is done in schools (Forghani-Arani & Bannon, 2019). Due to the growing list of expectations from teachers, Forghani-Arani and Bannon concluded that teachers will benefit from being equipped with “relevant knowledge, capabilities, dispositions, values and skills, such as understanding diversity issues, reflectivity about identities, perspectives and practices, sense of agency and autonomy, empathy and pedagogical judgement, and tact”. They suggest that this work must start with preservice teachers being encouraged to consider diversity as an asset. This work is possible in preservice teacher training institutions’ work to link theory and practice, integrate diversity into the curriculum and incorporate technologies into training.

Goe et al. (2008) found that effective teaching goes beyond the teacher spoon feeding students with subject-specific content or measuring student achievement in a single way. They were clear that cultural responsiveness is integral to the “essence” of effective teaching and provided five qualities of effective teachers. They held that effective teachers:

1. Hold high expectations for all students and help all students learn.
2. Contribute to positive academic, attitudinal, and social outcomes for students.
3. Use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities, monitor student progress formatively, adapt instruction as needed, and evaluate learning using multiple sources of evidence.
4. Contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic mindedness.
5. Collaborate with colleagues, administrators, parents, and education professionals to ensure student success, particularly the success of high-risk students or those with special needs.

Since effective teaching is culturally responsive (Culturally Responsive Teaching..., 2016), the emphases placed on holding high expectations for all students and the development of classrooms that value diversity speak into the characteristics of teachers of culturally diverse classrooms.

Álvarez and González (2018) found that teachers' intercultural sensitivity and educational practices were affected by the teacher's educational experience with cultural diversity. In the event of their work, they found that teachers did not think intercultural competence should be a requirement for them to be effective teachers of culturally diverse students. Teachers' disregard for intercultural competence is justified by their preconceptions and misconceptions about their students and their families; they often show a negative attitude towards students and hold low expectations for their students (Bonner et al., 2018). Negative attitude and low expectations are contrary to the culturally

responsive caring ideology of CRT, and this is clear as Gay (2010) advocated for positive interactions between teachers and students as a determining factor for student success. Gay also pointed out that teachers' attitudes, expectations and pedagogical skills determine the tone, structure, and quality of instruction when she stated: "Caring teachers expect (highly), relate (genuinely), and facilitate (relentlessly)" (p. 47).

Schools have fast become a platform of learners from multicultural and multilingual backgrounds, with cultural factors having impact on the classroom climate. Venkatesamy, Sing and Smart (2020) found that the learning environment plays a significant role in teaching and learning, with a friendly and conducive environment encouraging students to participate more in classroom activities. However, international educational researchers hold that while friendly, conducive, neat, and inviting classroom environments are important, they are not enough to impact student learning (Santoro & Forghani-Arani, 2015, Forghani-Arani & Bannon, 2019). This assertion makes teachers' knowledge of CRP a professional imperative. In a quantitative study using Latent Profile Analysis (LPA), Gaias et al. (2019) observed and surveyed 103 teachers at nine middle schools to examine the degree to which current classroom management strategies are responsive to the cultural backgrounds of students of color. Findings revealed three ordered profiles of classroom management practices (i.e., high, medium, low), suggesting that cultural responsiveness may operate as an extension of other classroom management strategies: white students more likely to be in classrooms with high levels of classroom management, and students in classrooms with low levels of classroom management more likely to demonstrate elevated levels of negative behaviors. This provides insight into

possible strategies to improve practices reflecting meaningful participation and cultural responsiveness.

Characteristics of CRP in Culturally Diverse Classrooms

Mindful of the fact that CRP coincides with many terms including CRT, Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRtT) Or Diversity Pedagogy, Arvanitis (2018) posited that “the goal is to define a new approach away from assimilation and/or integrationist logic”. Although culturally appropriate, culturally congruent, and culturally compatible are often used in different circumstances, they all point to a common goal: having students’ culture in mind when planning for instruction. In addition to other parameters, it takes CRP to achieve equity and inclusivity in schools. As culturally responsive and competent teachers believe in every student’s potential, they use students’ sociolinguistic and cultural backgrounds as resources for new learning (Gay, 2000, as cited in Arvanitis, 2018). In the teaching learning process, such teachers hold high academic aspirations for all students and use their strong instructional design skills to prepare meaningful tasks for their learners.

A method of teaching that includes students’ cultural references in the curriculum and in all facets of learning is in line with Ladson-Billings’ (1994) idea of CRT. Gay (2000) defined CRT as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more relevant to them” (p. 31). A combination of multicultural curriculum and multicultural experiences in the classroom encourages students to make rich connections and feel they are part of the classroom community. Multicultural curriculum, multicultural experiences and other

CRT strategies confirm the fact that CRT “simultaneously develops academic achievement, social consciousness and critique, cultural affirmation, competence, and exchange; community building and personal connections; individual self-worth and abilities; and an ethic of caring” (Gay, 2000, p. 43).

The core principle of responsiveness of any kind, including cultural responsiveness, “is to have an ongoing willingness and open-mindedness to change” (Hollie, 2017, p. 9). When culture is considered an asset in the teaching and learning process, educators begin to view curriculum and pedagogical practices as cultural artifacts. Educators are encouraged to pay attention to the quality of instruction and student-teacher interactions (Madhere, 1998, p. 285). Fostering student-teacher relationships requires teachers’ clear understanding of the three instrumental components of CRP presented by Stanton (2008): confidence in student potential, visibility in the school and community, and professional empowerment. Engaging students through the lens of their backgrounds requires teacher understanding of the importance of the interconnection between the above three components and how they contribute to student success.

With culture being central to learning, the teacher’s job is facilitated when culture is used as an asset in the teaching-learning process. In the words of Ladson-Billings, (1994), using culture as an asset speaks to “a pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures and offers full, equitable access to education for students from all cultures”. As such, CRT is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance

of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Characteristics of CRT include:

- Positive perspectives on parents and families
- Communication of high expectations
- Learning within the context of culture
- Student-centered instruction
- Culturally mediated instruction
- Reshaping the curriculum
- Teacher as facilitator

Glock et al. (2018) found that teachers in highly culturally diverse schools show better positive attitudes towards educating culturally diverse student bodies. When Banks (2004, as cited in Bucher, 2010) wrote about Teachers' Diversity Consciousness (TDC), he was clear that teachers need multicultural awareness, critical reflection and self-awareness as qualities to counteract stereotypes and prejudices, challenge their own beliefs and engage meaningful communications in multicultural learning environments. The needs listed above emphasise the fact that culturally competent and responsive educators develop cultural consciousness to their students (Sheets, 2009, p.13). The cultural consciousness of teachers, Sheets (2009, p.13) added, will promote the development of ethnic identity, provide interactive opportunities, create a safe learning environment, encourage socialisation, and promote language acquisition.

Allen et al. (2018) revealed that race and ethnicity feature amongst the ten themes that influence school belonging at the student level during adolescence in educational

settings. Although their work pointed to the fact that race and ethnicity were not significantly related to school belonging, other themes included academic motivation, emotional stability, personal characteristics, parent support, peer support, teacher support, gender, extracurricular activities and environmental/school safety. These themes are an indication that CRT is not an approach that works in isolation as teachers seek to meet every child's need. Allen et al. found that teacher support and positive personal characteristics are the strongest predictors of school belonging and should be encouraged in all schools.

Research holds that teachers who thoughtfully reach students by learning about and embracing their cultures while using cultural knowledge to guide instruction typically build their cultural responsive teaching readiness (CRTR) during their preservice years (Karatas & Oral, 2017). A measurement instrument developed by Karatas and Oral worked well to measure the CRTR of preservice teachers and found "personal readiness" and "professional readiness" as factors of CRTR. These factors are in line with Johnson-Smith's (2020) finding that the successful and efficient teaching of diverse students happens when teachers work hard to secure deep understanding of themselves and their students. CRP therefore aims at success for every student, builds bridges between home and school experiences, and focuses on equal education while celebrating diversity (Au, 2011).

Merits of CRT

The culturally responsive teacher embraces the whole child in order to reduce the achievement gap (Johnson-Smith, 2020). Hammond (2015) stated that "we often talk

about the problem of the achievement gap in terms of race-racial relations, issues of oppression and equity - while ironically the solutions for closing students' learning gaps in the classroom lie in tapping into their culture" (p. 21). To understand the relationship between culture and education, Johnson-Smith (2020) found that culture has direct influence on student learning; hence, the CR teacher demands academic success (Brown & Crippen, 2017). Although teachers often face a sense of discomfort and uncertainty when a new paradigm is considered in their practice, Mckoy et al. (2017) agreed that exposing both in-service and preservice teachers to the concept of CRT is an important step in moving the profession forward. It has been proven that CRT is a strategy that can be used across ages. Chen and Yang (2017) studied the effectiveness of implementing CRT strategies in an adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom and found that the use of CRT strategies sees improvement in students' communication skills. They also noticed an increase in student engagement and active class participation, thanks to the implementation of CRT strategies.

In their write up on CRT, Aceves and Orosco (2014) identified six themes of CRT including (a) instructional engagement, (b) culture, language, and racial identity, (c) multicultural awareness, (d) high expectations, (e) critical thinking, and (f) social justice. While the use of CRP in the classroom holds educators responsible for the diverse population of students, multicultural curriculum and anti-racism education have a positive impact on the social, cultural, and academic achievement of the students (Kowaluk, 2016, Wiggan & Watson, 2016). In addition to social and cultural achievement, students' academic achievement is more visible in classrooms where

teachers value and apply CRT practices, confirming the idea that teachers hold the responsibility of ensuring quality and equitable education for every student, regardless of their culture (Kawaluk, 2016). Although “it takes a village” has been used in various contexts, “it takes a village” to meet the needs of every student emerged as a theme in Wiggan’s and Watson’s (2016) study, which underscored the importance of emulating strategies and policies employed by other high achieving nations. The strategies and policies of high achieving nations ensure high-quality instruction and curricular (Finland and Sweden), teacher support and training (South Korea), and culturally relevant lessons for students (Singapore). Wiggan’s and Watson’s work is a confirmation of Darling-Hammond’s (2017) findings that in order to reach all students in diverse classrooms, there is a move to attract diverse candidates who can bring knowledge of Aboriginal issues and connections with Aboriginal communities and students into their teaching practices. Darling-Hammond’s study highlighted the fact that the teaching challenges posed by higher expectations for learning and greater diversity of learners around the globe will likely be better met if nations can learn from each other about what matters and what works in different contexts.

Research related to CRT through a relational cultural theory (RCT) has revealed that CRT practices and mutual empathy may decrease psychological distress and increase psychological well-being amongst students (Cholewa et al., 2014, Lertora et al., 2020). The RCT, which posits that we grow through and toward relationships throughout our lives and that growth-fostering relationships are the source of meaning and empowerment can be employed in education to increase student achievement. Cholewa et al. noted that

students benefitting from CRT practices, hence engaging in growth-fostering relationships, tend to demonstrate behaviors that mirror RCT's five good things proposed by Miller (1986, as cited in Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 30) - increased zest, empowerment, connection, clarity, and self-worth. Growth-fostering relationships create a positive feeling amongst students and teachers, "the feeling that comes when we feel a real sense of connection, of being together with and joined by another person." Mutual empathy is also important in the teaching and learning process, during which a teacher deliberately "presses pause" to check in with a student (Lertora et al., 2020). The teacher can relate with the student by stating: "when I hear you say that, I feel devastated, and I am wondering what that is like for you." This type of reflection, Lertora et al. (2020) noted, allows the student to feel heard and understood at a deeper, more empathic level, which fosters learning, hence increasing academic success.

Perceptions and Perspectives of Teachers on CRT and Multiculturalism

As far back as 2011, Parhar and Sensoy found that "a positive sense of cultural identity and self-worth are intertwined with academic achievement". The importance of CRP to support equity and student achievement within increasingly culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse classrooms cannot be overemphasized (Bottiani et al., 2018). Since all students generally benefit from the cultural responsiveness of all teachers, teachers must be culturally responsive in their practice, with the ability to work productively with culturally and linguistically diverse children while employing CRT strategies to move their academic skills forward (Bottiani et al, 2018; Santoro & Kennedy, 2015). To support the work of culturally responsive teachers, the culturally responsive educator is

encouraged to inwardly inquire if he is being culturally and linguistically responsive to those most in need of it by carrying out a daily reflection (Hollie, 2017, p. 10). A suggested reflection question is “*Where am I in my journey to responsiveness?*” Cultural responsiveness, when used as a lens to guide what is happening in classrooms in particular, and in schools organizationally and instructionally, becomes something that culturally responsive educators have in all that they do.

Borrero et al. (2018) used focus groups and interviews to investigate what CReP meant to a group of 13 pre- and in-service teachers. They sought to know what culturally irrelevant pedagogy meant, what the consequences of culturally relevant pedagogy were, what helped teachers develop CReP, what challenges to CReP teachers faced, and what worked for them as new teachers. To support the idea that some teachers are reflective and have cultural responsiveness in all that they do, Borrero et al. found that teachers referred to CReP as a type of pedagogy that could not be turned on and off, but rather a discourse. Warren (2018) pointed to teachers’ perspective taking abilities and multicultural attitudes as critical parameters for negotiating the social and instructional complexities of diversity in classrooms (Abacioglu, Volman, & Fischer, 2020; Warren, 2018). The critical nature of these parameters is supported by the fact that teachers who have better perspective taking abilities and more positive multicultural attitudes engage in CRT more frequently. In addition, Abacioglu, Volman, and Fischer also found that perspective taking is a stronger predictor for both components of CRT than multicultural attitudes is, revealing that multiculturalism in itself is not a great contributor to student success.

Civitillo, Schachner, et al. (2017) conducted a multiple case study with four ethnic German teachers using classroom video observations and post observation interviews on the relationship between CRT and teachers' beliefs about incorporating cultural diversity content into daily teaching and learning activities. The results indicated a high degree of congruence between CRT and teachers' beliefs, with more culturally responsive teachers showing elaborated patterns of self-reflection on their own teaching. These findings support the assumption that CRT requires teachers holding beliefs that consider cultural diversity as a valuable resource in teaching and learning, hence providing teacher educators insight into possible inclusion of culturally responsive practices in the teaching curriculum, so that teachers become more aware of what constitutes CRT.

Some teachers and leaders have been clear with their belief that cultural diversity in classrooms is a source of problems; hence portray a negative perception of diversity (Civitillo, Schachner, et al., 2017; Gómez-Hurtado et al., 2018). The above belief is supported by what Benegas (2019) found; that despite teachers' awareness of educational disparities in schools and their efforts to reduce such disparities, systems stand in the way of teachers' efforts to practice CReP. On one hand, Gómez-Hurtado et al. (2018) concluded that leaders who do not perceive recognizing cultural diversity to be their responsibility resort to bureaucratic leadership strategies focused on management of immigrant students, rather than their social and academic integration. Such leaders forget that "community-building is an important component in any culturally relevant learning space" (Benegas, 2019). On the other hand, Civitillo, Juang, et al. (2019) found that a

high degree of congruence exists between CRT and teachers' beliefs, with most culturally responsive teachers taking a self-reflective approach to improving their instruction. Similar perceptions also exist at college level with teachers who accept culturally diverse students having reduced level of "backlash" attitudes towards students (Prieto, 2018). Such teachers see the importance of incorporating diversity issues into their course content and embracing CRT strategies while teaching.

Although exposure to diversity could reduce prejudice and promote positive attitudes, teachers of high ethnic minority classes show more positive implicit and explicit attitudes and engage in more prejudice reduction practices (Abacioglu, Zee, Hanna et al., 2019). Prejudice reduction practices can be possible when related to Banks' (2004) five dimensions to the characterization of multicultural education including CRT. Prejudice reduction, which is described by Banks as one of the five key dimensions of multicultural education, is an umbrella term referring to deliberate attempts to reduce prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, and to develop positive attitudes between different ethnic and cultural groups. A culturally responsive educator takes prejudice reduction seriously and successfully applies CRT strategies to empower all students. In these dimensions, Banks highlights the importance of teachers working to reduce prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination while developing positive attitudes. Abacioglu, Zee, Hanna et al., (2019) confirmed the importance of content integration through the creation of a curriculum in which the integration and a CRT approach of material from different cultures cannot be underestimated. They also found that while research has revealed that using materials related to students' backgrounds and lives is of

great importance, it also boosts students' morale by making them feel more valued and competent.

Aspects of cultural relevancy come to light when an educator is able to speak more than one language, hence using another language in the classroom to support learning (Benegas, 2019). This linguistic dexterity, defined as “the ability to use a range of language practices in a multiethnic society and linguistic plurality as consciousness about why and how to use such dexterity in social and cultural interactions” (Paris, 2012, p. 96), is a powerful tool that bilingual, trilingual, or multilingual teachers can use to empower their learners. However, teachers, including those who enjoy incorporating CRT strategies in their practice, have expressed fear of being penalized (Benegas, 2019). Benegas (2019) found that teachers who typically follow a scripted curriculum fail to use curriculum as a tool – they use it as a guide. Such teachers perceive that CReP for language learners is not feasible, but some teachers have also advocated for instructional material like picture cards and vocabulary words to reflect the lived experiences of all students in a learning environment.

