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Middle School Teachers' Perceptions of Using Multicultural Literature in Their Classroom to Teach Reading

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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MA, Kennesaw State University, 2015

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Dissertation Submitted in Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The problem addressed in this study is that multicultural literature is not being used consistently to address the needs of the growing diverse population in the local middle school language arts classroom. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' perceptions of using multicultural literature to teach language arts to address the needs of the increasing population of students. The conceptual framework that guided this study was Ladson-Billings' culturally relevant pedagogy and Austin et al.'s ideas about student representation in texts. For this basic qualitative study, I conducted 11 interviews with teachers who are teaching or had taught middle school language arts for more than one year in a southern state of the United States. Participants were recruited via social media and interviewed using Zoom. Open coding and Saldana's method of qualitative analysis were used for data analysis to develop common themes throughout the interviews. The results included teachers' position that in order to address race and racism, teachers must do more than simply use culturally responsive practices. According to the findings, all participants viewed multicultural literature as any informative materials about culture and the people embracing it. The findings also found that teachers felt that they were lacking in administrative training in managing community pushbacks and focused on the integration of activating prior knowledge among a diverse group of learners. This research may positively influence social change by highlighting the importance of using multicultural literature in the middle school language arts classroom to make language arts curriculum accessible to all students, including those with a more diverse background.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to all of the children who have ever struggled to find themselves in the literature being used in their everyday classroom. I would especially like to dedicate this work to my son, Levi and my daughter, Zoë whom I love more than life itself. May you always be able to look into a book and find representation of yourself there so that the world may become not only your playground, but yours to conquer.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Multicultural literature reflects the differing perspectives of various cultures in literature. Each day, the United States grows more diverse and so does the population of the middle school classroom (Georgia Department of Education, 2021). Each student brings their own cultural background, understanding and schema to the classroom. Researchers have found that teachers who connect with this background are able to utilize this background knowledge to help all students connect to the curriculum and meet curriculum objectives (Thomas, 2019). According to Bennett et al. (2021), using multicultural literature to teach reading allows all students to see themselves and the lives of their peers in the books that they are reading in class. This is important because it allows students to engage deeper with the reading instruction due to the opportunity to connect something that may be foreign (reading instruction) with something that is familiar (their culture and prior knowledge). According to Ladson-Billings (2009), students of color have shown to perform inadequately in comparison to their White counterparts. This study was necessary to discover what teachers are doing to teach multicultural literature in middle school and the support teachers need to implement it in their classrooms.

Findings regarding the use of multicultural literature in the classroom may support social change through developing an understanding of how teachers are dealing with intersectionality of systems of oppression between race, class, gender, or religion while also documenting teachers' perspectives on concepts such as bias and stigmas in the middle school classroom. These findings could potentially lead to changes in reading

pedagogy that promotes more equitable access to literature for children of color. This research may positively impact social change by highlighting the importance of using multicultural literature in the middle school language arts classroom to make language arts curriculum accessible to all students, including those with a more diverse background. This study can provide guidance for how teachers are currently using multicultural literature to teacher reading in the middle school language arts classroom. Researchers will be able to use the results of this study to inform best practices in their classroom when using multicultural literature. This study can contribute to understanding the teachers' practices and highlight areas where the school district may make efforts to improve practices for incorporation of multicultural literature. Chapter 1 includes the Introduction, Background, Problem Statement, Purpose of the Study, Research Questions, Conceptual Framework for the Study, Nature of the Study, Definitions, Assumptions, Scope and Delimitations, Limitations, Significance, and Summary.

Background

Studies (e.g., Gabrielsen et al., 2019; Singh et al., 2020) show that it is important for students to connect with the literature that they read. Culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally relevant teaching are all lens used to discuss culturally relevant instruction. These efforts help teachers connect with students' cultural backgrounds. According to Ladson-Billings (2014) students must see themselves in the literature that they are reading to connect and engage with the curriculum. She argued that students of color have historically struggled to connect with curriculum that is not steeped in culture that they can relate to. Ladson-Billings (2009) found that the academic

success of African American students is directly impacted by using culturally relevant pedagogy. According to Sharp and Johnson (2016), culturally relevant teaching refers to the teaching practices that teachers enact to help their students deconstruct and examine the world around them. According to Sharp and Johnson (2016), culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is the idea that students can be equipped to deconstruct and examine the world that they live in each day.

Researchers indicated how CRP can support authentic student connection to classroom learning (see Bishop, 2009; Hernandez, 2022; Walker & Hutchison, 2021). In 1990, Bishop (2009) first introduced the concept of "mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors" in reference to literature and how children view themselves and the world around them. p.. According to Bishop , literature should be used as a mirror in which students can see themselves; a window in which they can look into the lives of others that are different than them; and a sliding glass door in which they can step in and out of worlds in which they are unfamiliar. Bishop also stated that when students are unable to find evidence of themselves and their culture in literature that they read, they begin to believe that they are devalued in the very society that they are living. The premise remains that the learning space must be made culturally accessible for all students and not simply the predominant ones. Bishop explained that many opportunities become available for students from all cultural backgrounds when multicultural literature is used in the classroom. According to Bennett et al., (2021), when students from the predominant culture are exposed to multicultural practices and concepts, an opportunity for empathy and student agency is created and fostered.

Achievement gaps can be found among student demographics. Likewise, the demographic of students diversifies each year. According to the most recent English Language Arts Milestones scores (2020), 17% of White students scored within the distinguished learner level of the Milestones. On the contrary, only 6% of Black students and 7% of Hispanic students scored in the distinguished learner level of the Milestones. A large discrepancy can also be seen between White students who scored within the beginning learner level (11%) and Black (28%) and Hispanic (26%) students who scored within the beginning learner levels. A local achievement gap can be validated within these scores. Austin et al. (2019) found that low graduation rates and achievement gaps exist in underrepresented minority students. Austin et al. also suggested that one way to address student learning and graduation concerns was to revise the pedagogy and faculty practices to include culturally relevant instruction and assessment in teacher education programs first so that these practices may begin to take root in the student classrooms. These practices were found to benefit diverse students in their academic achievement as well as their social health in the classroom (Austin et al., 2019).

Researchers such as Merga (2020) and Sciurba (2015) have shown that multicultural literature leads to higher learning engagement. According to Merga, literacy skill gaps existed among struggling English language learners in the secondary classroom. Merga found that lack of engagement was a key barrier in closing the literacy skill gap. According to Sciurba students tended to be more engaged in the literature in which they could see themselves and their lives. In this case, the literature would serve as a means of self-affirmation to students as they developed and grew in the secondary

classroom. According to Sciurba (2017), students engaged with literature by developing personal meaning from literature. Students develop these personal meanings through empathetic textual relevance (a mirror approach) and sympathetic textual relevance (a window approach).