Zorba (2020) studied teachers' perceptions of CRT and found that experience alone was a distinguishable factor for CRT. He then underlined the necessity for and the importance of culture-oriented courses in undergraduate English language teacher education. Zorba worked with the understanding that CRT is considered the extension of multicultural education in the classroom since multicultural education is mostly related to plans, ideas, and organizations on paper. In terms of personal readiness, although teachers often find themselves personally ready to teach in a culturally responsive way, they prefer

not to teach in places where cultural diversity is most observable (Zorba, 2020). In addition, Samuels (2018) found that although teachers consider the application of CRT strategies beneficial in a multitude of areas, time and resources remain major restraints in the initiative. Samuels then recommended the integration of theory and research into practice so that student success remains the center for education.

Teacher assimilative attitudes is also a factor that contributes to how teachers view cultural diversity and CRT in their schools. A study by Dubbeld et al. (2019) led them to classify teachers into three groups: teachers with relative assimilative attitude, teachers with no assimilative attitude, and teachers with moderate assimilative attitude. Dubbeld et al. found that teachers with limited assimilative attitudes have a positive attitude towards the interaction of students from different cultural backgrounds. They implied that although such teachers often show a lower score on diversity-related burnout, burnout is not the only challenge faced by junior high school teachers in culturally diverse classrooms. Teachers who are willing to try out CRT strategies in their classrooms often face cultural diversity-related instructional challenges as well. Although Dubbeld et al. did not investigate the cultural diversity challenges, they concluded that all is not well with teaching in culturally diverse junior high school classrooms.

Gay (2010) and Ladson-Billings (1994), amongst others, documented the attributes of culturally responsive teachers. In the absence of much knowledge on how culturally responsive teachers grow in the process, Brown and Crippen (2017) found specific themes characterizing teachers' growth as they pursued culturally responsive science teaching: views of students, repositioning, community building, and utilizing a

CRP toolbox. While teaching in a culturally responsive way as guided by a CRP toolbox, Brown and Crippen also identified relationship building between home and school as a means to enhance academic achievement.

CRT Versus Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education

While “Canada is the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as its official policy” (Khan & Cottrell, 2017, p.18), multicultural education must not be mistaken for CRT. Multicultural education has become a global initiative as supported by a significant positive relationship found between perceptions of the cultural effect of globalization and attitudes towards multicultural education (Bagceli et al., 2017). Bagceli et al. (2017) confirmed that there is an increase in positive attitudes of teachers towards multicultural education as the cultural effect of globalization increases. Amongst the many misconceptions as to how multiculturalism can be achieved in the classroom, Gay (2010) revealed that multicultural education is not a central part of the regular curriculum. “Educators have relegated it primarily to social studies, language arts, and the fine arts and have generally targeted instruction for students of color” (Gay, 2010, p. 316). Hammond (2017) explains clearly that multicultural education exists in schools in the form of different activities and posters that celebrate diversity. While multicultural education is a noble thing to practice in schools as it enhances classroom functioning and school climate, Hammond noted that it has nothing to do with learning capacity and will not impact students’ cognitive abilities. Supporters of multicultural education see it as an approach that is holistically integrated. In its comprehensive form, Gay (2010) recommends that multiculturalism must be an integral part of everything that happens in

the education enterprise (p. 316). Multiculturalism is not a bad idea and ties with the fact that teachers who ignore multiculturalism in classrooms and deny the fact that differences exist make it difficult for students to learn and respond in a meaningful way (Kowaluk, 2016). In as much as multiculturalism is important in education, it should not be forgotten that “multiculturalism is based on a celebration of diversity, not the pursuit of uniformity” (Beairsto & Carrigan, 2004, p. 1), and must not be mistaken for CRT.

Banks (1997) argued that multicultural education is an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process. Multicultural education seeks to create equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, and social class, making it an idea. To create equal educational opportunities for all students, multicultural education encourages changing the total school environment so that it will reflect the diverse cultures and groups within a society and within all classrooms. As a process, multicultural education presents stakeholders in education with goals and ideals they should constantly strive to achieve. The above definition of multicultural education supports what psychological research on intergroup relations and multicultural education perspectives revealed; that the promotion of equality and valuing cultural pluralism are two approaches to cultural diversity in schools (Civitillo, Schachner, et al. 2017). While some schools may adopt one approach, other schools tend to combine elements of both approaches (Civitillo, Schachner, et al. 2017; Schachner et al., 2016).

Banks (1995) presented five dimensions of multicultural education: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure. Although Hammond (2015, 2017)

argues that CRT and multicultural education are not the same, content integration and knowledge construction are two dimensions of multicultural education that are directly related to CRT. Content integration and knowledge construction are greatly supported by CRT practices. Banks (1996) maintained that while content integration encourages educators to use examples and content from different cultures and groups to explain key concepts, generalizations, and issues within their subject areas or disciplines, the knowledge construction process involves the ways educators facilitate student understanding and investigating. Knowledge construction also teaches students how to empower themselves academically. Content integration and knowledge construction therefore support CRT, which “is about *building the learning capacity* of the individual student, (Hammond, 2015). Teachers could confirm that their teaching is culturally responsive by checking whether all students, including learners of language and new arrivals are learning and making progress in their academic achievement. If they find otherwise, they will need to change the approach to make sure that they become more culturally responsive.

Effective teaching is arguably one of the largest single school influences on student achievement (Hattie, 2009). Kowaluk (2016) stressed that amongst the many factors that contribute to effective teaching, effective teachers acknowledge diversity. As programming which is highly effective connects prior learning and life experience, effective teachers understand the importance of incorporating students’ culture into content knowledge and the learning process. Capacity building within teachers is the root of culturally responsive education (Kowaluk, 2016). On the one hand, Ladson-Billings

(1995) suggested that CRT is anchored in the assumptions that pedagogy must (a) cater to academic success, (b) provide students with opportunities to develop and maintain cultural competence, and (c) cultivate critical consciousness so that students perceive, criticize, and challenge social inequalities (p. 160). On the other hand, Gay (2013) crowned it all by positing that regardless of how complex it is for educators to address culture and other differences, the empowering nature of the experience for both teachers and students makes it worthwhile. Although practicing multiculturalism in isolation does not increase student achievement, Akinlar and Dogan (2017) found that multicultural education could contribute to more opportunities and equal education rights for all. Most importantly, with all students needing an inclusive education, multicultural education should benefit every student without solely addressing classrooms with a high number of immigrant students (Nieto, 2001, p. 37; El Ashmawi et al., 2018).

Banks (2004), in his handbook of research on multicultural education emphasises that multiculturalism is a phenomenon that depicts the need for all religious, ethnic and racial cultures to be endorsed. He calls for prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination to be challenged in a way that ensures all students have equitable educational opportunities and access to knowledge regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Banks (1995) expressed the need for comprehensive conceptualization and clearly outlined five key dimensions of multicultural education as tools for the effective implementation of a wide range of multicultural practices in educational contexts. These dimensions include content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 1995). This

dimensions recommendation is in line with the fact that teachers' attitudes and intentions matter for their students (Abacioglu, Zee, Hanna et al., 2019).

Misconceptions and Stereotypical Beliefs of CRT

CRT is a term that has been used by educators for decades, but it recently got more attention in education with increasing diversity in schools (Gonzalez, 2017). This increase in cultural diversity in schools calls for teachers to show more interest in CRT strategies as a means to meet the instructional needs of students from different backgrounds. Gonzalez (2017) noted that although some teachers think they are being culturally responsive in their practice, “they’re kind of not. Or at least they’re not quite there”. In such situations, students who might excel in CRT environments tend to survive, hence the urgency for common knowledge on how to meet the needs of all students regardless of culture.

Educators are yet to understand that the tools in a culturally responsive toolkit revolve around five cultural “archetypes” or universal patterns used to help children process information and learn: ritual, recitation, rhythm, repetition, and relationships (Hammond, 2013). While these five are universal elements in communities of color, how it looks in African American culture might vary slightly from how it looks in Latino or Pacific Islander culture, yet they are a common thread across cultures. Gonzalez (2017) summed up the struggles and misconceptions with CRT by saying: “true culturally responsive teaching isn’t as simple as I thought it was; it’s much more holistic. In fact, in most cases, it wouldn’t even look “culturally responsive” to an outside observer.” Gonzalez worked with Hammond (2015) and came out with four main misconceptions

about CRT: (a) CRT is the same as multicultural or social justice education; (b) CRT must start with addressing implicit bias; (c) CRT is all about building relationships and self-esteem; (d) CRT is about choosing the right strategies. However, in as much as multicultural education, addressing implicit bias, relationship building and teaching strategies are essential components of CRT; CRT is much more than representing cultures and building relationships with students.

The theme of teaching the whole child encompasses concepts of skill development in a cultural context, calling for teachers to include the needs of the ‘total child’ when practicing CRT (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Students bring their initial family and community influences which shape their academic identity to the classroom. These cultural influences are known to directly affect students and families’ perceptions, responses, and prioritization of what is meaningful to them. Increased teacher sensitivity to how culture, race, and ethnicity influence the academic, social, emotional, and psychological development of students is paramount in the implementation of CRT practices. As Canadian classrooms become increasingly culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse landscapes for teaching and learning, there is increasing need for setting aside stereotypical beliefs related to CRT, while embracing CRT practices to support student excellence in education (Bottiani et al., 2018). Bottiani et al. advocated for consistent operationalization of a well-defined set of indicators that can serve as a comprehensive and integrative reflection of CRP, rather than the generation of new or additional definitions, which may stem from stereotypical beliefs.

As stakeholders in education look for ways to quickly close achievement gaps, CRT has become part, if not all the rage in education these days (Hammond, 2018). Hammond found that amongst other misconceptions, CRT is too often presented as a “bucket of engagement strategies,” with educators holding on to the idea that CRT is all about relationships and focuses on raising student self-esteem. This misconception is clearly conflicting with the real purpose of CRT, which is to help traditionally marginalized and under-served students become empowered, independent learners (Hammond, 2015, 2018). Culturally responsive educators are called to make the conscious effort not to confuse cultural responsiveness with simple multiculturalism to honor diversity. They should rather associate CRT with building students’ thinking skills. Confusing the purpose and process of CRP could stop educators from realizing its full potential to create outcomes that are more equitable.

Tobisch and Dresel (2017) found that although research results are somewhat accurate for teachers’ achievement expectations and achievement aspirations for immigrant students, there is overestimation in teacher expectations of non-immigrant students and students from homes with high socioeconomic status. Tobisch’ and Dresel’s findings coincide with the relationship between ethnicity and educational outcome. This relationship is threefold as presented by Borgna and Contini (2014) and Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007): “(a) ethnic minority students experience disadvantages throughout their educational careers; (b) the achievement levels of ethnic minority students are lower than those of ethnic majority students; and (c) ethnic minority students are underrepresented in academic and higher-level school tracks.” In addition to language and cultural barriers,

biases in teacher judgements also account for these disadvantages on minority students. In consultation with other research, Glock (2016) and Tobisch and Dresel (2017) found that in some cases, teachers evaluate ethnic minority students more negatively, often expecting lower performance from them. These biases portrayed by educators are associated with, and stem from stereotypes, as found in generalized knowledge about the members of social groups (Smith, 1998). Although stereotype-driven judgements could be an efficient and necessary part of information processing in education (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000), they, unfortunately, may also result in systemic disadvantages. Educators are challenged to explore ways to reduce or eliminate such biases and stereotypes while embracing positive attitudes, which are a driving force in interpersonal judgements (Glock et al., 2018, Tobisch & Dresel, 2017). Since attitudes affect the ways in which others are perceived and evaluated, applying CRT strategies in the classroom is one of the ways teachers can reduce, and potentially eliminate biases and stereotypes.

Hammond (2015, 2018) reported that she typically starts her workshops by asking teachers to define CRT and to draw a picture (a nonlinguistic presentation) of the process. She found that the mental models teachers carry around about what they think CRT is are fascinating. Different teachers often emphasize different aspects of CRT, with a mixture of truth and misconceptions evident. Hammond's 2015 analogy to the story of a king asking six blind men to tell him what an elephant was like revealed that CRT is not a set of best practices, but a process. Just as one blind man felt the tail of the elephant and said the elephant is like a rope, while another blind man who touched the ear said an

elephant is like a fan, different teachers have come up with different pictures of what they think CRT is.

Stereotypical beliefs towards CRT also play a role in shaping the thinking and implicit attitudes of pre-service teachers (Glock et al., 2018). Glock, Kovacs, and Pit-ten Cate (2018) found that as preservice teachers prepared for the task that lies ahead, some of them imagined working in culturally diverse schools, hence showed more negative implicit attitudes towards ethnic minority students than preservice teachers who imagined working in a school with little or no diversity. There exists an interrelation, in the form of a correlation, between stereotypical beliefs and attitudes that an increase in a school's cultural diversity activates more negative expectations (Glock et al., 2018). Teachers who have frequent contact with ethnic minority students have greater opportunities to encounter diverse members of this student group, thereby showing a more positive attitude.

Although it is easy to believe that CRT will lead to better classroom management, a quantitative study using Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) by Gaias et al. (2019) observed and surveyed 103 teachers at nine middle schools to examine the degree to which current classroom management strategies are responsive to the cultural backgrounds of students of color. Findings revealed three ordered profiles of classroom management practices (i.e., high, medium, low), suggesting that cultural responsiveness may operate as an extension of other classroom management strategies: white students more likely to be in classrooms with high levels of classroom management, and students in classrooms with low levels of classroom management more likely to demonstrate elevated levels of

negative behaviors. This provides insight into possible strategies to improve practices reflecting meaningful participation and cultural responsiveness.

Finally, in a qualitative study, Pollock and Briscoe (2017) interviewed 59 Ontario principals in seven school boards in an effort to illustrate how they understand difference and diversity within the student populations they served, asking them how the changing nature of their student populations influences their work. Principals identified four distinct ways they view difference in their student populations: (a) no differences, or homogenous; (b) non-visible differences defined by socioeconomic status, academic differences, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation; (c) visible differences, as a result of religion, race, ethnicity, language, or culture; and (d) an all-encompassing understanding of student difference defined by both visible and nonvisible factors. This study makes it clear that how principals understand difference and diversity can either help them lead school transformation in a way that ensures all students achieve academic excellence, or put their school populations in positions where some student needs are - sometimes unconsciously - ignored, hence the need for diversity awareness, not leaving behind cultural diversity.

The Ready for Rigor Framework for CRT

Rigorous learning is instruction that focuses on content and processes that are challenging for the students and call for high cognitive demand. Rigor in the classroom therefore refers to creating a learning environment that encourages students to learn at high levels, with the needed support for high-level learning provided in a way that each student demonstrates high-level learning (Blackburn, 2008, p. 2). Rigorous learning is

evident in the teaching and learning process during teacher facilitation of students engaging in real-world content and students engaging in cognitively demanding work. Although rigor is a fundamental piece of any learning experience, its subjective nature puts it amongst the most troublesome pieces (Hammond, 2018). In addition to how rigor can be used to promote understanding, the following rigor-related questions are pertinent: What does rigor mean? What are its characteristics? Rigorous for whom? Indicative of misconceptions that difficult, dry, academic, sink-or-swim learning is inherently rigorous, Williamson and Blackburn (2013) shared four ‘myths’ concerning rigor (p. 14):

- Myth 1: Lots of Homework is a Sign of Rigor
- Myth 2: Rigor Means Doing More
- Myth 3: Rigor is Not For Everyone
- Myth 4: Providing Support Means Lessening Rigor

Regardless of all these myths, rigor matters because it imposes cognitive load on students, forcing them to confront misconceptions, reconsider positions, separate the implicit from the explicit, and other critical thinking practices that distinguish shaky familiarity from true understanding (Teach Thought, n.d.).

Rigor is different for every student and must be carefully considered during CRT. The culturally responsive teacher carefully considers the fact that rigor challenges students’ thinking in new and interesting ways, cultivates a sophisticated understanding of fundamental ideas, and is driven by a curiosity to discover what they don’t know. The Ready for Rigor framework therefore works well when its implementation happens with fidelity (Johnson-Smith, 2020). Johnson-Smith (2020) found that the teacher’s ethnicity

does not influence student success; teacher commitment to CRT in culturally diverse classes does. The Ready for Rigor framework is an important tool that brings four core areas to the table: awareness, learning partnerships, information processing capacity, and learning communities and environments (Hammond, 2014, p. 41). These core areas, when synthesized and braided together help students become leaders of their own learning.

Key areas of teacher capacity building are revealed in the Ready for Rigor framework, setting the stage for students to build their independent learning skills (Hammond, 2014, p. 16). This framework encourages ethnicity awareness as a means for teachers to become culturally in tune to teach diverse learners in efforts to close the achievement gap. Hammond (2018), in her question and answer article on CRT, made it clear that although CRT may have secondary goals, its ultimate goal is to help students learn faster by building cognitive learning muscles. Possessing cognitive learning muscles is evidence of students who are “ready for rigor” and who ultimately become leaders of their own learning. However, there is disproportionality in the number of struggling, underserved students of color and poor students who cannot engage in higher order thinking. This disproportionality is not as a result of the fact that they are not capable, but as a result of “inequity by design”, calling for educators to start giving these underserved students the same learning opportunities as their peers (Hammond, 2018). Hammond then concluded that the only way to reach struggling underserved students and prepare them for rigor is to bring about powerful teaching to these populations to help build their brain power and learning muscles early. She recommends that teachers

provide students with tools needed for the job, one of these tools being engaging students with CR teaching practices.