Collegeboard's Springboard is the language arts and reading curriculum at the local site. Springboard English Language Arts is the curriculum adopted in the county of study. Within this curriculum, over 540 books are suggested as middle school novels of study. Out of those 544 suggested books, only 181 of the suggested books can be considered multicultural. Using Sharp and Johnson's (2016) definition of multicultural literature, multicultural texts, in this instance, can be defined as texts that address concepts and themes that relate to ethnicity, race, culture, and languages. This means that only 17% of the novels of study address the multicultural needs of the students. According to Ladson-Billings (2015), students must see themselves in the text to connect and engage with the curriculum. This study is needed because there is a lack of multicultural literature present within the curriculum at the local site and diverse students are not being given an opportunity to effectively engage with the curriculum.

Problem Statement

The research problem addressed in this study is that multicultural literature is not being used consistently to address the needs of the growing diverse population in local middle school language arts classrooms. The performance discrepancy between students of color and other students further confirms the need to find curriculum pedagogy that supports the reading needs of this. I conducted this study in a large suburban county

school district located in a large southern state in the United States. This county school district will be referred to as "Private County", a pseudonym, in this study. Table 1 represents the demographic changes in Private County over the past six years.

Table 1

Demographic Change in Private *County Over the Past 6 Years*

Race	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Black	*16,867*	*16,825*	*17,033*	*17,236*	*17,546*	*17,498*
	17,189	17,110	17,419	17,532	17,876	18,058
Hispanic	*12,567*	*12,548*	*12,103*	*11,884*	*11,717*	*11,183*
	13,213	13,117	12,681	12,432	12,283	11,700
Pacific Islander	*50*	*54*	*44*	*44*	*46*	*41*
	38	38	29	34	34	33
American Indian	*124*	*119*	*126*	*109*	*107*	*41*
	121	105	108	113	116	33
Asian	*3,223*	*3,219*	*3,167*	*3,088*	*3,026*	*2,928*
	3,373	3,360	3,290	3,178	3,109	2,981
Mixed Race	*2,289*	*2,269*	*2,153*	*2,139*	*2,077*	*2,068*
	2,341	2,331	2,139	2,063	2,060	2,040
White	*19,743*	*19,863*	*20,165*	*20,393*	*20,924*	*21,321*
	21,049	21,139	21,395	21,839	22,230	22,642

Key: *Pink* = Female   Blue = Male

Note. Date taken from Local School Department of Education

Table 1 shows that students of color have increased over the last 6 years. For this study, students of color will include Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, Indian, Asian, and students of mixed race. According to local county records, in 2019, there were a total of 71,095 students of color enrolled in the Private County School District. By 2020, the number of students of color enrolled in the Private County School District had increased

to 71,395 students (Local Department of Education, 2021). This shows a gradual increase

of students of color enrolled in the Private County School District. Table 2 represents the

demographic changes in the United States over the past 6 years.

Table 2

Demographic Changes in the United States Over the Past 6 Years

Note: Data is listed in millions and taken from data.census.gov.

Race	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Black	46.5	45.6	45.1	44.6	40.2	43.6
Hispanic	63.1	58.5	57.5	56.5	55.2	54.3
Pacific Islander	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3
American Indian	43.1	5.6	5.6	5.5	2.6	2.6
Asian	19.9	21.4	20.9	20.1	16.6	16.9
Mixed Race	9.3	7.9	7.7	7.4	9.8	9.4
White	253.2	244.6	197.2	243	233.7	232.9

Table 2 shows that there has been an increase in people of color over the last six years.

According to the United States census in 2019, 140 million people of color were living in

the United States. According to the same United States Census, taken only a year later,

there were now 183.2 million people of color living in the United States. This shows that

there was an increase of people of color living in the United States between 2019 and

2020. Because the population is becoming more diverse, this presents a possible benefit

of using multicultural literature to address the needs of multicultural students. According

to Linder (2021), multicultural literature is beneficial for not only students but their

teachers as well. Linder also stated that multicultural literature can broaden students'
knowledge about other races and ethnicities. According to Ladson-Billings (1994),
students must use literature as a "window" to investigate the lives of others and a
"mirror" in which to see themselves and the circumstances of their everyday life.
Multicultural literature should be introduced early in the academic career of all students.
Latima (2020) stated that it is important for younger students to see students of different
cultures even in their picture books. Yenika-Agbaw et al. (2021) also stressed the
importance of diversity in children's books and picture books by way of appropriating
diversity in the context of positivity and inclusion. According to Kibler and Chapman
(2019), when educators meaningfully pair culturally relevant texts with the needs of their
students, then students are able to use their background knowledge to interact and analyze
the text. Bensalah and Gueroudj (2020) studied the impact of students' cultural schemata
and prior knowledge and found that when teachers activated students' background
knowledge, there was an increase in students reading comprehension ability.

Multicultural education is beneficial to all students in the middle school
classroom and these ideas support the need for the study. McDonough (2016) explained
that the lack of multicultural literature is not a new issue. However, the need for
multicultural literature in the classroom appears to be a prevalent one in today's
classroom. On the local level, a language arts academic coach explained that
inconsistency has been observed regarding the texts and teaching practices used in the
middle school language arts classrooms that do not consistently reflect the diversity of
the students in the classroom. The language arts academic coach also stated that "while

the district literacy team is a huge proponent of diverse literacy, it is not implemented with fidelity- especially in our higher socioeconomic schools." Multicultural/diverse literature is not being used consistently on a local level.

In 2018, Private County School District adopted the College Board's Springboard curriculum to be used in their language arts classrooms. According to College Board (2021), Springboard focuses on student-centered instruction that integrates research-based strategies to help students of all learning levels. I reviewed the number of novels suggested by the Springboard curriculum that qualified as multicultural. Multicultural represents minority students as well as the majority. According to Sharp and Johnson (2016), diverse (multicultural) literature can best be defined as texts that address concepts and themes that relate to a variety of ethnicities, race, culture, and languages. Out of the 544 suggested books, only 181 of the books suggested by the Springboard curriculum were found to be multicultural. This means that only 17% of the novels proposed for the curriculum connect to the lives and conceptual situations of the multicultural students. Int this study, I addressed the gap in practice of the use of multicultural literature in Private County. Because there is a lack of multicultural literature present, diverse students are not given an opportunity to effectively engage with the curriculum.

Within a broader scope, researchers have found that there is a gap in practice regarding the use of multicultural literature. Ladson-Billings (2009) found that there very few African American experiences in K-12 classroom literature which could help improve low-self-esteem and low academic performance among students of color. It is important that students are exposed to texts that they can connect to. Henderson et al.