The Hard Re-Set of CRT and CReT Post Pandemic

In Ladson-Billings (2021) article on how to re-set after the pandemic, she speaks to the need to use the pandemic as a stepping-stone to reconsider how a more robust culturally centered pedagogy can be implemented. History highlights the gains of resetting Japanese and Italian education systems for the better post World War II. While the Japanese introduced a more gender equitable education, the Italians discouraged authoritarian teaching and initiated an education that allowed children to explore and discover. Although the United States and Canada have not seen any major wars, catastrophes have happened that could have initiated a re-set of education systems even at the district level. While this re-set has not occurred nationally or district wise, Ladson-Billings (2021) states that “the hard re-set demanded by the COVID-19 and anti-Black pandemics of 2020 require us to engage in CReP that takes into account the conditions of students’ lives these occurrences set in motion.” Re-setting around technology, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and parent/community engagement will be vital in promoting students’ culture.

In terms of technology, hard re-set involves requiring schools to work with families in helping all students have access to technology and Internet accessibility even when in-person learning resumes. In terms of curriculum, re-set will mean rethinking and redesigning the school curriculum by deconstructing and reconstructing curriculum to more accurately reflect the culture of students. Finally, re-setting as it pertains to parent

and community engagement means parents' roles and responsibilities will be negotiated as parents and care givers are encouraged and integrated to occupy a central role in teaching and learning. Although a re-set to improve parent involvement is challenging, considering some degree of flexibility could solve the problem. It will be necessary to re-set the use of time and resources even if it means using evenings and weekends for parents who work during school hours.

Summary and Conclusion

The literature review presented in Chapter 2 contains detailed information related to teaching in culturally diverse classrooms and the characteristics of CRT. Although there are no specific examples of instructional challenges faced by teachers who practice CRT in current literature, most of the research studies are relevant to this study. The literature presented in Chapter 2 is informative regarding teachers understanding of CRT, their perspectives and perceptions, along with characteristics and merits of CRT. This study is therefore intended to fill the gap in literature by investigating and reporting specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. Summarily, CRT, when carefully considered and implemented, should lead to the success of all students. Culturally responsive practices have proven successful in improving outcomes for students in culturally diverse classrooms. Most teachers want to use CRT strategies in their classrooms, and their perspectives and perceptions about CRT can impact their effectiveness. With increasing diversity around the world, teachers are now teaching in highly culturally diverse classes, but little research has focused on their instructional

challenges and the strategies they implement to overcome such challenges. This study will seek to fill this gap in the literature by interviewing junior high school teachers to investigate their cultural diversity related instructional challenges and gain in site into how they deal with such challenges.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this research study was to investigate specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. To fulfill the purpose of this study, I investigated cultural diversity instructional challenges and explored how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges through the lens of Gay's (2000) CRP theory, including elements of Ladson-Billing's (2004) CReP theory as the framework for the study. This study followed the basic qualitative design and employed the interview method to obtain information from and about participants, who were eight junior high school teachers in highly diverse junior high schools.

In this chapter, I first highlight the research design and rationale, and discuss my role as the researcher. In the methodology section, I discuss participant selection logic, instrumentation, researcher developed instruments, procedures for data collection, and data analysis plan. Furthermore, I discuss issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. I conclude Chapter 3 with a summary of what is covered in the chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions for this study were based the conceptual framework and the literature review. The following central research questions guided the research:

RQ 1: What are the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers?

RQ 2: How do teachers use CRT to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges?

The central concepts identified for the study are cultural diversity instructional challenges, teachers of culturally diverse classrooms, and teachers' use of CRT strategies. For this study, cultural diversity was defined as appreciating that the classroom is made up of many different groups with different interests, skills, talents and needs, and recognizing that students can have differing religious beliefs and sexual orientations. An instructional challenge was defined as a motivational, cognitive (and sometimes logistical) difficulty or obstacle that hinders students' and teachers' efforts towards achieving academic success of students (University of Waterloo, n.d.). Finally, Gay (2010) defined CRT as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them (p. 31). Furthermore, CRT is the behavioral expression of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning (Gay, 2010, p. 31).

A basic qualitative approach, also referred to as generic qualitative inquiry, traditional description, or interpretative description, was used to investigate the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers. It was also used to explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. A basic qualitative study engages the researcher to interpret the experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015), the meaning applied to the experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and how participants in the study reflect on those experiences (Percy et al., 2015). Hence, a basic qualitative research design is defined as one with the purpose of understanding how people make sense of their lives and their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24).

Finally, a basic qualitative study is meant to collect data from peoples' experiences to understand the interpretations of those experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), which is aligned to the purpose of this study.

A basic qualitative study is in alignment with cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers. A basic qualitative approach is a popular research approach in the field of education (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Keeping the focus of this study on the practical consequences and useful applications of CRT made this methodology appropriate for capturing teacher cultural diversity instructional challenges. Although a generic qualitative inquiry is a valid approach, a basic qualitative design was used for this study due to the ambiguity that comes with the term *generic*. A basic qualitative approach is consistent with investigating specific challenges making it difficult for junior high school teachers to effectively teach in culturally diverse classrooms. This topic is amenable to the basic qualitative approach since keeping the focus on identifying culture-related instructional challenges, and how teachers cope with such barriers, should be consistent with the CRP theory, which emphasizes bringing out the best from culturally diverse students while boosting their academic and psychological abilities (Gay, 2000).

The data collection process involved phone interviews and audio recordings of eight junior high school teachers. Participants were encouraged to find locations where they were free and comfortable to share their opinions about their experiences in terms of challenges faced in their culturally diverse junior high school classrooms. While one-on-one interviews allowed me to gather precise data from participants, semistructured

interviews gave me the opportunity to provide guidance on what participants talked about, thereby obtaining accurate data for the study. I was then able to ask follow-up questions and get deeper details based on participants' responses. Another rationale behind the interview process that was used in this basic approach is that it served to establish a relationship between the teachers (interviewees) and myself (the interviewer) to obtain in-depth responses and elicit information that was both interesting and obtained in an ethically friendly manner (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Additionally, this methodology allowed for the use of interview responses in determining if saturation had been reached in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Saturation was reached after eight participants.

Role of Researcher

For this basic qualitative study, I served as the primary investigator, the instrument for this study. The conceptual framework for this study lent the lens for the data observation, collection and analysis process by the primary investigator. I was responsible for all the groundwork needed prior to conducting interviews. I selected the research design, determined the criteria for participant inclusion, determined the types of data sources, and created data collection instruments. I was also responsible for developing procedures for the recruitment of participants, determining how data was collected and analysed, and for ensuring trustworthiness through the application of strategies for qualitative research.

As a teacher in a highly diverse school located in a highly diverse quadrant of the city, my role could have conflicted with the study. I maintained an appropriate interview

protocol. I asked one question at a time and refrained from disrupting participants while they were speaking, acknowledging understanding of participants' responses, asking questions as needed to clarify issues, distinctly transitioning from one topic to another, and expressing gratitude for their participation in the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Throughout the interview process, I intentionally maintained an active listener role by speaking less. In addition, to minimize my bias in this study, I conducted member checks (Carlson, 2010), did researcher reflective journaling, acknowledged limitations, and provided transcripts from participant interviews for review. Finally, my role as a qualitative researcher involved memoing, a practice that is common in qualitative research studies. Memoing allowed me, as the instrument for this qualitative study, to explore and challenge my interpretations when analyzing collected data (Patel et al., 2016). Through this process, I critically examined my notes to eliminate personal interpretations of what participants were communicating.

Since qualitative researchers do not use instruments with established metrics about validity and reliability, as is the case with quantitative researchers, trustworthiness in qualitative research is all about establishing credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Trustworthiness can be described as a big umbrella calling for the researchers, the study and results to be trustworthy in order for the reader to believe in the data presented. As the researcher and instrument for data collection and analysis, I brought with me a wealth of experience in teaching for 25 years across three continents. As a good researcher, I showed transparency in trustworthiness and credibility by revealing bias and indicating strategies to establish trust in the research

process (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Personal biases, theories, beliefs and experiences of the researcher have significant influence on the validity of a qualitative research. As a researcher, it was possible that I could collect data from a study based on my preconceived notions (Maxwell, 2005), stemming from my involvement with my school district as a teacher. Due to my work in schools and the rapport I have built with students and teachers, I could have been tempted to interpret participant responses based on what I already knew about the district. Although I made sure that my participants were not teachers I know prior to the study, I also reduced bias related to the study by keeping reflective notes and memos, which were consulted when any bias-related thoughts kicked in (Patel et al., 2016). I collaborated with my committee at Walden for consistent review of the study to minimise and address any potential bias and the employment of a systematic approach to data collection and analysis.

Methodology

The basic qualitative approach in this study helped in gaining a clear and wide understanding of cultural diversity instructional challenges of teachers. It explored how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. This methodology may be useful to other researchers in the future who are interested in carrying out a similar study. This methodology section encompasses the following topics: participant selection logic, instrumentation, researcher-developed instruments, and procedures for recruitment, participation, and data analysis. Credibility, confirmability, dependability, transferability, and ethical considerations are explained and discussed under the umbrella of trustworthiness.

Participant Selection Logic

After obtaining IRB approval (Walden IRB # 08-25-21-0758965), I used purposeful sampling to select eight junior high school teachers with a minimum of 5 years teaching experience in five highly culturally diverse junior high schools. Junior high school teachers with at least five years of teaching in culturally diverse classrooms were competent in understanding the cultural diversity instructional challenges in their classrooms and were more open to establishing the beginning of trust in the interviewer-interviewee relationship. Purposeful sampling was appropriate for this study because it increased the likelihood of recruiting knowledgeable participants who provided deep understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2013). I also used snowballing, a purposeful sampling technique in which participants were asked to assist me in identifying other potential teacher participants (Griffith et al., 2016). I sent prospective participants emails of introduction that included the purpose and description of the study and an electronic version of the informed consent form. Upon receipt of their consent to participate, I arranged a date and time to conduct a phone interview or MS Teams interview with each participant.

Using set criteria in the selection process ensured that the eight participants who were picked met the requirements for participation (Patton, 2015). Participants were recruited from schools in which principals had been enlightened with information regarding the study. In the selection process, I also remembered that I am a teacher myself, ensuring that participants had no prior working relationship with me as the researcher. It was important for me to select participants I am not acquainted with

because personal interest would have had the potential to upset or limit the research findings (Creswell, 2013). This basic qualitative study included every potential participant on a 'first consent first accepted' basis who met the selection criteria regardless of age, gender, or race to allow for a balanced approach.

After IRB partial approval, I submitted an application to conduct research to the district. I perused the district website again to obtain data on diversity in schools and chose highly diverse schools. I sent an email to principals of selected schools to introduce my study and asked to use participants from their respective schools. I sent emails to teachers with an invitation to participate in the study. While I was able to use snowballing to recruit some participants (Griffith et al., 2016), I also needed to drop some of them that did not respond to subsequent communication. Some participants who did not meet the criteria for inclusion were also dropped. The ideal situation was for me to contact prospective participants who met the criteria for the study and were deemed relevant to provide rich data for the study (Creswell, 2013), but some potential participants who were interested in the study did not meet the criteria for inclusion and had to be dropped. Finally, the recruitment process sprung from the understanding that participants had unique experiences and that their participation was guaranteed (Robinson, 2014).

Instrumentation

The interview process in any qualitative study requires the use of specific instruments to obtain data for the study. Researcher-developed instruments are tools designed by a researcher. These tools, which included consent forms and interview guides, played an important role in facilitating the data collection process. In this study, I

used protocols and instruments related to semistructured interviews and audio recordings. In addition to semistructured interviews and audio recordings as researcher-developed instruments, I also wrote an information/consent form and an interview guide (Appendix).

I reminded participants of the consent form they returned before I started asking them any interview questions. I also sent the interview guide to participants at least 2 days before the interview date. Sending the guide to participants prior to the interview gave them a chance to acquaint themselves with the interview questions. Because interview guides are tools that play an important role in supporting consistency in interviews while relating back to the research problem (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014), interview guides are instrumental in supporting consistency in interviews. Brinkmann and Kvale (2014) also hold that an interview guide is a tool that connects the research problem and the research questions; it is therefore important that participants gain acquaintance of the content of the interview a few days prior to the interview

Qualitative researchers mainly use interviews to collect data. I used interviews to obtain data for this basic qualitative study, which was aimed at investigating specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. Qualitative data gathered through semistructured interviews provided “rich and varied insights about the phenomenon under investigation” (Dornyei et al., 2007, p. 126). While one-on-one interviews allowed me to gather precise data from participants, semistructured interviews gave me the opportunity to provide guidance on what participants should talk about,

thereby obtaining accurate data for the study. Keeping the interview to the point and asking open-ended questions neutrally and formally made room for follow-up questions to elicit responses (Cohen et al., 2007; Patton, 2015). I was able to ask follow-up questions that gave me deeper details based on participants' responses. A qualitative study, in which the researcher studies people in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them, was consistent with investigating specific challenges making it difficult for teachers to teach effectively in culturally diverse classrooms. Keeping the focus on identifying culture-related instructional challenges, and how teachers cope with such barriers was consistent with the CRP theory, which emphasizes bringing out the best from culturally diverse students while boosting their academic and psychological abilities (Gay, 2000). I conducted semistructured phone interviews that lasted for up to 60 minutes.

This basic qualitative study employed open-ended questions to collect adequate and appropriate information from participants to answer the research questions. Rubin and Rubin (2012) recommend open-ended questions that will give room for the participants to express themselves without any limitations in a basic qualitative study. I asked participants to elaborate or explain their responses whenever it was necessary. I followed Creswell's (2013) suggestion to develop and prepare interview questions in advance. Also, organizing questions in a way that simple questions were asked before difficult questions requiring deep thinking maintained the interviewee at ease with the researcher. With the above points in mind, it was necessary for me to send out the interview guide to each participant to preview before signing the consent form.

I was also aware that interview questions might change slightly in the course of the interview. This researcher's approach incorporated trustworthiness factors including credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability to establish the content validity of the findings (Creswell, 2013). I took audio recordings of interviews, which provided for "thicker" descriptions and the trustworthiness and accuracy of research information (Patton, 2015). To be able to capture data in participants own words, I used a computer voice recorder with my phone recorder for backup. I then transcribed interview data for analysis with the help of otter.ai, a process that made use of audio recordings during transcription and analysis (Creswell, 2013). Interview audio files will be kept for a minimum of five years before discarding as required by the university.

Researcher Developed Instruments

In this basic qualitative study, the researcher-developed instruments included the informed consent form with information about the researcher's background, risks, participants' privacy, and the nature of the study. Another important instrument was the interview guide. The Appendix contains the interview guide, which allowed for good flow in the interview process while providing the opportunity to ask participants follow-up questions for more detailed responses.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After obtaining IRB conditional approval, I obtained permission from my school district to carry out research. Although the school district was already aware of the work I was doing as I had shared the purpose of the study with stakeholders to secure a grant for my study, Walden University required their permission letter for me to get full IRB

approval. While recruiting participants after obtaining both university and school district approvals, I cautiously avoided the possibility of an inequitable relationship that could arise from recruitment and interviewing based on sexism, racism, classism, and institutional politics (Seidman, 2013, p. 29). I refrained from recruiting friends and other teachers I knew and worked with in the school district. Once I received permission to carry out the study, I made initial contact with the school principals, seeking permission to recruit teachers. I perused the district website to identify schools with high cultural diversity before sending invitation letters and informed consent forms. Once I received consent from teachers showing their willingness to participate in the study, I contacted each participant by phone or email to arrange a day and time for a 45 to 60-minute phone interview. I encouraged participants to look for an interview setting that maintained their confidentiality and anonymity. My interview guide (Appendix) was made up of open-ended questions, which allowed for detailed responses while giving room for the participants to express themselves without any limitations in this basic qualitative study (Creswell, 2013, Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Semistructured interviews gave me the opportunity to provide guidance on what participants should talk about, thereby obtaining accurate data for the study. Qualitative data gathered through semistructured interviews provided “rich and varied insights about the phenomenon under investigation” (Alshenqeeti, 2014, Dornyei, 2007, p. 126).

Saturation was reached in information when there was redundancy of gathered information (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Although the literature does not directly address this topic, saturation in this basic qualitative study was reached with eight participants (Guest

et al., 2006). During the data collection phase, I intentionally watched out for when interviews no longer lent new information. When this happened after the eighth interview, further interviews were no longer necessary in the process.

Once the interviewing phase was over with responses from all participants recorded to capture comprehensive and detailed information, all necessary data for this qualitative study had been collected. Interview questions also sought to collect participants' demographic information including the gender, race or ethnicity, and years of teaching experience. Demographics were helpful information during data analysis as they provided common themes regarding the teachers' experiences (Creswell, 2013). Participants in the study were provided with interview transcripts shortly after the interviews. The purpose of this was for interviewees to verify that all the information captured was representative of their views. Participants were encouraged to return their transcripts as soon as their confirmation process involving accurate information recording was completed. Participants were encouraged to contact the researcher with any further information or concerns that they could have thought of later. No participant got back to the researcher with any additional information.

Data Analysis Plan

During data collection and analysis in this qualitative study, I was intentional about being reflective and reflexive. Mindful of the fact that a qualitative research process is interpretive, I was also intentional in ensuring that there was credibility and trustworthiness in outcomes (Patton, 2015). I invested time in transcribing interview responses in order to replicate the data in participants' exact words. My data management

plan included an iterative process that promoted a working knowledge of the data, a formative data analysis, identification of gaps, analysis of the data on a timely basis, and an on-going review of data by peers.

The primary data collection process in this basic qualitative study was interviews. After data collection, I immersed myself in the data by transcribing and reading the transcript many times. Although there is no set number of times to read the transcript, a good guide was for me to come up with an analytic insight, knowing exactly where to go in the data to find supporting or disconfirming evidence. I used an inductive approach to qualitative data analysis (Toma, 2011), working from the bottom-up, where my lowest level consisted of relatively descriptive codes that I applied directly to the data. At the next level, I gathered similar codes into more conceptual categories. Finally, I summarised what I learned with eight interpretive themes. As a researcher, I developed my themes (thesis) centered on answering my research questions.

The inductive bottom-up approach described above was used alongside manual coding in a Microsoft Word document (Lauer, Brumberger, & Beveridge, 2018). An inductive approach, which is a typical approach within qualitative research allowed for patterns and themes to emerge from data collected from interview responses. I coded and analyzed the raw data using an in-vivo approach with focus on the participants' spoken words (Saldana, 2016). During in vivo coding, labels were assigned to sections of the interview transcripts using a word or short phrase taken from that section of the data. Using a CRT lens to investigate cultural diversity instructional challenges provided a means of ensuring implications for students' success in culturally diverse classrooms.

In order to acknowledge the idiosyncratic process of data analysis, I used a constant comparative method to code the raw data from interview questions. I used a splitter perspective (Saldana, 2016) in the coding process, which involved a thorough line-by-line approach to data analysis. According to Hatch (2002), data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. As per Hatch's recommendation that formal data analysis should begin early in the data collection process, a systematic search for meaning occurred in the process as each interview was completed to allow for the emergence of themes.

To ensure that the data supported categories, I identified salient features of the raw data while examining each area. As proposed by Atkinson and Abu el Haj (1996), I indexed participant responses and recorded topics of the discussion line by line. I read the raw data multiple times while identifying categories from concrete issues raised by participants. Based on the framework underlying this basic qualitative study, looking for consistent patterns, as evidence from participant responses was the focus while analyzing the data concurrently.

According to Saldana (2016), as the researcher employs inductive reasoning while analyzing data, applying specifics from data paves the way for general themes to emerge. I used in vivo coding in the first round of coding to split data into smaller chunks that were easy to code. This first round of coding was done line by line while paying attention to, and laying emphasis on the actual words of the participants. In vivo coding has proven to be successful when researchers want to honor and to prioritize the participants' voices while fulfilling one of the purposes of coding, which is to detect patterns in data

(Saldana, 2016). In vivo coding helped me identify emerging categories, identify themes and patterns to compare participant responses. Although I was aware that subcategories could emerge in the process calling for a third coding cycle, the third coding cycle was not necessary, as I did not identify any subcategories. In order to meet the goal for coding, which was to identify salient domains and patterns, I identified relationships between patterns that were supported by direct quotes from the initial data. I also kept a written record of my analysis in the process. In this analysis process, data saturation was reached when no new information was found from emerging themes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012)

Issues of Trustworthiness

In a qualitative study, the data collected must be trustworthy. Validity in qualitative research is the extent to which the researcher maintains credible and plausible data (Creswell, 2013). The four aspects of trustworthiness in qualitative studies that researchers must establish are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2013). Positivists often question the trustworthiness of qualitative research because their concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way in naturalistic work. Accepting the trustworthiness of qualitative research has seen progress, with frameworks for ensuring rigor in qualitative work established many years ago (Silverman, 2001). Guba (1981) proposed some criteria to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative work, reinforcing the constructs related to the criteria used by positivist investigators. These criteria include (a) credibility (in preference to internal validity), (b) transferability (in preference to external

validity/generalizability), <http://researchcenter.waldenu.edu/Oral-Defense.htm> (c) dependability (in preference to reliability), and (d) confirmability (in preference to objectivity). For this study, credibility, transferability, validity, and dependability were evidence of trustworthiness (see Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Establishing the credibility of a study is one of the most important criteria of qualitative research (Polit & Beck, 2014). Credibility in a research study can be ensured by answering the question, “how do you know that your findings are true and accurate?” Since credibility refers to trustworthiness and how believable a study is, I used triangulation (Patton, 1999) to capture different dimensions of the phenomenon being studied, which is cultural diversity instructional challenges. Phone interviews, transcripts, notes, and journal entries were my sources of data. The fact that this study was anchored on the CRP theory, which is a well-known theory serving as a guide to my research questions and interview questions ensured the credibility of this study. By transcribing interviews myself and carrying out hand coding, I ensured that I captured participants’ contributions, not what I am thinking about the topic. While interviewing, I used iterative questioning and asked follow-up questions to get the data needed from participants (Shenton, 2004). Creswell (2013) encourages peer debriefing in qualitative research to enhance the credibility of the findings. To this end, I worked with a doctoral student who just completed her qualitative study in the debriefing phase to ensure credibility. When no further information is being gleaned during the interview process, it is not necessary to continue the process. To avoid making the interviewing process an onerous task with no meaningful information coming from the process, I stopped the interview process at

participant eight once I realized that the participant was providing the same information over and over study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). When the same information is being provided by a participant, the process becomes laborious, with nothing meaningful about the topic being learned.

According to Merriam (2009), external validity, also known as transferability by positivists, “is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations”. Transferability simply denotes generalization of the findings to other settings. It is possible for other researchers to evaluate and use qualitative research findings to other settings, people, and situations provided the phenomenon described information that is relevant to their study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). I upheld transferability in my study by ensuring that at least eight participants were interviewed, until when thematic saturation of the data was attained with participant number eight. Another provision I made for the transferability of my study was by providing vast background data as I worked to establish the context of the study. I used a conceptual framework as an anchor for the study, providing a detailed description of the phenomenon in question to allow for comparisons.

Dependability means being able to show that if the study were to be repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained. Dependability in this study was achieved by making the report available to the participants who were encouraged to evaluate the findings, interpretations, and recommendations to confirm that these elements were supported by the interview data. I ensured that the processes within the study were reported in detail,

starting with inviting participants, requesting and getting consent, interviewing, transcribing, coding and reporting the results. This process was clear and rendered my study dependable. The basic qualitative design I chose could be viewed as a “prototype model”. The fact that I provided an in-depth description of my study allowed any reader to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed, rendering this work dependable. Peer scrutiny also helped bring dependability to my results (Shenton, 2004). I used a fellow qualitative researcher for peer debriefing who reviewed the findings to ensure that they were substantiated by the data. I also used the services of an expert with experience in qualitative research to conduct an audit trail that involved crosschecking the transcripts to ascertain that they corroborate the findings (Anney, 2014). Using an expert is in line with Morse’s (2015) recommendation to use an outside individual to conduct an inquiry audit to ensure the linkage between the data and the research conclusions.

Confirmability means that findings are based on participants’ responses and not any potential bias or personal motivations of the researcher. I achieved confirmability in this study through reflexivity, which is the process of examining both oneself as a researcher, and the research relationship (Creswel, 2013). As a reflexive researcher, I used journaling to record how I used bracketing to avoid biases kicking in from my background as a teacher. Any evident bias was noted in the journal with the goal to base my research findings exclusively on the participants’ responses, which were not driven by my biases or self-interests. Finally, I collected data with an open mind and no biases from eight teacher participants. I transcribed and coded the raw data, listening to

recordings over and over as I went through the process. I also used triangulation to reduce the effect of investigator bias and admitted any of researcher's beliefs and assumptions.

Ethical Procedures

As the participants in this study are my concern as a researcher, especially as it relates to moral reactions, I ensured that ethical procedures required for this study were in place before and during the study. I kept the integrity of relationships and choices of my participants as recommended by Ravitch and Carl (2016). In accordance with Colbeck's (2007) advice that researchers should have developed creativity, curiosity, and ethics-related skills by the time they are carrying out their research, I put on the creative, curious, and ethics-related skills that during the research. Following all research ethical guidelines for qualitative research gave me peace of mind and reassured me that everything was done well during the data collection and analysis phases. I do understand the issue of subjectivity leading to ethical challenges involved in a qualitative study. While I studied participants in their natural setting, in this case the classrooms of teachers, I was careful to respect their integrity while getting the data needed to complete my study.

I followed other ethical procedures including getting Walden's Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval and Canada's ethics approval through the Community Research Ethics Office (CREO) before recruiting participants. Furthermore, to adhere to key research processes involved in carrying out a study, I required participants to complete informed consent forms before they participate in the interview process. In addition, to protect the rights and privacy of participating teachers, I made it clear to

participants that the data collected would be kept confidential and that I would ensure their privacy in the study reports. I also informed participants that their participation in the study was voluntary, and that they could decline to respond to any questions or withdraw from the study at any time if they chose to do so. Before recording the interview, I reminded participants of their signed consent form giving permission to the interviewer to record. I also made it clear that at any point in the interview, the interviewee could ask for the recording device to be turned off and their request will be granted.

It is also important that the researcher consider how data will be treated. I stored interview data and demographic information in a secure place. I stored interview and demographic information on secure password-protected storage devices including hard wares. This process helped ensure compliance with ethical considerations, as pointed out by Creswell (2013). Only authorized research team members (if need arose) and I had access to participant responses and information. Any interview notes, printed drafts, consent forms and audiotapes were locked safely with access granted only to the research team member and me. As per university rules, I will destroy hard copies of the transcripts and discard the audiotapes after 5 years.

Summary

Chapter 3 is an overview of components and processes involved in this basic qualitative study. The overview has laid out how I explored cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and how teachers use CRT to overcome challenges. A basic qualitative approach helped me explore the challenges

of culturally diverse classrooms in their own voices. The primary components of this research method outlined in this chapter included my role as a qualitative researcher, population and sampling, selection criteria for participation, data collection instruments, and data analysis. I collected, transcribed, and analyzed data obtained from interviews to extract common themes arising from participant responses. To ensure the trustworthiness of this research and its findings, I employed strategies to establish its credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I also adhered to ethical procedures, as discussed in this chapter. In Chapter 4, I will review the study, include data collected, and present my research findings.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. I investigated cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by teachers in their culturally diverse classes and used thematic analysis to analyze the data. My investigation of teachers' cultural diversity instructional challenges and my exploration of how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges were focused on answering the following RQs respectively:

RQ 1: What are the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers?

RQ 2: How do teachers use CRT to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges?

In this chapter, I describe the setting of the study, the demographics of the participants, the data collection process, and data analysis. I also provide evidence of trustworthiness and present the results of the study.

Research Setting

The setting for this study was junior high schools in the Northeast of Calgary, within a school district in Calgary, Alberta. Schools in Calgary, especially in the Northeast quadrant of the city, are a true reflection of a diverse society in Alberta in particular, and in Canada in general. Participants had experience teaching in highly diverse schools in this highly diverse quadrant of the city.

Demographics

Eight teachers who fulfilled the criteria for participants in this study were purposefully selected. Participants had been teaching in highly diverse junior high schools for at least 5 years. Participants were full time teachers in junior high schools and were mostly in their 40s. They were asked for an age group, their pronouns, and to self-identify a race or ethnicity.

In order to identify participants, yet also maintain confidentiality following ethical codes and IRB/CREO requirements, each participant was assigned a pseudonym. Eight junior high school teacher participants were identified as TP1, TP2, TP3, TP4, TP5, TP6, TP7, and TP8. Table 1 highlights the participants' identification pseudonyms, the number of years of teaching in a northeast junior high school, their gender, and their ethnicity/race. A summary of participant descriptions is given below and presented on Table 1.

Teacher Participant 1 (TP1) was a woman in the 55-60 age group. She self-identified as biracial Indo Caribbean/English. She stated that she is a first-generation immigrant to Canada who immigrated in 1970. She also stated that she was one of the first immigrant students in her school. TP1 teaches Grade 6 Humanities (30 students per class), and Grade 9 ELA (29 students). TP1 reported that her school has a large population of students from the Middle East, India, Pakistan, and Punjab. She stated, "I have no White children that I teach."

Table 1*Demographics - Summary of Participant Description*

Participant	Ethnicity	Age Group	Gender	Teaching Experience in (Highly) Diverse School(s)
TP1	Indo Caribbean/English	55-60	Female	16
TP2	White	40-45	Female	6
TP3	South Asian	40-45	Female	5
TP4	White	40-45	Female	16
TP5	White	40-45	Male	6
TP6	Punjab	35-40	Female	5
TP7	White	45-50	Male	15
TP8	White	35-40	Male	7

Teacher Participant 2 (TP2) was a woman in the 40-45 age group. She self-identified as White. TP2 has been with her school district for 16 years and has taught Grades 1 to 9 at four different locations. She is currently teaching Grades 7 and 8 Math/Science while doing Student Services half time. TP2 stated that her school has diverse socioeconomics in a community that usually shows lower socioeconomics. Although most of the families are immigrant families, TP2 reported that “they might not have a lot, but they are very educated and push their kids to do more and to work harder.”

Teacher Participant 3 (TP3) was a woman in the 40-45 age group who self-identified as South Asian. She has been teaching for 18 years. Although she started her

career as an elementary teacher, she is currently teaching at a Grades 7-9 junior high school. TP3 stated that she teaches in a community where the majority of students are immigrants or children of immigrants. "The school has some newcomers who sometimes have interrupted studies, which typically means refugee status," she explained. TP3 is doing Student Services this year, which means working with all students in the school. She reported that when she taught Grade 9 Humanities last year, she had "two White students." As student services, she stated that she does "a whole myriad of things." She does "a lot of work with students with particular learning needs, whether it is rooted in social, emotional, behavioral, or learning disabilities, working closely with teachers around appropriate programming for students."

Teacher Participant 4 (TP4) was a White woman in the 40-45 age group. TP4 has been teaching at her current school for 16 years, which is located in a lower-middle-class community. She stated, "In my classroom, similar to pretty much every other class in the school, about two-thirds of students are coded as ELL." She also stated that about 50% of her students were born outside of Canada and the other half will be first generation Canadians. TP4 also teaches in a sheltered class in which students' language proficiency (LP) levels are low - LP1 and LP2. Half of the students in her sheltered class are "refugees with different experiences of trauma and educational schooling."

Teacher Participant 5 (TP5) was a male in the 40-45 age group. He stated that he is a White educator. TP5 has been teaching for 12 years and said that many describe his current school as "a diverse school with approximately 50% of the school population being ELL." He mentioned that English proficiency is 'fairly strong' at his school with

many ELLs at LP4 and LP5 levels. TP5 also mentioned that his school is in a 'fairly transient' neighbourhood where they see a number of students join the school partway through the year or leave, and income is a challenge for many families. TP5 teaches classes with 31 students on the class list. A number of his students identify as Arab or as having other Islamic background or culture. He also talked about a number of students having connections to places like Vietnam and some that are Filipino in origin. TP5 mentioned that about a third of his students will identify potentially as White and that there are a couple of Indigenous students in his class. Lastly, he mentioned that a couple of students would have connections to Africa, mostly North Africa.

Teacher Participant 6 (TP6) was a woman in the 35-40 age group who self-identified as Punjabi. She has been teaching for 12 years and currently teaches in a school she describes as "having a very diverse multicultural background." She has an average of 30 students in each of her classes with "a lot of ELL students". She also talked about having students who are refugees in her classes. TP6 stated that she has "students with different backgrounds, whether that's cultural or socio economic."

Teacher Participant 7 (TP7) was a man in the 45-50 age group. He self identified as white. His first experience with teaching was through coaching kids in sports. He has been teaching at his current school for 15 years. TP7 described his school as "a school that has a large population of ELL students." He also mentioned that although some of their students were born in Canada, they are first generation kids going to school. TP7 is teaching grade 8 this year, but indicated that he had taught grades 7, 8 and 9 over his 15 years of teaching at his current school. His classes have an average of 32 students. When

asked about student diversity at his school, he said, “it is very diverse in terms of academic abilities, social emotional readiness, and cultural diversity with students coming from different countries and language abilities in English and in their own language.”

Teacher Participant 8 (TP8) was a White man in the 35-40 age group who has been with the school district for seven years. He was currently teaching Grade 8 with an average of 24 students in his classes. He also talked about “a very mixed student body” when asked about student diversity in his classes. TP8 mentioned that he teaches immigrants and also students that have lived in Calgary their whole lives, yet present lots of different cultural backgrounds.

Data Collection

After I received approval from the school district on December 08, 2021 and Walden IRB approval (#08-25-21-0758965) on December 10, 2021, I emailed principals of eight junior high schools in the area mapped out for this research. My emails sought permission to conduct research at their respective schools as per school district procedure. Six principals granted permission for me to carry out the study at their schools. I emailed invitations to 46 teachers and eight of the invitees participated in the study. I sent the information/consent letter to the teachers who showed interest, fulfilled the criteria of the study, and consented voluntarily. I worked with each participant to secure a convenient time for an interview. There was no need for any more participants as saturation was reached with eight participants.

All eight participants preferred phone interviews and were interviewed over the phone. I used semistructured interviews in the data collection process. Semistructured interviews were a great way to capture the experiences of each participant as it relates to cultural diversity instructional challenges they face in their classrooms and how they use CRT to overcome the challenges. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, but 60 minutes were available to each participant. Interviews were recorded using the 'voice recorder' app and then transcribed by me with the help of Otter.ai. I sent each transcript to the interviewee and waited for confirmation that the data was correctly captured before proceeding with coding. The findings of the study are reported later in this chapter, followed by interpretations and conclusions in Chapter 5.