(2020) found that many classrooms do not have texts that reflect the racial, cultural, and linguistic diversities of the students that sat within them. Thomas (2020) found that in early education, teachers often adapt a color-blind approach to educating students which leads to an absence of cultural-conscious curriculum in the classroom. These studies indicate that there may be a gap in practice regarding the use of multicultural literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' perceptions of using multicultural literature to teach language arts that can address the needs of the growing diverse population of students. This purpose aligned with the problem of lack of multicultural literature because I used this study to explore the lack of multicultural literature being used in the middle school language arts classrooms. According to Ravitch and Carl (2019), qualitative research is rooted in the methodological pursuit of understanding the ways that people see, view, approach and experience the world. Qualitative research is steeped in inquiry. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stated that a basic qualitative approach stems from the genuine interest of the researcher that focuses on phenomenon of choice. Multicultural literature is the phenomenon of interest, and this research study stems from authentic inquiry.

Patton (2015) promoted the importance of remaining flexible in one's research to allow authentic inquiry to take place. Interviews are a primary way to authentically investigate a phenomenon. According to Ravitch and Carl (2019), one of the main sources of qualitative research is interviews. I used interviews to address the previously stated gap in practice. Multicultural literature allows diverse learners to become

immersed in the curriculum of the classroom. According to Linder (2021), multicultural literature has been shown to be important in the learning of diverse learners. This research may also lead to deeper insights into the perceptions of middle school language arts teachers and the different ways that multicultural literature can be used. This data could be used in efforts to improve student reading overall.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided my study:

RQ1: How do local middle school teachers perceive the use of multicultural literature to teach language arts to address the increased diversity in the English language arts classroom?

RQ2: What supports do local middle school teachers think are needed to help them use multicultural literature with fidelity to teach language arts?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guidde the study is the concept of Ladson-Billings' s (2014) culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). Ladson-Billings explained that the purpose of CRP is to make literature and curriculum more inclusive for students from multicultural backgrounds. According to Ladson-Billings (2009), students should use literature as a window to investigate the lives of others and a mirror in which they can connect and see themselves. According to Ladson-Billings, this is important because it allows students to activate their prior knowledge to connect with the curriculum and the learning that takes place in their class.

I used CRP to inform the purpose and problem of the study because it advocates for the use of multicultural literature in the classroom. This effort may support students from all cultural backgrounds in connecting with literature and classroom curriculum. This conceptual framework connects to the problem because it stresses that curriculum should directly connect with students and their cultural backgrounds and experiences.

The CRP conceptual framework relates to the purpose of studying teachers' perspectives about the use of multicultural literature because it may help teachers support students' cultural differences and build on their backgrounds. I chose to do a qualitative study because qualitative study research methods allowed me to understand teachers' perceptions of teaching language arts using multicultural literature and gather more details on the challenges that they may face when incorporating multicultural literature while teaching language arts. A more detailed analysis of CRP is included in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

I have chosen to do a traditional basic qualitative study. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), a basic qualitative study allows a researcher to address a practical problem within the field. As a middle school language arts teacher, the lack of multicultural literature being used in the middle school classroom is something that I experience daily. I conducted 11 interviews for this qualitative study. Guest et al. (2006) suggested that 10 interviews is the acceptable number of interviews when completing a basic qualitative study. According to a Guest et al. , data saturation tends to occur around twelve interviews, even though basic elements of metathemes can be found as early as

the first six interviews. I used using Saldana's (2021) method of qualitative analysis to determine patterns from the data in order to generate themes.

Definitions

For this study, the following terms were:

Bias Awareness: The cognizance of being prejudice as it relates to stereotyping, imbalance and selectivity, unreality, fragmentation and isolation, linguistic bias and invisibility or omission. (Byrne, 2002)

Critical Consciousness: The capacity for students to be able to classify and acknowledge systems of inequity and oppression within their society and devise and take actions against those systems. (Mernick, 2021)

Hegemony: The act of one cultural group dominating another cultural group, often to the point where the dominating group exerts power over the other. (Glăveanu, 2009)

Multicultural literature: Literature where students of color can see themselves in the text (Linder, 2021)

Assumptions

I assumed that the participants in the study were interested in discussing the topic. I assumed that they were forthcoming and truthful in their answers. These assumptions are necessary to the meaningfulness of the study because. according to Ravitch and Carl (2019), interview data can be skewed by several influences, but interest in the topic and honesty in the interviews is at the foundation of credible data.

I also assumed that the participants had heard about multicultural literature and had some experience using it in their classrooms because they work in Private County

and have been trained to use multicultural literature. This assumption is necessary to the meaningfulness of the study because for the teachers' interviews to be significant they must answer from a place of prior knowledge that includes the basic concepts of using multicultural literature in the classroom. Through the research, I assumed that multicultural literature is helpful to all students. This was necessary to the meaningfulness of the study because it reflected the need for the study.

Scope and Delimitations

For this study, middle school teachers who teach in Private County were be interviewed. These teachers were reading and language arts instructors. They were certified in either reading or language arts. Some teachers were certified in both reading and language arts. The participants were not elementary or high school teachers as they do not fit the scope of this study. The participants were not school administrators as administrators were not able to answer the interview questions on using multicultural literature in the middle school classroom from a first-hand experience due to the nature of their job. Regarding potential transferability, I described the research situation thoroughly so that this study's findings can possibly relate to other counties as well.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the participant size pool. While Private County is a rather large county, the participant size pool was limited to middle school language arts teachers who have access to the social media platforms I selected. To add, the participant pool was limited to middle school language arts teachers who teach in Private County. Overall, teachers in Private County have received the same training or type of training

concerning the use of multicultural literature in the classroom. Another limitation of this study is the possible bias of self-reporting. According to Ravitch and Carl (2019), interview participants may fail to report and share details that they are asked about due to the possible fear of being perceived in a negative light. This is exceptionally true when discussing assumed controversial topics such as multicultural literature. To combat this limitation, I built a good rapport with the interview participants and ensure them that their responses will not be shared publicly without shielding their identity.

Significance

This study is significant because it may provide a deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives of incorporation of multicultural literature in the middle school classroom and how they implement it in their classrooms to support students of color. This study may contribute to understanding how well the school districts' mandated practices for incorporation of multicultural literature are being implemented. This study may have a positive effect on social change because it may allow for an understanding of how teachers are currently making the language arts curriculum accessible to all students, including those with a more diverse background. To add, this study may also support understanding regarding reading achievement. This study may also be published and presented to professional organizations, leading to a contribution to the literature.

Summary

Middle school classrooms are becoming more diverse, and researchers stress that the language arts curriculum and the literature used in classrooms need to mirror this increasing diversity. The problem addressed in this study is that multicultural literature is

not being used consistently to address the needs of the growing diverse population in the local middle school language arts classrooms. Students tend to learn best when they can engage and connect to the material and curriculum that they are learning about in class. The purpose of this basic qualitative study is to explore middle school teachers' perceptions of using multicultural literature to teach language arts that can address the needs of the growing diverse population of their students.

In Chapter 2, I provide an explanation of the search strategy for related literature, a review of literature regarding multicultural literature, its use in the classrooms, its possible effect on diverse learners, and its consequential effect on the achievement gap. In addition, an in-depth discussion of the conceptual framework is included in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The research problem I addressed in this study is that multicultural literature is not being used consistently to address the needs of the growing diverse population in a local middle school language arts classrooms. The purpose of this basic qualitative study is to explore middle school teachers' perceptions of using multicultural literature to teach language arts to address the needs of the growing diverse population of their students. This literature review includes Ladson-Billings and Gay's ideas about ways that multicultural literature can be beneficial in making literacy and curriculum more accessible to all students. Most literature points to Bishop's (2009) theory of windows, mirrors and doors which emphasizes the importance of using literature as a window, mirror and/or door for students to engage with the literature that is being used. To add, there is not much recent literature on the perceptions of middle school teachers' use of multicultural literature in the middle school classroom. However, there are some formative research articles Garcia (2019), Smith-Buster (2016), and Usanga (2021) that point to an innovative future where multicultural literature paves the way for making middle school language arts classes more inclusive and impactful. I addressed the gap in practice of the use of multicultural literature and address the lack of research literature regarding this issue.

Researchers suggested that multicultural literature has positive benefits for middle school students. According to Sciurba (2015), students of color tend to gravitate towards books where the characters look like them (the readers). Additionally, Bishop (1990) stated that books play a key role in demonstrating the cultural and historical traditions of

one culture and can often prompt students to compare these traditions to their own:

emulating the "window" effect of using multicultural literature. According to Gay (2015),

culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy is used to expose students to equity practices and

cultures other than their own. Gunn (2016) offered that when students tend to be more

engaged in learning when they are encouraged to participate in meaningful and impactful

experiences that reflect and explore culture as it also promotes civic engagement.

Additionally, Hinton and Dickinson (2005) described how connecting students with

books that interest them can help close the achievement gap. Ladson- Billings (2009)

expressed the need for teachers to start with what students already know and build upon

their existing knowledge.

Chapter 2 includes the literature research strategy used to obtain the research

necessary for this study and the conceptual framework. Additionally, it also includes the

literature found and the connection between the research literature and the conceptual

framework used to organize the study. Chapter 2 also includes a complete and applicable

synopsis of the research literature that provides a foundation for this research topic and

study.

Literature Search Strategy

Most of the research and peer-reviewed articles for this study were found using

the Walden University Library. I searched key terms such as *diverse learners,*

multicultural literature, diverse literature, diversity, culturally diverse literature,

culturally relevant education, teachers' perspectives, middle school language arts,

reading or attitudes or experiences, and *achievement gap*. These terms were searched

both separately and collaboratively. This research strategy allowed me to ensure that I captured all relevant and useful articles surrounding the research topic. The databases that I used to search these terms are as follows: EBSO Host, SAGE Journals, Education Source, ERIC, Complementary Index, Academic Search Complete, SocINDEX with Full Text, Walden University Library Catalog, and Gale in Context. Due to the scarcity of the current peer-reviewed articles specifically related to the use of multicultural literature in the middle school classroom, I used the bibliographic and references material found at the end of each peer-reviewed article to find additional research sources and articles.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework I used to guide my study was the concept of CRP. Ladson-Billings (2009) observed African American students' academic performance reporting disproportionally lower than their White counterparts. From her initial study, she set out to show that there were teachers equipped with teaching African American students at mastery levels. Her research led her to question what was going "right" with African American students rather than what was going "wrong". After conducting several studies with teacher educators, she concluded that culturally relevant teaching empowers students by treating them as if they are competent and capable of learning. Ladson-Billings also explained that teachers should start with what students know and understand foundationally and scaffold their instruction to get students to where they need to be.

Ladson-Billings (1994) suggested that CRP is the idea that there are many different components to consider when investigating student achievement. She found that students are more successful when their cultural identities are validated in the classroom.

Ladson-Billings (1995) identified three main components of CRP: (a) student learning,

(b) cultural competence, and (c) critical consciousness. Student learning refers to the

student's cognitive growth and development along with their ability to use reason

towards problem solving. Additionally, Ladson-Billings referred to cultural competence

as the skills that teachers and other stakeholders use to affirm and support the students'

cultures. She added that critical consciousness refers to the ability to view real-world

issues through the lens of bias awareness. Figure 1 shows a visual presentation of the

three components of CRP.

Figure 1

CRP Components
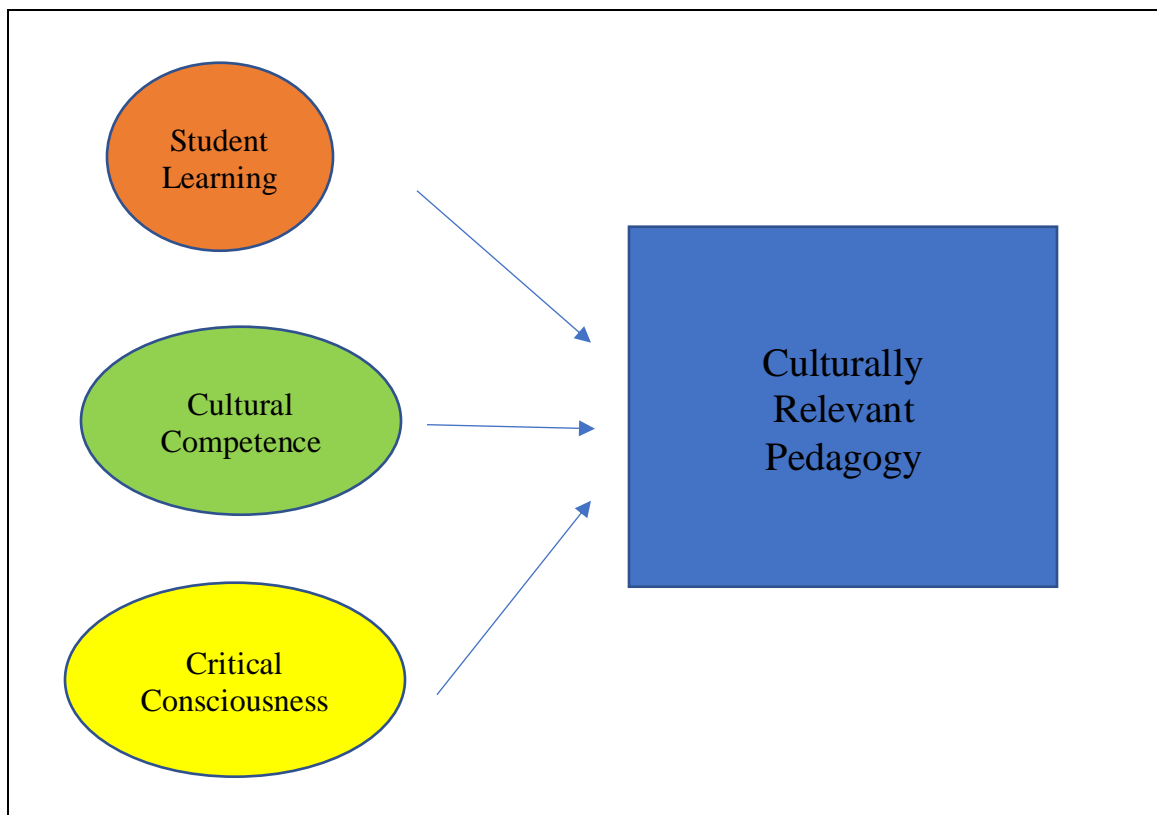
Note. Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). *Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy.*