All interviews began with a word of thanks to the participant for their willingness to support my study by sharing their experiences. I reviewed the ground rules for the interview, encouraging each participant to answer questions to the best of their ability. Each participant was also reminded that they do not have to answer any questions that they felt uncomfortable to answer, and that there were no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. I also made sure that each participant consented to the recording of the interview before I turned on my recording device. I started the interview with opening questions aimed at confirming that each participant met the requirements laid out in the information letter. Interviews with eight teachers who met the participant criteria proceeded according to plan.

It was interesting to notice that during the interviews, some participants recounted the cultural diversity instructional challenges they face in their classrooms before I got to

that question. This was mostly evident when participants talked about the problems they encounter as they teach in culturally diverse classrooms. Instead of following the order of the questions on the interview guide that was shared with participants a few days before the interview, I strategically changed the order of the questions to ensure the flow of the interview and informed the participants about this change in order. I reminded them that they did not need to repeat themselves if they felt they had addressed the challenges while talking about the problems they encounter in their classrooms. I restated their answers in most cases to ensure that I captured what they intended to state as cultural diversity instructional challenges. I transcribed all the interviews as this enabled me to listen to the recordings several times in order to familiarise myself with the data. I used the software Otterai.ai to facilitate the transcription.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the interview data, I used an inductive approach to qualitative data analysis. This inductive approach allowed for patterns and themes to emerge from data collected from interview responses. I worked from the bottom-up, where my lowest level consisted of relatively descriptive codes that I applied directly to the data. At the next level, I gathered similar codes into more conceptual categories. Finally, I summarised what I learned with eight interpretive themes. As a researcher, I developed my themes (thesis) centered on answering my research questions.

The first phase of data analysis involved transcribing recorded interviews and organizing them by assigning a pseudo name to each participant for the purpose of identification. I printed out each transcript and read it several times to familiarise myself

with the general idea in the data. I then examined the transcripts line by line to capture the rich facets provided by each of the eight participants.

The second phase involved the use of in vivo coding during which labels were assigned to sections of the interview transcripts using a word or short phrase taken from that section of the data. I also used a splitter perspective by doing a thorough line-by-line approach to data analysis. I began the coding process by fishing out 19 descriptive codes. Table 2 provides examples of these descriptive codes.

Table 2*Examples of Descriptive Codes*

Code	Participant	Excerpts from Interview Transcripts
Teaching culturally diverse classes is rewarding	TP1	"Oh my God - everything! Every single thing - every story, every child, every time I have to challenge myself."
	TP2	"I think that it brings like a sense of community - a sense of community that shares who we are and what we are about because we are all very different."
	TP4	"I've been here so long because I really enjoy it. I do find it highly rewarding. I would say i have learned so much about different cultures in the world just by being with my students."
	TP8	"I mean, I think for me, it's interesting. Education aside, I might ask them about their background, where they're from trying to get to know them a bit more."
Language is a major challenge	TP3	"We do have varying levels of English language proficiency in the classroom."
	TP6	"I have a lot of ELL students in my class, some are refugee students, like, at the beginning of the year, there's about two students who didn't like don't know, word of English, right?"
	TP8	"For some of the ELL kids, I tried to help with the vocabulary a bit more."
Understanding of CRT	TP1	"Child centered education...If you are focused on that child and not on yourself, then you are going to figure it out and you are going to teach them."
	TP4	"I know sort of the key highlights of CRT are often asset-based right?"
	TP7	"Just I guess, being aware of different cultures, and accepting of other different cultures in the classroom is a big thing for me."

In the third phase, I then looked out for patterns, repetitive words, phrases, and notable sentences related to the research questions and the conceptual framework that were repeated among the participants. This provided me with categories of the descriptive codes, which were organized on a spreadsheet accompanied by excerpts from participant interview transcripts. Examples of descriptive codes and categories are shown on Table 3.

Table 3*Examples of Descriptive Codes and Categories*

Category	Code	Participant	Excerpts from Interview Transcripts
Language barriers Large class size Communication Heterogeneous classes	Language is a major challenge	TP3	"Textbooks are all in English. We do have tools such as phones and computers, but we are in a very poor area, so we don't even have access to all these ... I'm also trying to utilize translation tools so that if they would understand it in their own language, they will have access to that."
		TP3	"We do have varying levels of English language proficiency in the classroom."
		TP6	"I have a lot of ELL students in my class, some are refugee students, like, at the beginning of the year, there's about two students who didn't like don't know, word of English, right?"
		TP8	"...or some of the ELL kids, I tried to help with the vocabulary a bit more."
Motivation Refugee Shock and mentality Mental health issues COVID/pandemic	Students struggle with lack of motivation due to mental health issues	TP1	"Students come from refugee camps and may have a mentality; some students are still shocked about leaving their own cultures and being in Canada."
		TP5	"I worked, as I said, for the system as part of a mental health specialist. And it's just fascinating. The blind spots that exist within our organization for that diversity"
		TP6	"He came with a refugee status, no word of English. And I think there's mental health stuff that is there as well".
Access to resources Textbooks Work overload Lack of time No programming	Limited resources for teachers and students	TP2	Textbooks are all in English, inadequate time to sort of address language issues
		TP3	"I feel like it's, it's, there is no access to resources that show a balanced perspective."
		TP4	"So trying to find things that are representative of students in my class is a challenge."

Category	Code	Participant	Excerpts from Interview Transcripts
		TP5	"I mean, I think some of the challenges really come down to I mean, lack of resources, lack of training for some of this."
		TP7	"With many students in the classroom, it's really difficult to in the moment, to give them the time that they need."
Task design is key	Teachers pay attention to task design	TP2	<p>"Modeling a lot is big - so we are using tools, drawing it out - instead of number equations, we draw it out, and model it then demonstrates you know how many you're taking away or how you are dividing them, you're making sense of pictures".</p> <p>"Sometimes we do physical sense - so if we're doing probability, we might talk about how many people versus how many teachers are in the room ... We really just try to utilize various ways to understand things differently."</p>
		TP3	<p>"I think that it comes down to task design, so that students have many ways to access information, as well as share what they've learned".</p> <p>"The task design piece is, in particular, really important that the work we're asking kids to do is broadly accessible, so that they can see the relevance, they can find themselves in it, and that the resources are plentiful, so that it can match their level of language proficiency."</p>
		TP4	"I would say that for all of our classes, this is for cultural diversity, but I guess this is really more for learning diversity - the idea of multiple entry points."
		TP5	"It is bringing in the current events, it's really trying hard to make sure that the events represent, you know, not just what's happening in North America. But looking at a diverse set of events that, again, maybe students are seeing things that are more closely related to maybe their home, or their experience, or their family or, or just coming to understand diverse perspectives and diverse issues from around the world."

In the last phase, I reread and reviewed the categories and was able to identify four themes related to RQ1 and four themes related to RQ2. All themes were also related to the conceptual framework, which is Geneva Gay's Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) theory (Gay, 2000), including elements of Gloria Ladson-Billings's Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) theory (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Progressing inductively from open coding to coding for patterns, categories and themes helped me to narrow down the scope of the study and understand the interview data. Identified themes from categories as they relate to RQs and the conceptual framework are shown in Table 4.

Table 4*Categories and Themes Related to RQs and the Conceptual Framework*

Research Question	Category	Theme
RQ1: What are the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers?	Language barriers Large class size Communication Heterogeneous classes	Theme 1: Teachers experience language barriers in large heterogeneous classes.
	Access to resources Textbooks Work overload Lack of time No programming	Theme 2: Sparsity of resources for teachers and students.
	Motivation Refugee Shock and mentality Mental health issues COVID/pandemic	Theme 3: Teachers struggle with keeping students regulated and motivated.
	Unfinished learning Gaps	Theme 4: Teachers struggle with closing gaps in student learning.
RQ2: How do teachers use CRT to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges?	Books Pictures Resources Objects Community	Theme 5: Teachers find and use appropriate resources for instruction.
	Culture Indigenous Stories Family	Theme 6: Teachers make connections between the Canadian culture and students' cultures
	Modelling Pre-assessments Physical space Design tasks	Theme 7: Teachers pay attention to lesson planning and task design
	Relationships Classroom environment Collaboration	Theme 8: Teachers work to build relationships with students and to create a conducive classroom environment.

Themes that emerged from the data related to the research questions and aligned with the conceptual framework of the study. These themes were important in answering the research questions because they highlighted participants' challenges in culturally diverse classrooms and their understanding of, and use of CRT to overcome challenges. All eight participants supported Theme 1. Theme 2 was supported by five of the participants while Theme 3 was supported by three participants. Four participants supported theme 4. Five participants revealed Theme 5 as they outlined how they look for resources to be used in their classrooms. Theme 6 was supported by three participants, Theme 7 by six teachers and Theme 8 by four participants.

Below are the identified eight themes: Themes 1-4 answered RQ1 while themes 5-8 answered RQ2 and related directly to the conceptual framework.

- Theme 1: Teachers experience language barriers in large heterogeneous classes.
- Theme 2: There is sparsity of resources for teachers and students.
- Theme 3: Teachers struggle with keeping students regulated and motivated.
- Theme 4: Teachers struggle with closing gaps in student learning.
- Theme 5: Teachers find and use appropriate resources for instruction
- Theme 6: Teachers make connections between the Canadian culture and students' cultures
- Theme 7: Teachers pay attention to lesson planning and task design

- Theme 8: Teachers work to build relationships with students and to create a conducive classroom environment.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of qualitative research is often questioned by positivists because their concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way in naturalistic work. Accepting the trustworthiness of qualitative research has seen progress, with frameworks for ensuring rigor in qualitative work established many years ago. Silverman (2001) presents clear demonstration of how qualitative researchers can incorporate measures that deal with these issues. Guba (1981) proposed some criteria to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative work, reinforcing the constructs related to the criteria used by positivist investigators. These criteria include (a) credibility (in preference to internal validity), (b) transferability (in preference to external validity/generalizability), (c) dependability (in preference to reliability), and (d) confirmability (in preference to objectivity). For this study, credibility, transferability, validity, and dependability are evidence of trustworthiness (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Concisely, qualitative studies establish trustworthiness through the ability of the research finding to be credible, transferable, confirmable, and dependable (Newman & Clare, 2016; Ngozwana, 2018; Simon & Goes, 2016). The choice of the qualitative approach characterized the researcher as the instrument of data collection and data analysis. I ensured full confidentiality in the data collection and data analysis exercise throughout this study. Below is a description of how I maintained the above qualities of trustworthiness in this research.

Credibility

Credibility in this research study was ensured by answering the question “how do you know that your findings are true and accurate?” Since credibility refers to how believable a study is, I used triangulation to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon in this study, which is cultural diversity instructional challenges. The phone interviews, transcripts, notes, and journal entries were my sources of data. The fact that the study is anchored on the CRP theory, which is a well-known theory that guided my research question and interview questions show credibility of my study. By transcribing interviews myself and carrying out hand coding, I ensured that I captured participants’ contributions as opposed to my own biases about the study. While interviewing, I used iterative questioning and asked follow-up questions to get the data needed from participants (Shenton, 2004). The fact that my data was looked into by a peer, otherwise called peer scrutiny also ensured credibility of my study.

Transferability

According to Merriam (1998), external validity, also known as transferability by positivists, “is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations”. One of the provisions I made for transferability of my study was by providing vast background data as I established the context of the study. I used a conceptual framework as an anchor for the study, providing a detailed description of the phenomenon in question to allow comparisons to be made. My interviews pointed to the fact that participants face cultural diversity instructional challenges in their classrooms. Participants revealed language barriers in large heterogeneous classes, lack of resources

for teachers and students, struggles with keeping students regulated and motivated and struggles with closing gaps in student learning as instructional challenges faced by teachers in culturally diverse classrooms. These findings testify that there exist instructional challenges related to cultural diversity in classrooms, which is the main theme in this study. The results of this study can be applied in other cultural diversity related studies in the field of education and in different settings (Shenton, 2004).

Although a sample size of eight saw saturation, this large sample size ensured transferability as participants coming from various schools will allow for results to be used in a broader context.

Dependability

Dependability means being able to show that if the study were to be repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained. Dependability can be addressed in a study by making sure that the process within the study is reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results. I have clearly indicated the processes in my study, starting with inviting participants, requesting and getting consent, interviewing, transcribing, coding and reporting the results. This process is clear and renders my study dependable. The basic qualitative design I used could be viewed as a “prototype model”. The fact that I provided an in-depth description of my study will allow any reader to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed, rendering this work dependable. Peer scrutiny also helped bring dependability to my results (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research is achieved when the findings are based on participants' responses and not any potential bias or personal motivations of the researcher. I showed confirmability in this study by getting all my data with an open mind from eight teacher participants, with no biases. I transcribed and coded the data the way it was, listening to recordings over and over as I went through the process. The findings were not influenced by my inclinations because I documented reflective notes as a reminder for me to remove bias (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As the instrument of the study, I built trust by maintaining confidentiality of all participants whose identities were only known to me. Participants chose a convenient time and place for one-to-one phone interviews to preserve their privacy, confidentiality, and trust in an effort to conform with ethical procedures of the study (see Shenton, 2004).

Results

The organisation of data in this study was guided by the RQs, hence the results presented in this section align with the RQs and framework of the study. The eight participants provided thick description by responding to the interview and probing questions related to cultural diversity instructional challenges they face in their classrooms, and how they use CRT to overcome such challenges. Once codes that developed into categories were generated, themes supporting each of the RQs were identified from participant responses. I identified four themes related to RQ1 and four themes related to RQ2.

RQ1: What Are the Cultural Diversity Instructional Challenges Faced by Junior High School Teachers in Calgary?

This question investigated the participants' experiences as it relates to instructional challenges in their culturally diverse classrooms. Interview questions focused on the benefits and challenges related to teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. As discussed above, four themes emerged to answer RQ1: (a) Teachers experience language barriers in large heterogeneous classes; (b) There is sparsity of resources for teachers and students; (c) Teachers struggle with keeping students regulated and motivated; and (d) Teachers struggle with closing gaps in student learning.

Before asking teachers about their experiences with instructional challenges, I sought to bring positivity to the discussion by asking the question: "In what ways is teaching in a culturally diverse classroom rewarding? What is rewarding in the process?" Each participant was able to elaborate on the rewarding aspects of having cultural diversity in their classes. Table 5 shows examples of what six participants had to say.

Table 5

Examples of Participant Responses to the Question: In What Ways is Teaching in a Culturally Diverse Classroom Rewarding?

Participant	Excerpt from Response
TP1	"Oh my God - everything! Every single thing - every story, every child, every time I have to challenge myself".
TP2	"I guess it brings in a lot of creativity, like a lot of kids do things differently and that's ok. We introduce kids to other methods and other ways of doing things, or if they can bring in their culture for an assignment or project, I think it improves community or understanding about the world."
TP3	"... what's most rewarding about it would be like having spent a lot of energy and time and care in establishing the classroom as a really safe space, would be the comfort with which students were able to talk about their personal experiences
TP4	"I've been here so long because I really enjoy it. I do find it highly rewarding. I would say I have learned so much about different cultures in the world just by being with my students. I'm having an opportunity to use students as experts."
TP5	"One of the ways that I find that it's really rewarding has been being able to spark some interesting conversations."
TP6	"Students really appreciate you like, I went student, he came from Africa as refugee status, and was just so appreciative of like, any little thing that I would do for him, was just just so happy. And I'm like, I just give you a pencil, like, okay. But just like little things, like, you know, like, you don't think twice, but for that student, it meant, like, a lot."

Theme 1 - RQ1: Teachers Experience Language Barriers in Large Heterogeneous Classes

All eight participants expressed concerns about challenges related to language within the first few minutes of talking about cultural diversity instructional challenges.

They recounted stories of language challenges in different ways, and their accounts are reported below.

Language Barriers in the Classroom. TP3 expressed her difficulties to cover curriculum due to the varying levels of language learners in her classroom. She stated, “We do have varying levels of English language proficiency in the classroom, so some of the topics that we have to take up from the program of studies are really difficult for students to understand.” TP1 supported the idea that language barriers make it hard for students to access curriculum by stating, “Actually three years ago I was teaching grade 8 Humanities and I had two ELL level 1 students in the class and they couldn't even read the content.” TP6 was also concerned about having students in her classes with very limited English at the beginning. She reported that

I have a lot of ELL students in my class; some are refugee students, like, at the beginning of the year, there's about two students who didn't like know a word of English, right? So it is very different in the sense where you have to plan for how can I help them in regards to success.

The rest of the teachers talked about language challenges in different contexts, but the message was clear that it is an instructional challenge. While TP2 talked about her students always wanting to translate material into their own language so they could connect it to what they know, TP4 mentioned that students find it difficult to learn in some environments, and language is a factor. TP4 stated, “Learning will be very intimidating for someone who comes from a different culture and is not familiar with our education - perhaps does not speak English.” TP5 talked about the whole school context

when asked about cultural diversity instructional challenges he faces in his classroom. He noted the fact that about 50% of his school are English language learners. He emphasized that “the language need may not be apparent in conversation but is definitely there.”