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Ladson-Billings (2014) explained that the purpose of culturally relevant pedagogy is to make literature and curriculum more inclusive for students from multicultural backgrounds. According to Ladson-Billings (2009), students should use literature as a window to look into the lives of others and a mirror in which they can connect and see themselves. Culturally relevant pedagogy is a commonly used conceptual framework when multicultural literature is explored by researchers. Bishop (2009) used the concept of windows and mirrors to stress the importance of access to learning for diverse people. While this is not new research, it provides a very informative description on how multicultural literature can facilitate learning for diverse learners. According to Bishop, books are meant to be used by readers as windows to investigate other unfamiliar worlds, mirrors to reflect on themselves and their world, and even sliding glass doors to step into worlds that they have never been a part of.

Ladson-Billings' (2009) CRP has been used in several relevant studies. Garcia (2019) used CRP to research activities and ideas that facilitate the learning of adolescents in an ELL classroom. The researcher found that when teachers provide authentic, relevant, and rigorous literacy activities, students can access and use their previous knowledge to show mastery of the curriculum. They also found that students' writing samples improved when students were able to write about their own experiences by

connecting their experiences to the classroom curriculum. Smith-Buster (2016) used CRP to guide their research where they reviewed evidence-based practices that helped teachers use culturally relevant texts in diverse classrooms to help improve the reading outcome of students. They found that when teachers used CRP in the classroom, students were able to connect to the curriculum better and show an improvement in their reading outcome. This shows that.CRP may allow more students to connect to classroom curriculum more closely and authentically.

The notion of CRP as perceived and promoted by Ladson-Billings (2009) has inspired many similar processes and concepts such as *culturally responsive practices, social justice teaching* and *culturally responsive teaching*, as a way of making sure that culture is a part of classroom instruction. CRP and the basic qualitative methodology are aligned due to the explorative nature of qualitative methodology. Usanga (2021) used CRP to guide their inquiry of Grade 3-5 teachers' knowledge and use of CRT strategies during literacy instruction. The researcher found that teachers were inclusive of students' cultural backgrounds but needed support in continuing to use their understanding to develop and implement CRT practices in their classrooms. Safi (2020) used CRP to explore the perspectives of teachers regarding the use of CRP to provide students with effective and engaging instruction. The researcher found that when teachers used cultural competence within their lessons, students were able to use their cultural knowledge to advance their learning. Hendricks (2021) used CRT to analyze the scope in which preservice teachers were prepared to obtain cultural competence and use CRT practices in the classroom. The researcher found that the elementary school teachers required more

support regarding the use of culturally relevant strategies. Owens (2020) used CRT to investigate the instructional practices of elementary content teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) and how the teachers perceive those practices to be aligned with improved ELL academic performance. The researcher found that cooperative learning was a benefit to student learning but needed to be paired with culturally appropriate practices, such as linking content to students' cultural background knowledge and using it to help them acquire new information, to be effective and make learning more applicable and welcoming to ELLs. Love-Kelly (2020) used CRT to explore the challenges of using culturally responsive instructional strategies in urban high school literacy classrooms. The researcher found that teachers were struggling to address the needs of students' multiple learning styles and diverse needs based on a lack of time. The researcher developed a professional development to help support teachers in addressing the diverse needs of students in the urban literacy classrooms. Credit (2020) used CRT to assess the viability of the different strategies that principles have put in place in their respective schools to help improve the academic outcomes of African American male students. Credit found that when coupled with effective classroom management, financial support, mentorship, instructional leadership and corrective action, CRT was imperative to the academic development of African American male students. Both Love-Kelly (2020) and Credit (2020) highlight the importances of CRT in the classroom.

CRP is not a heavily explored concept. Adelani (2020) used CRP to explore the lack of evidence on how world language and English language teachers instruct middle and high school ELLs in a local New Jersey district while using multicultural resources to

supplement the New Jersey core curriculum while meeting the students' cultural and linguistic needs. The researcher used purposeful sampling to find nine teachers as study participants and conducted interviews using open-ended questions. Adelani found that the majority of the libraries accessible in the district of study were antiquated and that the librarians were lacking in appropriate training to support multicultural resources. From these findings, the researcher designed several workshops to help teachers propagate the use of multicultural resources in the classroom and aid in further collaboration among teachers. Abas et al (2021) studied how using multicultural literature paired with geocriticism can help transnational students become more adapted to their new environment. Abas et al. found that while adaptation to the new world around them may be difficult, students benefitted from the curriculum being infused with stories of immigrants and real-life experiences of other migrants. This study may be used to show the importance of including alternative experiences and perspectives to engage students. Booker (2021) used CRP to study the academic achievement gap between African American and White elementary students in mathematics and English language arts. The researcher used purposeful sampling and snowball sampling to gather eleven participants for the study's interviews. Booker found that having high expectations of students was essential when working with African American students. Wicker (2020) used CRP to "examine the perceptions of African American male teachers on the challenges and benefits of teaching at a predominately minority elementary school and to ascertain strategies for recruiting and retaining African American male teachers in the profession"(3). The researcher conducted a case study that contained nine African

American male teachers and deducted that African American male teachers are a necessity within the educational ecosystem as their presence supports the learning of minority students'. CRP continues to support qualitative studies in the world of academia.