Language Barriers While Communicating with Parents. It was interesting to hear TP7 use a different approach to answer the same question on cultural diversity instructional challenges as it relates to language. He started by discussing a benefit in teaching culturally diverse classes. He explained that living and teaching in a culturally diverse classroom is a good thing as it challenges him to acknowledge students’ backgrounds. As a language related challenge, TP7 mentioned that communication with parents is part of the teaching-learning process, yet language sometimes stands in the way of communication with parents, even when students try to translate for their parents. He explained that

If I have to talk to parents about their child who may be struggling, whether it's, you know, behaviorally or academically, that can be a challenge, because based on parents experiences, you know, their own experiences with school, or their or their language ability with English, that it can be tough to, to communicate and, and get, I guess, my message across. Sometimes, you know, the child is, is willing to translate or help, but, you know, may not necessarily know what the message is that's being delivered.

Communicating with parents the minute something comes up in class without having to go through the process of booking an interpreter is highly desired, but this is not the reality in a diverse class setting.

Language Barriers Related to Resources and Class Size. Access to resources is a theme that will be discussed next, but some elements of it are related to language barriers and are reported here. TP3 said, “When you combine English language learners needs with an issue of resources about pretty lofty topics, I think another instructional challenge would be finding appropriate resources that students who are still learning English can access to understand sort of these higher level topics.” TP2 also expressed this concern by stating, “Textbooks are all in English.” She reported that although translation tools such as phones and computers could be used, her school is based in an area with low socioeconomics and parents may not always be able to provide these pieces of technology for their students, and the school does not have enough to assign to individual students.

Theme 2 – RQ1: There is Sparsity of Resources for Teachers and Students

Teaching and learning is demanding enough even when teachers have the tools and resources needed for the job. With sparsity of resources, it could become an onerous task especially in diverse classrooms. Theme 1 pointed to the language challenges teachers face in culturally diverse classrooms. Theme 2 indicates another challenge, which is lack of resources for both students and teachers.

When analysing results related to the question on cultural diversity instructional challenges, categories pointing to lack of resources emerged *including access to resources, textbooks, work overload and lack of time*. These categories developed into Theme 2: There is Sparsity of Resources for Teachers and Students. Six of the eight participants indicated that they lacked resources to adequately meet the needs of students

in diverse classrooms. TP2 stated, "Textbooks are all in English." Although she did not say more about this, TP2's statement indicated her desire to have books in languages that cater for the language needs of all students. To add to the problem of textbooks available only in English, TP3 recounted her experience with lack of resources that show a balanced perspective. She stated, "Again, I feel like there no access to resources that show a balanced perspective." "So trying to find things that are representative of students in my class is a challenge," said TP4. The statements above from TP3 and TP4 point to their desire to include every student in the classroom, yet lack of the right resources is limiting their work. TP5 summed up the issue of resources in one statement. "I mean, I think some of the challenges really come down to I mean, lack of resources," he said.

TP6 expressed a concern about the absence of programming, which is a necessary resource when teaching students from different cultural backgrounds. She said, "I feel like, you know, like as teachers, I do so much where, you know, we need more programming ... yeah - we need proper programming." A relationship could be seen between TP6's thinking and TP7's expression of lack of time to work with students in a way that caters for their individual needs. All teachers value time as a resource and are constantly looking for ways to maximise their time use. TP7 stated, "With many students in the classroom, it's really difficult to in the moment, to give them the time that they need." TP7's statement supports TP6's programming concern in the sense that if there was proper programming in place, students will be strategically placed in programs that carefully consider resources and time spent on students, which could sometimes be one-on-one instruction.

Theme 3 – RQ1: Teachers Struggle with Keeping Students Regulated and Motivated

When teachers were asked to recount all the instructional challenges they encounter while teaching in culturally diverse classrooms, their responses made it clear that students are often dealing with mental health issues that make it difficult for them to study. *Motivation, refugee status, shock and mentality, pandemic and mental health issues* are the categories that came up during data analysis, leading to the coining of Theme 3: Teachers Struggle with Keeping Students Regulated and Motivated. Although the mental health of all students should be looked after for them to be successful, it is important to be more intentional when dealing with students that come from different backgrounds with different, yet unique stories. Theme 3 presents the experiences of teachers who expressed the concern that they struggle with keeping their students regulated and motivated.

Refugee Status Effects on Students' Mental Health. Families enter Canada with different statuses, refugee being one of them. Students who have gone through the experience of being a refugee, especially those who resided in refugee camps often carry the negative effects of this experience with them. These experiences often affect their learning, sometimes spanning for a long time. "Students come from refugee camps and may have a mentality; some students are still shocked about leaving their own cultures and being in Canada," stated TP1. Students living in a state of shock will need a lot of care, love and support to get them to a point where they can access English language and eventually access the curriculum. TP6 also talked about students' refugee status and their mental health concerns. "He came with a refugee status, no word of English. And I think

there's mental health stuff that is there as well," said TP6 while giving an example of a student facing challenges in one of her classes.

COVID-19 Effects on Students' Mental Health. Six of the eight teacher participants mentioned either COVID-19 or pandemic in different contexts during their respective interviews. TP3 particularly talked about the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of students, which is now affecting the teaching-learning process. She said,

My role is Student Services. I do a whole myriad of things. Lots of work, of course, with students with particular learning needs, whether it's rooted in social, emotional, behavioral, or learning disabilities. So I work closely with teachers around appropriate programming for students. I also am leading up some work with our indigenous strategist about sort of teaching holistically teaching the whole child, not just the mind, and also wellness pieces, right, that incredible mental health needs of our students in particular in the last few years, that I would say COVID just brought to the surface, everything that was already there.

TP1 reiterated the fact that mental health issues from COVID are affecting instruction. She reported that "a lot of the children I find, more so now with COVID, are overwhelmed. You know they have gone through two or more years of a pandemic." TP2 also emphasized the spike in pandemic-related mental health challenges amongst students and noted, "All students nowadays seem like they are not at grade level because of COVID and even crazier things you know."

Student engagement has also been affected as students wrestle with mental health issues caused by COVID. TP5 observed, "COVID has made it exceptionally difficult to

allow students to engage as effectively.” As she thought about a solution to the reduced student engagement problem, another challenge came up and TP5 noted, “I mean, sometimes things like social media can be places where they can explore some of this, but then my ability as an educator to create and ensure a safe space for the young people, for the students isn't always there.” TP5 also spoke about the difficulty to get the community involved in student education. She said,

Trying to balance things out this way has been a challenge where I might have had to get out and be more involved in the community. COVID has made it more difficult for us to have experiences outside the walls of the classroom. And while I can bring people in for some virtual conversations, that's not the same as actually taking action.

Theme 4 – RQ1: Teachers Struggle with Closing Gaps in Student Learning

When students have gaps in their studies, it is often difficult to make progress in general, and particularly with concepts that carry on. Data pointed to *gaps in learning* and *unfinished learning* as categories, which led to the coining of Theme 4: Teachers Struggle with Closing Gaps in Student Learning. While all teacher participants shared some concerns about students' unfinished learning due to gaps in their education, five of the eight participants were very forth coming with their experiences, which are recounted below.

Language Gaps and Subject-Specific Content Gaps. For TP1, closing the gaps in students' learning has always been challenging especially because she “spent a bulk of time trying to teach English while carrying on with Humanities curriculum content for

the rest of the students.” While it has always been a huge challenge due to the discrepancy in language levels in culturally diverse heterogeneous classes, TP1 spoke of her observation that “it is so much easier because of the pandemic; everybody is behind in reading and writing.” Pre-pandemic, “my approach was more focus on Social Studies, but with doing it this way, I am able to reach many of those ELL learners,” she said. Speaking of discrepancies in language levels as it relates to gaps in learning, TP2 talked about the challenge of differentiation in levels. She stated, “Some students that have just come to Canada, they may have no skills, they may have little skills, it might be very hard to communicate with them.”

Teachers of culturally diverse classes who sometimes assume that students have previous knowledge of concepts needed to understand a current topic could be up for some surprises. Students generally bring different experiences to their classrooms, so teachers who activate students’ knowledge from scratch and do the necessary front loading and instructions set students up for success. TP6 gave a specific example of a gap in learning that affected instruction in her Social Studies class. She shared,

In Renaissance, we're talking about the Western Worldview and certain concepts like ... expansionism, but they weren't here. Obviously, they weren't here in Canada for that curriculum. So in that sense of challenges, when you're saying like, Oh, I remember in grade seven, we talked about, like indigenous or this math, they have no clue, like, what are you talking about? So sometimes there's challenges like that where it's like, okay, then you have to explain, like, explain

that quickly - so that they understand the content that you're talking about, just because they didn't learn that in their country, or they're not aware of that.

TP6's above account reveals that making assumptions as to what students may or may not know has not been an effective way to meet the needs of students in diverse classes. Instead, she pivoted and addressed the gap before continuing, and this led to student success.

RQ2: How do Teachers Use CRT to Overcome Cultural Diversity Instructional Challenges?

While RQ1 sought to identify the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by teachers, RQ2 sought the CRT strategies used by teachers to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges in their culturally diverse classrooms. Interview questions focused on each teacher's understanding of CRT and any CRT strategies they might be using in their classrooms. Four themes emerged to answer RQ2: (e) teachers find and use appropriate resources for instruction, (f) teachers make connections between the Canadian culture and students' cultures, (g) teachers pay attention to lesson planning and task design, and (h) teachers work to build relationships with students and to create a conducive classroom environment.

Before asking for CRT strategies used by teachers to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges, I sought to know each teacher's understanding of CRT. Each teacher participant revealed his/her own definition/understanding of CRT while answering the question, "What is your understanding of CRT?" While seven teachers expressed their own understanding of CRT without looking it up, TP6 explained that she

had heard about CRT, yet did not have any understanding of it. She reported, “Honestly, I had to look it up.” Phrases that demonstrated varying understanding of CRT amongst teachers included *meet students where they are at, child centered, asset based, understanding different cultural backgrounds and perspectives, and accepting of different cultures*. Table 6 shows the varying responses on teachers’ understanding of CRT. It was evident that although each teacher had their understanding of CRT, they all wanted the best for their students and applied strategies that enhanced students’ learning. These strategies were shared to answer RQ2 and the themes that emerged were discussed below.

Theme 5 – RQ2: Teachers Find and Use Appropriate Resources for Instruction

The teaching/learning process requires teachers and students to be equipped with the resources needed for students to make progress with their learning. While the issue of lack of resources came up as an instructional challenge in RQ1, teachers also made it clear that they do not just depend on what is provided; they also look for resources that can meet the needs of their culturally diverse classrooms. TP1, TP4, TP5, TP6, TP7, and TP8 all demonstrated that they do not stop looking for and using resources that will promote students learning in their culturally diverse classrooms. To be specific, TP6 made a blanket statement regarding resources, stating, “So I feel like as educators, we need to find material that is like culturally appropriate, as well, that students can connect with.”

Table 6*Teachers' Understanding of CRT*

Teacher Participant	Understanding of CRT
TP1	"Child centered learning – that is it!"
TP2	"To me it means that you know you're teaching to all students - varying learning levels, varying cultures, varying needs and wants. You're trying to be diverse in learning in their backgrounds so that others can be knowledgeable about who they are, where they come from and you know build strength within our classroom, know each other, understand each other more, including things that are going on in the world".
TP3	"No matter who are in the building, our job is to meet them where they're at, understand them, and then push them along their journey gently and lovingly'.
TP4	"I know sort of the key highlights of CRT are often asset-based right? Not seeing things as deficits but seeing them as strengths, honoring the experiences or the context of the students and trying to understand what those are, trying to include a larger community or family, different stakeholders in education."
TP5	"I, I would describe CRT from, I mean, understanding the different cultural perspectives and backgrounds that we all bring to the classroom. So including my own white privilege, male perspective, examining that and how that shapes how I see things in the classroom, and inviting students to ask some of the same questions of their own experiences in the world around them, then I think it is also bringing forward perspectives and resources for the classroom that allows students to see themselves in the material that's being discussed and made relevant for them that learned in the classroom".
TP6	"So I honestly had to look this up, because like, I haven't heard of it. Yeah. So when I looked this up, CRT in the classroom, I realized, like, we're already doing this. Like, being supportive, understanding the curriculum, like identifying students needs, interests, etc."
TP7	"I guess being aware of different cultures and accepting of other different cultures in the classroom is a big thing for me."
TP8	"To me, I guess it can mean many things to me, but understanding there might be sensitivity or there might be, for example, some of our Arabic females, their parents may not even care about their education".

TP1 gave an example that when she is teaching myths and legends from different places in the world under the Greek mythology unit, she uses a collection of books with multicultural content. However, she also explained that she does not have all the resources she needs for students to make connections in their learning. She stated, “I ask the children to find myths and legends from their own homes and interview and ask questions of their parents.” In line with seeking resources that support learning, TP7 stated, “We make it hands on, so we're bringing in the material. So I mean, if it was an example, a hockey stick, then we would have one that we would bring in and just be like, Okay, this is, you know, this is a hockey stick.” TP4 also gave an example for Science instruction and stated, “In Science, when talking about forces, maybe we use a picture of levers.” Because TP4 also wants to bring cultural awareness in her classroom at all times, she stated, “So I guess I’m always trying to find texts or reading materials or examples that are representative of the students’ culture.” TP5 said, “... trying to bring in resources that don't have that white cultural bias that unfortunately is present within the curriculum.” TP5 also shared that he brings in visual resources for visual literacy, like pictures that students can look at and try to understand the perspective. In line with visual resources, TP8 shared that he uses videos to keep his students interested in Math. He stated, “Thinking of being a math teacher, you know, first are Arabic kids, there's lots of different videos that might engage them bit more because the history of numbers--dates back to maybe their country. Lots of visual dictionaries to help with different languages.”

When teachers talked about looking for resources and using them to facilitate the teaching/learning process, they were not only talking about material resources. Human

resource is also an important component of a successful teaching/learning experience. TP7 brought forward the idea of human resource being helpful during instruction by stating, “I think, again, through our professional learning community (PLC) groups, working with other teachers would be the big one. Its two teachers getting together and assisting each other I guess.” TP1 also mentioned that she uses human resource as needed. She stated, “We talk about governments across the world, what makes Canada a place that people want to come and be part of, ...? I’m always open to questions and finding answers, reaching out to the community for support.” TP6 explained that they have DSLA workers who act as middle persons for family school affairs. The DSLA worker could explain to families “culturally how things are here, and then giving us a better understanding of how they do things culturally”.

Theme 6 – RQ2: Teachers Make Connections between the Canadian Culture and Students’ Cultures

Teachers generally try to tap from students’ cultures to make the learning more meaningful. TP5 consistently makes use of diverse stories and diverse perspectives in his lessons. He said,

A lot of times, when I'm introducing things, I really try the best of my ability to look at bringing in diverse stories and diverse perspectives. So when we're studying a story within the context of the classroom, trying hard to bring forward stories that are not just based on Western literature, trying to bring in resources that don't have that white cultural bias, that unfortunately is present within the curriculum.

TP5 was certain that after trying this for a long time, she could say with confidence that tying curriculum concepts to students' cultures helps them understand the work while bringing in multiple perspectives into the classroom. Culture includes language, so TP2 reported that she encourages her students to use knowledge of their first language to gain understanding and meaning of new vocabulary. "Sometimes we have a lot of students that have Google Translate on their phone or on their laptop. I know I have one kid that will often say to me - can I just translate this?" said TP2.

TP1 noted that it is easier to discuss issues with grade 9 students who are "older and able to handle more things like commonalities between what happened with the First Nations and focus on cultural genocide within the First Nations Peoples of Canada". TP1 takes a different approach with younger grades. She explained, "With my younger children, we do a lot of storytelling, sharing personal stories. We talk a lot about what would it be like at my house. We celebrate everything - we celebrate Ramadan, we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate Diwali." TP1 shared the following practical instructional examples from her classroom:

I read *Wonder* with the children at the beginning of the year by Patricia Palacio and I asked them 'so how come there were no children/no boys with turbans in that class? And where were the other children? Where were the Indian children? And the Punjabi children. Then we read some of it and they put themselves into the captives in the book and I asked how could we implement ourselves into this story and not in an authentic way? And so they wrote things like oh well I sat down with mom talking and we argued. I sat down with mom and dad and I had

mom make roti and curry for super and you know that was a really fun thing to do. I try to do that with novel studies. Yeah - we did Nania and I told them we are going to read the book and we are going to listen to the book but we are just going to just ignore the character description of the people and instead of being Lucia- the white girl in 1940, we are going to see her as you - you get to pick the characters that you want to be. And then through Art, through a lot of Art, we're able to look at what the world looks like now as opposed to what it looked like when that book was written in nineteen forty something. And so talking about our similarities and our differences and celebrating those things together has been very helpful.

Theme 7 - RQ2: Teachers Pay Attention to Lesson Planning and Task Design

Visible cultural diversity in the classroom calls for teachers to be intentional with lesson planning and task design in order to meet diverse learning needs in their classrooms. TP1, TP2, TP3, TP4, TP5, and TP7 shared their strategies to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges as it pertains to task design. TP3 pays great attention to task design as a strategy that promotes student learning. She stated, "I think that it comes down to task design, so that students have many ways to access information, as well as share what they've learned". TP3 emphasised the importance of task design when she said, "The task design piece is, in particular, really important that the work we're asking kids to do is broadly accessible, so that they can see the relevance, they can find themselves in it, and that the resources are plentiful, so that it can match their level of language proficiency." Effective task design must take into consideration the language

needs of culturally diverse students in the classroom. TP4 was also in support of task design that makes work accessible for students, adding that she offers multiple entry points in her lessons. TP4 stated, “I would say that for all of our classes, this is for cultural diversity, but I guess this is really more for learning diversity - the idea of multiple entry points.”