Gay (2015) and Ladson-Billings (2014), CRP, worked to develop *culturally relevant teaching*. According to Gay, culturally relevant/responsive teaching practices are teaching practices that are developed from the understanding of equity, equality, and advocacy. According to Chen and Gay (2020) culturally responsive teaching is comprised of four different components: (a) contextualized and culturally based caring, (b) teacher-student communication, (c) a multicultural curriculum, and (d) culturally congruent teaching and learning with multiple forms of assessment. These components work in tandem to create culturally responsive teaching.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables

Multicultural literature is a frequently mentioned topic in the world of K-12 education. Sharp and Johnson (2016) defined diverse (multicultural) literature as texts that address concepts and themes that relate to ethnicity, race, culture, and languages. Teachers and educators abroad have begun to use multicultural literature to expand the horizons of their students. Linder (2021) stated that multicultural literature allows students to understand other races and ethnicities. To use multicultural literacy with efficacy, teachers must be sure that they are using culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2013) defined culturally responsive teaching as the act of employing students' cultural knowledge and prior knowledge to structure the curriculum in a more relevant way. This concept was used to help students connect more deeply to the curriculum while building

on what they already knew. This empowers students and shows potential in the area of student engagement. Culham (2019) suggested that when students of color are provided books where the characters, situations, and concepts mirror their own life, they are more likely to read and engage in literacy. Multicultural literature is an ever-evolving phenomenon and shows evidence of being a possible necessity in today's classroom. The subsections that are included in the review are multicultural literature, culturally responsive teaching, achievement gap, schema theory and literacy, student engagement, and hegemony and multicultural literacy.

Multicultural Literature

The literature on multiculturalism is varied and pertains to different aspects of diversity. According to Ḥaj Yaḥya (2021), multicultural literature is a newer concept that appeared in political and educational settings across the world in the 1960s and 70s. Multicultural literature is a form of access for students of color. According to Sharp and Johnson (2016), diverse (multicultural) literature can best be defined as texts that address concepts and themes that relate to ethnicity, race, culture, and languages. However, the concept of multicultural literature has begun to morph into a more wide-spread idea. Garrison et al. (2014) stated that several other topics such as LGBTQIA, gender, disabilities, religion, socioeconomic status, dialect variances, and differences in family structure have expanded the scope of this phenomenon as well. The expanding idea of multicultural literature offers the opportunity for more ethnic concepts to be explored. However, the current study will only be confined to multiculturalism based on racial and ethnic diversity in order to give focus and specificity to the exploration of the perceptions

of middle school teachers regarding the use of multicultural literature to teach language arts that can address the needs of the growing diverse population of students.

Diverse representations in the classroom are often lacking (Casto, 2020; Chen & Gay, 2020; Thomas, 2020). Chen and Gay (2020) stated that multicultural literature is needed because oftentimes the mainstream curriculum does not offer adequate representation of ethnic and diverse concepts. This may stem from a lack of expertise in the area of teaching multicultural literature or fear of inadequacy or judgment. Casto (2020) found that while many preservice multicultural education teachers are reluctant to discuss controversial or political topics related to diversity, power, and privilege, they also realize that it is important to start exploring multiple perspectives and viewpoints as early as elementary school. While conversations discussing diversity, power, and privilege may be controversial for some teachers to discuss, it may be hazardous to student learners. According to Thomas (2020), "early childhood teachers too often favor the sentiments of the color-blind approach, a philosophical and basic approach to educating that intentionally ignores racial differences rather than combating racial injustice and racism by using a color-conscious approach."(9). Multicultural literacy has the potential to be a catalyst for social change in schools across the world.

There are many benefits of using multicultural literature in the classroom. According to Dillon et al. (2020), children's literature plays a key aspect in the development of children's literacy skills. This suggests that it is important to introduce multicultural literature as early as possible in the classroom environment. According to Linder (2021), multicultural literature allows students to expand their understanding of

other races and ethnicities. By using literature with multicultural concepts and characters, students can build upon what they already know about races and ethnicities that are not their own. Rodgers (2020) examined how using multicultural literature affected the cultural awareness of 11 students of the dominant (White) culture. The researcher found that using multicultural literature in the classroom encouraged students of the dominant culture to think critically about social issues faced by people of color. This study is different from many of the other studies presented because while it studied the use of multicultural literature in a classroom setting, Rodgers specifically studied the effect that the use of multicultural literature may have on White student. The results of this study suggested that the use of multicultural literature was beneficial to all students and not just students of ethnic background. Choo (2020) stated that multicultural literature affords the students the opportunity to explore global issues and concepts. By using such diverse literature as a window into someone else's life, students can explore the norms and concepts in cultures that are different from theirs.

To synthesize the above research about what is known on the topic of multicultural education is that multiculturalism is a relatively newer concept that has been applied in educational setting (Haj Yahya, 2021). Past research also indicated that exposing students to diverse perspectives is beneficial to their intellectual growth (Dillon et al., 2020; Rodgers, 2020). More specifically, exposure to multicultural education is beneficial in expanding student's ability to understand global issues and racial diversity (Choo, 2020; Linder, 2021). One issue that is controversial is the large scope of multiculturalism, which can encompass different aspects of diversity in terms of race,

gender, socio-economic status, or political views (Garrisson et al., 2014). Another issue is that diverse representations in the classroom are often lacking (Casto, 2020; Chen & Gay, 2020; Thomas, 2020). What remains to be known about multiculturalism are the perceptions of middle school teachers regarding the use of multicultural literature to teach language arts that can address the needs of the growing diverse population of students.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Connecting students to their cultural background is essential to student learning. Author Gay (2013) defined culturally responsive teaching as the act of employing students' cultural knowledge and prior knowledge to structure the curriculum in a more relevant way. Gay (2013) explained that the initial focus was on culturally responsive content and has since advanced to focusing on shifting teachers' concentrations to connecting students to the curriculum through their teaching practices -hence culturally relevant teaching. Gay (2002) explained that the key to using culturally responsive teaching is identifying the strengths and weaknesses in multicultural curriculum and leverage them to the needs of students in the classroom setting. This journal article is different from other journal articles because is connects the idea of culturally responsive teaching to the use of multicultural literature in the classroom. Gay (2002) introduced the concept of culturally responsive teaching to communities where teachers work collaboratively to use culturally responsive practices to address students' needs within cross-curricular subjects.

Culturally responsive teaching is often a reflection of the backgrounds of teachers. For instance, high culturally responsive teaching is highly congruent with teachers'

cultural diversity beliefs (Civitillo et al., 2019). In one qualitative study involving urban teachers, Bonner et al. (2018) found that teachers are committed in providing culturally responsive teaching, that they are aware of its implementation, and the benefits to students in terms of addressing their needs. Larson et al. (2018) also found that culturally responsive teaching is positively related to the successful behavioral management of teachers in the classroom.

Using narrative inquiry, Lobato-Creekmur (2021) investigated the culturally responsive teaching methods of three K – 8 teachers to further understand the implications of how the absence of race or racism can influence teachers and their students. The researcher found that a teacher who is using culturally responsive teaching strategies may not necessarily address race and racism. Lobato-Creekmur also found that, overall, teachers have differing levels of comfort when discussing race and racism within their classroom. This study differs from other studies discussed in this literature review, because the results implicated that in order to address race and racism, teacher have to do more than simply use culturally responsive practices. Rosenow (2020) implemented a multi-case study to research how three English language arts teachers used culturally relevant and responsive teaching practices to enhance their classroom instruction. The researcher found that teachers needed to be given the autonomy to embed culturally relevant teaching practices in their curriculum. One strength of this study is that it demonstrated that culturally relevant teaching practices are most effective when they are immersed into the already established curriculum. This extended the academic conversation around culturally relevant teaching because it directed the discussion

towards how teachers should use culturally relevant teaching practices in the classroom rather than simply discussing its importance. Also looking CRT and supportive classroom practices, Rosenow (2020) found that sometimes county-supported trainings can be found to be inadequate in their efforts to prepare teachers to use culturally relevant teaching practices in their classroom. These practices help culturally diverse students connect to the curriculum and grow academically.

To synthesize the above research what is known on the topic of culturally responsive teaching is that teachers recognize the benefits of culturally responsive teaching to students (Bonner et al., 2018; Gay, 2013; Larson et al., 2018). Other main points can be summarized as culturally responsive teaching being dependent on the extent to which teachers value diversity (Civitillo et al., 2019). One issue that is controversial is that culturally responsive teaching does not always involve race or racism (Lobato-Creekmur, 2021; Rosenow, 2020). What remains to be known in this topic is middle school teachers' perceptions of successes and challenges they may have had implementing CRP.

Achievement Gap

Achievement gap can best be described as the gap in academic performance between marginalized students and their non-marginalized peers. It is important to consider this concept when exploring the use of multicultural literature because scholars are still striving to solve the achievement gap problem and multicultural literature may prove to be part of the resolution. Certain factors can help when working with students who are negatively affected by the achievement gap. Sohad et al., (2020) stated that a

supportive social climate influences how well marginalized students retain information. This means that the more inclusive and supportive an environment is, the more likely marginalized students are to retain the information that is being taught and help students feel more supported in an academic setting. According to Hendricks (2021), the racial achievement gap has been a topic of research for over 30 years. Author Ladson-Billings (2009) highlighted the disproportionate achievement gap between African American students and their White counterparts due to the lack of culturally relevant instruction. Austin et al. (2019) explained that culturally relevant pedagogy can be used to reduce the achievement gap between underrepresented minority groups and their White counterparts. Hendricks explored the ineffective use of culturally responsive teaching strategies and how they may have contributed to the long-standing academic achievement gap between Black and White students in English language arts (ELA) and math performance as well as in graduation rates by interviewing six K-12 teachers and conducting a self-audit. Hendricks found that the elementary school teachers required more support regarding the use of culturally relevant strategies. In response, Hendricks (2021), developed a professional development segment that addressed appropriate use of culturally responsive teaching and found that using culturally responsive teaching strategies in the classroom can promote cultural competence among teachers through classroom observation; Improvement of CRT can help students feel accepted and may have an influence on closing the racial achievement gap. which makes students feel more accepted and supports the closure of the racial achievement gap.

Some researchers have demonstrated that race plays a role in the achievement gap. Hanushek et al. (2019) studied test scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) over a 47-year period and found that the racial achievement gap is still very much present. Like the other studies, this study acknowledged that there is still a racial achievement gap. Conversely, this study's approach inquires why the achievement gap persists. Bowman (2018) studied children of color in an academic setting and found that while there were several types of factors that influenced the achievement gap between children of color and their peers, the achievement gap is exacerbated by specific social factors such as racism and inequality. This study is similar to many other studies because it studies the learning factors of children of color. However, this study is different because it considers concepts of basic child development and how it may play a role in a child's overall ability to learn. In the peer-reviewed journal, *Voices in the Middle,* Hinton and Dickinson (2005) described how connecting students with books that interest them can help close the achievement gap. Based on their observation of the middle school classroom today, they explained that students gain the most from curriculum that is directly related to their cultural experiences.

Promoting multicultural literature directly supports engagement and addresses the achievement gap in multicultural students. Hinton and Dickinson (2005) also stated that student achievement improves for students of color when they are taught using culturally relevant curriculum. du Plessis (2019) studied three secondary schools in South Africa using focus groups and their efforts to close their achievement gap while sustaining their

success over time. du Plessis found that when inequality can be found in the formative learning years of a student, the achievement gap increases in the student's later years of learning. du Plessis also found that educational leadership plays a key role in closing the achievement gap. This study is similar to aforementioned studies because it studies the achievement gap in secondary students. On the contrary, the approach to this study is different from the previously presented studies, because it expounds upon how to achieve success in closing the achievement gap.

To synthesize research about the achievement gap, researchers continue to report an achievement gap exists based on race, with minorities performing lower that their White counterparts (Bowman, 2018; du Plessis, 2019; Hanushek et al., 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Sohad et al., 2020). Other researchers stress that culturally responsive teaching and effective educational leadership are critical to address this problem (Hinton & Dickinson, 2005; du Plessis, 2019). One issue that is controversial is how teachers can be actively supported in the implementation of culturally responsive teaching as a way to solve the achievement gap (Hendricks, 2021). What remains to be known about the achievement gap are the perceptions of middle school teachers regarding the use of multicultural literature to teach language arts that can address the needs of the growing diverse population of students, including the need to close the achievement gap among minority students.

Schema Theory and Literacy

Schema theory has been found to be an important aspect of students' endeavors to retain new information when reading; Schema theory is a tool for reading

comprehension. According to Rivadeneira-Barrieo (2020), schema theory can best be described as the organization of new information into units of knowledge based on previously acquired understanding. Schemas give structure and system to information, which could aid learners in problem-solving when engaging in reading activities (Marshall, 1995). As an important part of comprehending what they read, students develop new understandings based on their previous knowledge or schema, which is linked to their cultural experiences.

Schema theory is a tool for reading comprehension. Jaafar (2020) studied how readers process literary language using schema theory to interpret the text that they are reading. Eman Adil Jaafar found that a reader's perception hinges on their existing schema built from the world around them. Malikhatul Lailiyah et al. (2019) studied the role of EFL students' background knowledge when practicing reading comprehension. Malikhatul Lailiyah et al. stated that it is imperative for students to use their background knowledge to fully comprehend a text. Malikhatul Lailiyah et al. found that using pre-reading strategies, such as pre-teaching vocabulary words, offering pictorial context, and using pre-reading questions, students are able to better comprehend the text.

Schema theory suggests that when students were able to connect new material to previously acquired knowledge, they may be more likely to comprehend the new material. Schema theory also explains why CRP helps students better understand new information. Almaguer (2021) highlighted the significance of culturally relevant literacy practices as a way to validate the cultural identities of minority students, which facilitates the supportive power of read aloud for language and literacy development. However, the

implementation of such practices remains unclear as evidenced by the limited literature on this particular issue (Almaguer, 2021; Freeman-Green et al., 2021).