TP2 shared that she designs her tasks and plans her lessons in a way that permits her to model a lot in her classes to enhance student learning. She stated, “Modeling a lot is big - so we are using tools, drawing it out - instead of number equations, we draw it out, and model it then demonstrates you know how many you’re taking away or how you are dividing them, you’re making sense of pictures.” TP2 also discussed the importance of designing tasks that employ physical sense in the teaching learning process. “Sometimes we do physical sense - so if we’re doing probability, we might talk about how many people versus how many teachers are in the room ... We really just try to utilize various ways to understand things differently.”

Task design also came up in TP5’s response to how he overcomes cultural diversity instructional challenges in his classroom. He spoke about the importance of using resources with multiple perspectives when designing tasks for his culturally diverse students. TP5 stated,

It is bringing in the current events, it's really trying hard to make sure that the events represent, you know, not just what's happening in North America. But looking at a diverse set of events that, again, maybe students are seeing things that are more closely related to maybe their home, or their experience, or their family

or, or just coming to understand diverse perspectives and diverse issues from around the world.

TP7 was excited about teacher collaboration especially in Profession Learning Communities (PLCs) to discuss and apply effective task design strategies. TP7 highlighted that “through our PLC groups, working with other teachers would be the big one. It's the teachers getting together and assisting each other.” With regards to teacher collaboration, TP3 shared a school wide task design idea that has been helpful in giving every student a voice. They borrow from Indigenous ways of knowing by having class meetings or discussions in a circle. She said, “Sometimes we'll have meetings or discussions in circle, like just borrow from the work that we're doing around Indigenous ways of knowing.”

TP4 talked about another form of collaborative task design in her school, which pre-assessments administered in every classroom. Although she felt that pre-assessments show more of learning diversity related to multiple entry points, she also thought that “pre-assessments for everything for everybody in the school reveals what students understand, their perspective and where they are coming from for a topic.” TP8 was prompted by a follow-up question “Do you do any form of pre-assessments to know where they're at?” to talk about informal ongoing assessments that sometimes prompt him to change his practice. TP8 stated, “I usually do informal pre assessments - and that could just be answering questions on small whiteboards to see 75% of us or 25% of the class are ready to move on. Then depending on that, obviously, it will change my practice.”

Theme 8 – RQ2: Teachers Work to Build Relationships with Students and to Create a Conducive Classroom Environment

Building and fostering positive and healthy relationships came up as a goal on the school development plan (SDP) of most schools. TP6 mentioned that her school is big on this goal and mandates every teacher to consider it as they plan and deliver lessons. TP7 shared the importance of having a positive classroom environment. He stated, “I think part of it is having a classroom environment where, you know, you hope the kids feel safe enough to ask questions, then they don't feel silly because they don't know. And maybe the other kids do”.

TP1 shared that being an art teacher has been helpful in relationship building in the sense that it gives her the opportunity to relate with her students while knowing them better. She stated, “I had the absolute pleasure of being an Art teacher where Art is a universal language and I learned so much from my students through their Art work.” TP2 also builds relationships through her work with students. She shared, “In my classroom if you walked in you would usually see me sitting with various students or walking around to check-in on various students. I have lots of high or low learners. I might be utilizing out loud modeling so that some of my low kids will understand it - hear it, see it several times in different ways.”

TP3 spoke proudly of a whole school initiative called Spirit Buddies. She explained that to build a sense of community in their classrooms in particular, and in the school as a whole, they take on an inclusive activity every morning. She stated,

Every day, ideally, at the very beginning of the day, students gather in small groups of three or four. They're posed a question and they kind of practice through the model of, of, like, indigenous circle, where one person speaks, people listen, they wait their turn, they're not waiting to sort of interject their idea, or make it even conversational message. It's a very sort of like, a structured protocol, with the intent to build community and, and sort of attend to the spirit of children. So I think that that might be like a specific, culturally responsive practice.

Discrepant Finding

The purpose of this study was to investigate cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. A discrepant finding from this study was that each teacher participant in the study confirmed that he/she had not received any formal training on CRT. Although this finding was not reported as a theme in the study since it did not directly answer any of the research questions, every single participant echoed it. When asked if they had received any training on CRT, TP4 responded, "I wouldn't say training - I would say like a one-time PD thing, being part of an ELL teaching group - there is a lot of different one-time things on CRT." TP1 responded to the same questions by stating, "No no - I haven't - I have done a lot on the First Nations, Métis, Inuit (FNMI) work, I've read a lot and continue to try to learn, but yeah - there haven't been or I haven't seen any professional development (PD) on CRT and teachers' practices or learning. I hope that it comes before I retire and but I talk about it wherever and however I can.

It was interesting to note that all teachers expressed their desire to take advantage of such training should it be offered. They reported that training on CRT will be beneficial to getting them equipped and set them up for success as they teach their culturally diverse classes. When asked how she overcomes cultural diversity instructional challenges in her classroom, TP1 quickly pivoted to talk about the importance of training. She said, “I know that we are very focussed on reconciliation at the moment, but I think that's a good springboard into training on culturally sensitive/trauma-sensitive, more sensitive teaching practices.” The importance of training teachers to teach in a culturally responsive manner cannot be underestimated.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the data collection process, transcription of data, and data analysis of participant responses with regards to each of the research questions. The results presented in chapter 4 were premised on the purpose of this study, which is to investigate specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. Using semistructured interviews, I was able to investigate teachers' instructional challenges as it relates to cultural diversity. This study also allowed me to explore how teachers use CRT strategies in their classrooms.

Using thematic analysis, eight themes answering the RQs were identified. While the first four themes answered RQ1 (What are the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers?), the last four themes answered RQ2 (How do teachers use CRT to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges?) The

following themes emerged during data analysis: (a) teachers experience language barriers in large heterogeneous classes, (b) there is sparsity of resources for teachers and students, (c) teachers struggle with keeping students regulated and motivated, (d) teachers struggle with closing gaps in student learning, (e) teachers find and use appropriate resources for instruction, (f) teachers make connections between the Canadian culture and students' cultures, (g) teachers pay attention to lesson planning and task design, and (h) teachers work to build relationships with students and to create a conducive classroom environment. These themes were supported by quotes from the participants' transcripts which were verified by them.

While examining RQ1 data, participants identified language barriers, lack of resources, gaps in learning and mental health issues of students as major instructional challenges they face in their classrooms. Data from RQ2 pointed to the fact that although each participant has their own understanding of CRT, which results in every teacher using their own self-developed CRT strategies, they employ strategies that will encourage students to complete their best work. Teachers gather and use resources that facilitate learning, make connections between Canadian culture and students' culture, design tasks with student cultural diversity in mind, and create a conducive classroom environment for students.

A culturally diverse student body is an important element of schools now. As teachers, participants in the study are expected to meet the learning needs of each student in terms of language learning and content areas. Participants indicated that although they do not have the training and resources needed to meet the needs of students in diverse

classrooms, they continue to work hard in their own little way to ensure students make progress. Chapter 5 will include the interpretation and discussion of the results in relation to the conceptual framework, which is the CRP theory, including elements of the CReP theory. Interpretation and discussion of results in Chapter 5 will also be in relation to the literature review. The limitations, recommendations and social implications are also discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. Using semistructured phone interviews, I gathered the experiences of eight junior high school teachers who had been teaching in highly diverse schools in the Northeast quadrant of Calgary for at least 5 years. Two research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What are the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers?

RQ2: How do teachers use CRT to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges?

Data analysis revealed eight themes. The first four themes answered RQ1. The themes were:

- Theme 1: Teachers experience language barriers in large heterogeneous classes.
- Theme 2: There is sparsity of resources for teachers and students.
- Theme 3: Teachers struggle with keeping students regulated and motivated.
- Theme 4: Teachers struggle with closing gaps in student learning.

The last four themes answered RQ2 and were:

- Theme 5: teachers find and use appropriate resources for instruction.

- Theme 6: Teachers make connections between the Canadian culture and students' cultures.
- Theme 7: Teachers pay attention to lesson planning and task design.
- Theme 8: Teachers work to build relationships with students and to create a conducive classroom environment.

This study helped fill a gap in the research, which was identified by Raisinghani (2019a) based on a national teacher survey during which Canadian teachers identified the concern that student cultural diversity is one of the greatest challenges as they work to provide all students with optimal learning opportunities.

Summary of Findings

All participating junior high school teachers acknowledged that they face cultural diversity instructional challenges in their practice. Teachers shared their experiences related to cultural diversity instructional challenges during semistructured interviews. While all teachers had heard the term CRT, seven teachers offered their own understanding of what it means to them and their respective definitions are displayed in Table 6. One teacher reported that although she had heard about CRT, she did not know what it meant and had to look it up. When asked how participants use CRT to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges, participating teachers shared their self-developed CRT strategies. It was clear that participants wanted all their students to do well, so they worked hard to meet students' needs in a way that made sense to them. None of the participating teachers had received any formal training on CRT; they all desired such training.

Interpretation of Findings

After obtaining IRB partial approval, I proceeded to obtain Community Research Ethics Office approval (CREO Research Project #223) and the CBE's Research Committee approval. I then obtained IRB full approval (Walden IRB # 08-25-21-0758965), which allowed me to start my data collection. I started the data collection process by contacting principals of junior high schools in the Northeast of Calgary to get permission to conduct the study at their respective schools. I conducted eight semistructured phone interviews and culled all findings from these interviews. I compared the eight themes with research about cultural diversity instructional challenges and CRT in peer reviewed literature as well as the conceptual framework.

Four themes emerged from RQ1: (a) Teachers experience language barriers in large heterogeneous classes; (b) There is sparsity of resources for teachers and students; (c) Teachers struggle with keeping students regulated and motivated; and (d) Teachers struggle with closing gaps in student learning. A key finding was that increasing cultural diversity in Calgary classrooms has led to increased instructional challenges including language barriers, lack of resources, lack of student motivation, gaps in learning, and unfinished learning.

A cultural diversity instructional challenge presented as Theme 1 concerned language barriers faced by teachers in large heterogeneous classes. All eight participants recounted experiences of language issues that perturb instruction. TP3 expressed her difficulties to cover curriculum due to the varying levels of language learners in her classroom. She stated, "We do have varying levels of English language proficiency in the

classroom, so some of the topics that we have to take up from the program of studies are really difficult for students to understand.” This result points to the fact that the absence of discourse, which is the development of language through communication (Powell & Cantrell, 2021) becomes difficult when language presents itself as a challenge in the teaching learning process. The absence of discourse therefore makes communication, which is an essential element of student achievement difficult. This chain reaction of the lack of discourse to the absence of communication continues and stops diverse learners from developing a deeper understanding of the content (Gay, 2018; Powell & Cantrell, 2021). Participants reported that the absence of culturally responsive discourse caused by language barriers deters students from engaging in academic conversations, which would normally lead to the transfer of information and increase student performance.

The second finding presented as Theme 2 was a challenge related to the lack of resources for teachers and students. Six of the eight participants expressed the lack of resources needed to deliver curriculum effectively in their culturally diverse classrooms. This result mirrors results from Samuels (2018) who found that although teachers consider the application of CRT strategies beneficial in a multitude of areas, time and resources remain major restraints in the initiative. Teacher participants noted that they lacked resources to meet the needs of all students in their diverse classrooms. They were clear with their message that with teaching being demanding enough even when teachers have the tools and resources needed for the job, it becomes more challenging to teach when there is sparsity of resources. Lack of resources potentially presents teaching as an onerous task especially in diverse classrooms.

Zorba (2020) pointed to the lack of resources as something that contributes negatively to the personal readiness of teachers. Zorba was clear that although teachers often find themselves personally ready to teach in a culturally responsive way, they prefer not to teach in places where cultural diversity is most observable due to lack of resources that reduces personal readiness. Participants in this study felt that the shortage of books, the absence of programming, and the lack of time to work with students in a way that caters for their individual needs are all resource-related challenges that stop them from doing their work efficiently. While TP3 stated, "Again I feel like there is no access to resources that show a balanced perspective," TP4 said, "So trying to find things that are representative of students in my class is a challenge." Participants communicated that they are expected to deliver in a way that meets the needs of every student and to develop programs that will boost students' knowledge. However, they are not provided with all the resources needed to support student learning in culturally diverse classrooms.

Theme 3 states that teachers struggle with keeping students regulated and motivated. Teacher participants expressed their struggles with keeping all students regulated and motivated in their classes as some students had witnessed, if not lived in places and through situations that led to trauma. "Students come from refugee camps and may have a mentality; some students are still shocked about leaving their own cultures and being in Canada," said TP1. Because the psychological well-being of students is directly related to their academics and influences students' success (Bartz and Bartz, 2018), participating teachers expressed that the mental health of students was crucial in keeping them regulated enough and motivated to study.

In addition, six of the eight participants talked of the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of students. TP5 observed, “COVID has made it exceptionally difficult to allow students to engage as effectively.” As she thought about a solution to the student engagement problem, another challenge came up and TP5 noted, “I mean, sometimes things like social media can be places where they can explore some of this, but then my ability as an educator to create and ensure a safe space for the young people, for the students isn't always there.”

When students are intrinsically motivated to study, teachers can also apply extrinsic motivation strategies to get them fully motivated for their studies. Lack of motivation reported by teacher participants as a cultural diversity instructional challenge in this study is in line with the previous research; that academic motivation influences school belonging at the student level (Allen et al., 2018). Allen et al. found that teacher support and positive personal characteristics are the strongest predictors of school belonging and should be encouraged in all schools.

Theme 4 translated as cultural diversity in classrooms comes with the challenge of students having gaps in learning as they try to master the Alberta curriculum in particular and navigate the Canadian classroom as a whole. Teachers identified language gaps as well as subject-specific gaps that they must work with students to bridge. For TP1, closing the gaps in students' learning has always been challenging especially because she “spent a bulk of time trying to teach English while carrying on with Humanities curriculum content for the rest of the students.” This finding is in line with Johnson-Smith's 2020 write-up that the culturally responsive teacher embraces the whole child in

order to reduce the achievement gap. Speaking of discrepancies in language levels as it relates to gaps in learning, TP2 talked about the challenge of differentiation in levels. She stated, “Some students that have just come to Canada, they may have no skills, they may have little skills, it might be very hard to communicate with them.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has also left students and teachers struggling with some unfinished learning. Teachers of culturally diverse classes who sometimes assume that students have previous knowledge of concepts needed to understand a current topic are sometimes up for some surprises. TP6 gave a specific example of a gap in learning that could have been as a result of COVID-19 or simply from the fact that students were not in Canada to learn that concept. While teaching Renaissance in her Social Studies class, she shared that she assumed all her students had good knowledge of ‘expansionism’, but that was not the case. She then shared that making assumptions as to what students may or may not know has not been an effective way to meet the needs of students in diverse classes. Ladson-Billings’ (2021) provided a suggestion on how to re-set and close gaps in learning after the pandemic; she spoke of the need to use the pandemic as a stepping-stone to reconsider how a more robust culturally centered pedagogy can be implemented. Teachers should be ready to pivot and address any gaps and unfinished learning before carrying on with the curriculum, as this will lead to student success.

Four themes, emerged as answers to RQ2: (a) teachers find and use appropriate resources for instruction, (b) teachers make connections between the Canadian culture and students’ cultures, (c) teachers pay attention to lesson planning and task design, and (d) teachers work to build relationships with students and to create a conducive classroom

environment. As RQ2 sought to know how teachers used CRT to overcome these instructional challenges, each participating teacher provided his/her own understanding of CRT prior to giving an example of a CRT strategy they employed in their classrooms. Participant definitions of CRT ranged from simple short definitions like “child centered education” to more detailed definitions like, “being aware of different cultures and accepting of other different cultures in the classroom.” Each participant presented their own definition of CRT (Table 6) as well as their own strategies, which were summarised into the four themes presented above.

To overcome the cultural diversity instructional challenges, participating teachers reported that they find and use appropriate resources for instruction, and this was recorded as Theme 5 in the study. TP6 made a blanket statement regarding resources, stating, “So I feel like as educators, we need to find material that is like culturally appropriate, as well, that students can connect with.” This result explains what Goe et al. (2008) found; that effective teaching goes beyond the teacher spoon feeding students with subject-specific content or measuring student achievement in a single way. Goe et al. made it clear that cultural responsiveness is integral to the “essence” of effective teaching and provided five qualities of effective teachers featuring the quality that effective teachers use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities, monitor student progress formatively, adapt instruction as needed, and evaluate learning using multiple sources of evidence. As human resource is also an important type of resource, culturally responsive and competent teachers believe in every student’s

potential, so they use students' sociolinguistic and cultural backgrounds as resources for new learning (Gay, 2000, as cited in Arvanitis, 2018).

Results from this study also revealed that participating teachers were intentional in their lesson planning, making sure that they made connections between the Canadian culture and students' cultures. Although all eight teachers reported that they had not received any training on CRT, they also reported that they carefully considered the cultural diversity in their classrooms during lesson planning. These results were presented as Theme 6 and Theme 7. TP5 reported that after trying to do it for a long time, she could say with confidence that tying curriculum concepts to students' cultures helps them understand the work while bringing in multiple perspectives into the classroom. This confirms the fact that effective teachers contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic mindedness.

As schools have fast become a platform of learners from multicultural and multilingual backgrounds, participating teachers revealed that they worked hard to build relationships with students and to create conducive classroom environments. This result was reported as Theme 8 and concerned relationship building and classroom/school environment and climate. TP2 shared,

In my classroom if you walked in you would usually see me sitting with various students or walking around to check-in on various students. I have lots of high or low learners. I might be utilizing out loud modeling so that some of my low kids will understand it - hear it, see it several times in different ways.

Relationship building coincides with the finding from Venketsamy et al. (2020) that the learning environment plays a significant role in teaching and learning, with a friendly and conducive environment encouraging students to participate more in classroom activities. TP3 shared a whole school initiative called Spirit Buddies, which was a morning inclusive activity that was used to build a sense of community in their classrooms in particular, and in the school as a whole. Such initiatives in schools also mirror a finding by Allen et al (2018) that teacher support and positive personal characteristics are the strongest predictors of school belonging and should be encouraged in all schools.

Finally, each teacher participant in this study confirmed that he/she had not received any formal training on CRT. Although this finding was not reported as a theme in the study since it did not directly answer any of the research questions, every single participant echoed it. It was interesting to note that all teachers expressed their desire to take advantage of such training should it be offered. They reported that training on CRT will be beneficial to getting them equipped and set them up for success as they teach their culturally diverse classes. The importance of training teachers to teach in a culturally responsive manner cannot be underestimated. This need is justified by Bradshaw et al. (2018) who observed improvements in coached teachers' use of responsiveness to student needs. The above justification lines up with the argument put forward by Forghani-Arani and Bannon (2019) that amongst other factors, teacher quality is arguably a significant factor when it comes to adding effectiveness and meaning to the work that is done in schools. Due to the growing list of expectations from teachers, Forghani-Arani and Bannon concluded that teachers will benefit from being equipped with "relevant

knowledge, capabilities, dispositions, values and skills, such as understanding diversity issues, reflectivity about identities, perspectives and practices, sense of agency and autonomy, empathy and pedagogical judgement, and tact". They suggest that this work must start with preservice teachers being encouraged to consider diversity as an asset.

Limitations of the Study

The first set of limitations in this qualitative study was related to the sample. The first sample-related limitation was the sample size of eight teachers, which is considered a small sample size. This small sample size was not also diversified to include all races as none of the participating teachers self-identified as black. Examining the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers may not have given a broad view of other teachers' experiences with cultural diversity-related instructional challenges in other parts of Canada. It may have also been short of the experiences of teachers who identify as black. A second sample-related limitation was in the restriction of the sample to junior high school teachers in highly culturally diverse schools. As cultural diversity is now increasing at every level of education, the choice of teacher participants from junior high schools might not have painted a clear picture of what could be happening at other levels of education. The last sample-related limitation was the application of the snowball sampling strategy to recruit some participants for the study. This strategy posed the problem of participants being mirror images of one another and not a true variation.

The second set of limitations in this study was related to my own biases. To avoid my own bias as a teacher researcher, I was intentional to address this potential bias by

applying my experience to recognize other teachers' challenges while keeping my own interpretations and ideas aside. I also kept a memo that I used to ask myself questions in the data collection process. The memo helped me separate myself from infusing self-interpretations to participants' responses. All results in this study stemmed from interview transcripts of individual participants as opposed to what I thought or knew as a teacher. I did the interview transcriptions with the help of otter.ai.

In order to decrease the possibility of bias, I avoided using teachers that I work with directly and did not recruit any participants from my school. It is true that as a junior high school teacher, I began the research with my personal knowledge and opinions about cultural diversity instructional challenges and CRT practices that I might have used in my practice. I used a reflexive journal to maintain trustworthiness and to avoid inferring biases. I also increased dependability by ensuring that all documents were securely saved on a password-protected device. As per university policy, I need to hold this information for five years and I have maintained my stand with keeping all information secured and password protected. Transferability was addressed through thick descriptions to ensure that other researchers might be able to replicate the study in other locations. I employed approved research strategies and ensured alignment with the literature review, which supported the interpretation of the findings of the study.

The last limitation to this study was the COVID-19 pandemic. My initial plan was to observe teachers working with students in their classrooms. This would have given me the opportunity to see how teachers apply CRT strategies with their students. With the pandemic, visitors were not allowed in schools and I did not do lesson observations. The

findings reported in this study were from teacher responses shared during semistructured interviews.

Recommendations

This basic qualitative study investigated specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explored how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. Participants acknowledged that they face cultural diversity instructional challenges and listed challenges related to English language barriers, lack of resources, gaps in students' learning and lack of motivation. Participating teachers also explained their own understanding of CRT and were clear that they had not received any formal training on CRT. They however shared what they think their CRT strategies are as they work to ensure every student in their culturally diverse classrooms succeeds.

The findings in this study pointed to the fact that as each teacher understands CRT in their own way, they try to employ self-developed CRT strategies in their own way to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges. The CRP theory including elements of the CReP theory was used as the conceptual framework for this study and can be used for research to affirm whether CRT strategies work well to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges in Calgary classrooms. The CRP theory was a relevant framework for this study and is transferable as was evident in the work of Wachira and Mburu (2019) who applied the CRP theory to their study while exploring CRP and what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher. Wachira and Mburu found that a constructivist approach to teaching and CRT both require continued partnership in the

form of interaction between students and teachers, with social interaction playing a critical role in learning.

My first recommendation is that research that includes participants throughout Canada could be conducted. Investigating the cultural diversity instructional challenges and exploring how CRT is used to overcome such challenges on a larger and wider sample may provide similar results or information on how teachers can best serve their students in culturally diverse classrooms. Chen and Yang (2017) already studied the effectiveness of implementing CRT strategies in an adult ESL classroom and found that the use of CRT strategies sees improvement in students' communication skills. They also noticed an increase in student engagement and active class participation, thanks to the implementation of CRT strategies. More studies at different levels with different age groups could yield results that are beneficial to teachers of culturally diverse classrooms.

Secondly, I recommend that teachers could be presented with professional development opportunities related to using CRT strategies to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges. All participating teachers in this study were clear that they did not receive any training on CRT, but they also went further to express their desire to pursue such training should it be offered. The thirst for training expressed by participating teachers in this study is in line with what Ngo recommended in 2012; that all teachers be offered intentionally planned sustainable professional development opportunities to ensure cultural competence. Ngo's recommendation still holds as universities with preservice teacher programs could use challenges identified and

documented in this study to ensure that cultural competence is integrated in their preservice education and educational leadership programs.

Furthermore, research holds that teachers who thoughtfully reach students by learning about and embracing their cultures while using cultural knowledge to guide instruction typically build their culturally responsive teaching readiness (CRTR) during their preservice years (Karatas & Oral, 2017). A measurement instrument developed by Karatas and Oral worked well to measure the CRTR of preservice teachers and found “personal readiness” and “professional readiness” as factors of CRTR. These factors mirror Johnson-Smith’s 2020 finding that the successful and efficient teaching of diverse students happens when teachers work hard to secure deep understanding of themselves and their students. CRP therefore aims at success for every student, builds bridges between home and school experiences, and focuses on equal education while celebrating diversity (Au, 2011). Cultural diversity instructional challenges and strategies used to overcome challenges reported in this study can create more awareness on CRT, a model of teaching that motivates students in the teaching and learning process (Zoch, 2017).

The third recommendation is that teachers could engage in teaching their students self-regulation strategies and encourage students to use the strategies when they are not motivated to learn. Some school districts are already on this journey as some participants in this study mentioned that a wellness goal was amongst goals in their school development plans. It is also evident that the mental health of students has depreciated, especially post pandemic. Teaching them how to stay regulated will potentially keep them motivated to learn. Ladson-Billings voiced this recommendation in her 2021 work

by stating, “the hard re-set demanded by the COVID-19 and anti-Black pandemics of 2020 require us to engage in CReP that takes into account the conditions of students’ lives these occurrences set in motion.” Re-setting around technology, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, parent/community engagement and students’ regulation will be vital in promoting students’ culture and keeping all students motivated to learn.

The fourth recommendation is that school districts could invest in resources and programs that cater for the needs of all students in culturally diverse classes. This recommendation is extended to include examining curriculum and to confirm the need for professional development and support for delivery in culturally diverse classes. Most teachers often find themselves personally ready to teach in a culturally responsive way, but they prefer not to teach in places where cultural diversity is most observable due lack of resources (Zorba, 2020). In addition, Samuels (2018) found that although teachers consider the application of CRT strategies beneficial in a multitude of areas, time and resources remain major restraints in the initiative. Samuels’ work confirms the recommendation to prepare teachers for the challenges that await them in their culturally diverse classes by ensuring that they have the resources needed for the job. As Goe et al. (2008) found that effective teaching goes beyond spoon feeding students with subject-specific content or measuring student achievement in a single way, they made it clear that cultural responsiveness is integral to the “essence” of effective teaching. Amongst their proposed qualities of effective teachers featured the use of diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities, monitor student progress formatively, adapt instruction as needed, and evaluate learning using multiple sources of evidence.

The last recommendation is to diversify learning by emulating strategies and policies employed by other high achieving nations. This was also recommended by Wiggan and Watson (2016) who made it clear that although “it takes a village” has been used in various contexts, it takes a village to meet the needs of every student, never mind every student in highly diverse classrooms. He then suggested that we emulate the example of high achieving nations, which ensure high-quality instruction and curricular (Finland and Sweden), teacher support and training (South Korea), and culturally relevant lessons for students (Singapore). Following this recommendation by Wiggan and Watson was the 2017 work of Darling-Hammond who found that in order to reach all students in diverse classrooms, there is a move to attract diverse candidates who can bring knowledge of Aboriginal issues and connections with Aboriginal communities and students into their teaching practices. Darling-Hammond’s study highlighted the fact that the teaching challenges posed by higher expectations for learning and greater diversity of learners around the globe will likely be better met if nations can learn from each other about what matters and what works in different contexts.

Implications

This study may contribute to positive social change as applying CRT strategies to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges activates civic citizenship of all students, keeps students awake, and makes them active participants in the fight for social change regardless of their cultures and backgrounds. It may encourage stakeholders in education to find new initiatives to promote teachers’ knowledge of, and application of CRT strategies in their classrooms. Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2010) both

highlighted that an approach to CRT empowers students intellectually, socially, and emotionally by creating a culturally responsive classroom, which affects students through a holistic approach to the implementation of culturally responsive instructional practices. This is in line with Bassey's 2016 conclusion that it is possible to realize educational justice in the field of teaching because in its true implementation, CRT conceptualizes the connection between education and social justice and creates the space needed for discussing social change in society.

Teacher participants in this study outlined cultural diversity instructional challenges they face in their classrooms and explained how they use CRT to overcome such challenges. The challenges they face ranged from lack of resources and gaps in learning to difficulties with keeping students motivated. Positive social change results in the improvement of human and social conditions. As far back as 1937, Dewey proposed that schools are agents of social change. Schirmer, Lockman, and Schirmer (2016) also noted that with schools being agents of social change, it is crucial for students to be immersed in educational practices that enable them to be knowledgeable about the global society in which they live, think critically about their environment, communicate effectively, and feel empowered to take action that will affect social change. Nevertheless, effecting social change cannot be the job of students alone. Although scholars may have many goals to accomplish, a scholar practitioner's goal is to apply knowledge to a real-life situation (Callahan et al, 2012). This study on cultural diversity instructional challenges revealed some information on the struggles of teachers, which is a real-life situation.

Finally, I appreciate the opportunity given to me by Walden University to be an agent of change in Education. As a passionate teacher, promoting a practice that leads to the success of students from all cultures and backgrounds is in line with the three-year education plan of my school district. Carrying out this study is a gateway to getting my voice heard in promoting social change. This research filled a gap in understanding by focusing specifically on cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers in Calgary. This project is unique because it addressed an under researched area of education identified by Raisinghani (2018a) among the many diversity-related challenges teachers encounter in their daily practice. The results of this culture-related study may provide much-needed insights into the awareness of all cultures in a classroom and help develop best practices for teachers, helping teachers create an atmosphere of a respectful learning environment. Insights from this study may aid teachers and other stakeholders in education in identifying and implementing teacher professional development sessions that will promote effective strategies needed for a culturally diverse classroom.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate specific cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers and explore how teachers use CRT to overcome such challenges. Much research has focused on CRT, but research on specific cultural diversity instructional challenges and how teachers overcome them is limited. I interviewed eight teachers to tap their experiences related to the cultural diversity instructional challenges they face in their classrooms. I also

explored what their understanding of CRT was and how they used CRT to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges. All eight teachers acknowledged the existence of cultural diversity instructional challenges and gave specific examples based on their experiences. They then explained how based on their personal understanding of CRT, they applied some strategies to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges in their classrooms. Participants expressed their thirst for more resources and training on CRT that they felt would better equip teachers to teach in a culturally responsive way.

This study was guided by two research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers?

RQ2: How do teachers use CRT to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges?

Eight themes emerged from data analysis: (a) teachers experience language barriers in large heterogeneous classes, (b) there is sparsity of resources for teachers and students, (c) teachers struggle with keeping students regulated and motivated, (d) teachers struggle with closing gaps in student learning, (e) teachers find and use appropriate resources for instruction, (f) teachers make connections between the Canadian culture and students' cultures, (g) teachers pay attention to lesson planning and task design, and (h) teachers work to build relationships with students and to create a conducive classroom environment. While the first four themes answered RQ1, the last four themes answered RQ2. This study is unique because the findings fill a gap in an under researched area of

education identified by Raisinghani (2018a) among the many diversity-related challenges teachers encounter in their daily practice.

As a culturally diverse student body is an important element of schools now, teachers are expected to meet the learning needs of each student in terms of language learning and content areas. Participants in this study indicated that although they do not have the training and resources needed to meet the needs of students in diverse classrooms, they continue to work hard in their own little way to ensure students make progress. The findings could increase understanding of teachers' culture-related challenges and give teachers and stakeholders in education insights on how to train teachers to be more culturally responsive.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Thank you very much for participating in this interview. My name is Lumbesi Amanwi and I am working on a research study at Walden University as part of my dissertation. The aim of this interview is to allow you to expand on some of your thoughts or perspectives as they relate to cultural diversity instructional challenges and culturally responsive teaching. This interview session will provide you an opportunity to speak freely with additional privacy. As an educator, the information you share may help inform the school board and point teachers to where they can gain access to increased support to promote cultural responsiveness in teaching. This information may help leaders and stakeholders in education understand some of the challenges teachers face as cultural diversity is increasing and how culturally responsive teaching could help overcome some of the challenges. I will be taking some notes and also recording the session. This is so that I can go back and revisit the information to accurately capture all facets of your input. The expected duration of this interview is 45-60 minutes.

Let us briefly review some of the ground rules for the interview. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. You do not have to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable to answer. There are no right or wrong answers. This interview is confidential as neither your name nor your school will be included in my report. As a reminder, you have the right to decline to participate in this research at any time. Are you OK if I start the recorder now?

Opening Questions

Please tell me a bit about yourself. Questions a and b are intended for you to confirm your status as a CBE employee teaching in a junior high school with five or more years of experience in a highly diverse school.

- a. Your educational background
- b. Your professional background

Please describe your school and classroom.

- a. Setting (socio-cultural contexts of school)
- b. Grade level
- c. Number of students in the class
- d. Tell me about student diversity within your classroom.

Interview Questions

RQ1: *What are the cultural diversity instructional challenges faced by junior high school teachers?*

1. What are some instructional strategies you use to meet the needs of diverse students
2. What is it like teaching in a class with students from diverse cultural backgrounds?

- a. In what ways is it rewarding? (please give some examples)
- b. What problems do you encounter generally? (please give some examples)
3. How do the cultural backgrounds of your students affect your teaching (how you introduce or teach your lessons)? Please share some particular example(s)
4. What are some instructional benefits of teaching in a culturally diverse class?
5. What are some instructional challenges related to teaching in a culturally diverse class?

RQ 2: How do teachers use CRT to overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges?

6. How do you overcome cultural diversity instructional challenges in your classroom?
7. What are your perceptions of culturally responsive teaching in junior high schools?
 - Please explain how culturally responsive pedagogy is being implemented in your classroom
 - Please give examples of your culturally responsive strategies.
8. Educators might understand culturally responsive teaching differently. What is your understanding of culturally responsive teaching? What does it mean to you? Explain the relevance of culturally responsive teaching in your classroom.
9. Have you received training on culturally responsive pedagogy? What kind of training was it? Was it a one-time training?
10. Are there any other points or ideas you would like to share regarding cultural diversity instructional challenges and cultural responsive teaching?

Closing

Thank you so much for your participation and for improving the quality of my study. I really appreciate the information you have provided. Are there any questions or thoughts that arise from today's session that I can collect or answer at this stage? Should you need to reach me at any time please contact me through my email lumbesi.amanwi@walden.edu or my cell phone at 4038294743.

In the next few days, I will send you a copy of the transcript. If you want to make any alterations, please do so and e-mail it back to me. If there are no changes could you, please also let me know so I can record this as well. I expect that the final results of the study should be compiled and available before the summer of 2022.