To synthesize, what is known on the topic of schema theory is that schemas aid reading comprehension (Jaafar, 2020; Malikhatul Lailiyah et al., 2019; Marshall, 1995; Rivadeneira-Barrieo, 2020). Other main points can be summarized as the cultural backgrounds of students inform their schema (Almaguer, 2021). One issue that is controversial is the continued lack of specific practices that link culturally relevant pedagogy to reading techniques intended for minority students who are struggling academically (Almaguer, 2021; Freeman-Green et al., 2021). What remains to be known about culturally responsive teaching is how to help teachers be more comfortable with incorporating ideas of race and ethnicity in reading instruction using the lens of schema theory.

Student Engagement

Student engagement is the key to helping students comprehend and understand the curriculum. While studying potential classroom stressors in 40 Dutch secondary teachers, Junker et al. (2021) discovered that low student engagement is a problem. While this study is similar in topic many articles that will be presented in this section, this study is different because the researcher did not intend to discover student engagement as an issue, but rather discovered it as part of their data analysis. Gullapyan (2020) conducted a qualitative study that consisted of 15 K-12 teachers. The researcher found that to facilitate student engagement, teachers must pair evidence-based practices with insightful instruction. Thakurta (2021) studied eight middle and high school students in a summer

literacy program and explored how authentic literacy practices helped to engage and empower students in civic justice. These authentic literacy practices are best paired with multicultural literature when engaging diverse students. In this case, authentic literacy practices are practices that focus on students making real connections to the literature that they read. Thakurta and Gullapyan's studies offer insight into how teachers might use multicultural literature to engage multicultural students. While Gullyapyan's study focused on STEM instruction and using evidence-based practices to aid comprehension, Thakurta's study specifically indicated how authentic literacy practices and multicultural literature work conjointly to engage multicultural students. Ford et al. (2019) studied the use of bibliotherapy as a means to support the learning of gifted Black girls of all ages. For this study, bibliotherapy can best be described as reading that uses a form of therapy to understand the surrounding world, push through tough circumstances, or find a solution to a problem that one is facing. Ford found that the use of multicultural literature as a means of bibliotherapy for gifted Black girls increases their motivation and engagement across the board through increasing their sense of self-efficacy. In this case, self-efficacy can best be described as a person's ability to complete tasks based on a pre-determined level of achievement.

The need to teach multicultural literature responsibly falls upon the classroom teacher. Merga (2020) surveyed 315 secondary teachers who work in mainstream classrooms to learn more about their experience with teaching second-language learners in mainstream contexts and found that students who struggle with literacy are also students who struggle to engage in literacy. Gunn (2016) conducted a case study where

she investigated 23 preservice and in-service teachers' experiences while they participated in a multicultural children and young adults' literature course and found that when teachers adopted a multicultural approach in their classrooms, students were provided the space to explore their personal views and perceptions of the world. Gunn offered that students tend to be more engaged in learning when they were encouraged to participate in meaningful and impactful experiences that reflected and explored culture as it promotes civic engagement. For example, Bedard and Fuhrken (2019) studied the use of multicultural literature in a seventh-grade middle school classroom and found that students were more engaged when they were able to reflect and connect more deeply with the multicultural text used in the study when their instruction was paired with multiple opportunities to reflect on what they learned and demonstrate mastery with creative methods of assessment such as poetry and writing reflections.

Multicultural literature can potentially serve as a catalyst for constructive conversations that may support social change. Rodesiler (2018) stated that when teachers use multicultural literature that discuss controversial topics such as stereotypes and racism in the classroom, students are oriented to examine how texts progress or disturb the power relations that provoke injustices and inequities. Using multicultural literature in the classroom cultivates analytical thinking in the classroom which may then be translated to actions outside of the classroom. Painter-Davis (2018) argued the importance of dissecting prominent narratives that stick to monolithic characterization of black America as this practice offers people the opportunity to challenge mainstream

views and opinions regarding the black community. It is important that all students are offered the opportunity to engage with multicultural literature.

Additional studies about teacher education provide a broader picture of challenges addressing diverse learners' needs and desired engagement. Riley (2019) researched the impact of multicultural literature on teacher racial identity and minority student sense of belonging by conducting a ten-week observation study. The researcher concluded that when multicultural literature was not used in the classroom, students missed the opportunity to engage in rigorous and stimulating discussions and authentic learning experiences. They also miss the opportunity to engage deeply with other cultures and learn more about them.

Using multicultural literature can also improve the reading skills of students of color. Peterz-Dent (2021) studied the influence of multicultural literature on students of color in the classroom. Peterz-Dent found that using multicultural literature in the classroom can help increase the reading stamina, fluency, and comprehension of students of color. Kapoyannis (2018) studied how 11 teachers worked to support student engagement with the literacy instruction of 28 students who were trying to learn English. The researcher found that there is "a positive impact" on student engagement when the students' linguistic and cultural needs are met.

When rigid norms of literacy practices, such as sight reading, are challenged, a possibility for advancement and development are proposed in the scope of engaging students of color. Vehabovic (2021) studied how translingual students of a diverse ethnic background might respond to multicultural literature. Vehabovic found that even students

who do not speak English as their first language were able to connect to multicultural literature on a deeper level with instructional support. In a peer-reviewed article, Culham (2019) stated that when students of color are provided books where the characters, situations and concepts mirror their own life, they are more likely to read and engage in literacy. Culham (2019) also added that non-diverse students benefit from multicultural literature because it allows them to look into the lives of others who come from a different background than their own. Therefore, appropriate use of multicultural literature in the classroom may lead to higher learning engagement.

To synthesize research about student engagement, what is known on the topic of student engagement is that students are not engaged with learning (Gullapyan, 2020; Junker et al., 2021). Another main point that was found from past research is that multicultural literature can enhance the engagement of students in the classroom, particularly students of color (Bedard & Fuhrken, 2019; Culham, 2019; Ford et al., 2019; Kapoyannis, 2018; Peterz-Dent, 2021; Thakurta, 2021; Vehabovic, 2021). Another main point is that the adoption of multicultural literature in classroom depends on the teacher (Bedard & Fuhrken, 2019; Gunn, 2016; Merga, 2020). Multicultural literature can potentially serve as a catalyst for constructive conversations that may support social change (Painter-Davis, 2018; Rodesiler, 2018). One issue that is controversial is that despite the benefits of multicultural literature in the classroom, many teachers do not use this strategy to enhance the engagement of their students (Riley, 2019). What remains to be known about student engagement is the perceptions of middle school teachers regarding the use of multicultural literature to teach language arts that can address the

needs of the growing diverse population of students, including how this strategy can enhance student engagement.

Hegemony and Multicultural Literacy

Hegemony is the practice of suppression by a dominant group of people. Historically speaking, Glăveanu (2009) defined the concept of hegemony as when a group of individuals suppresses other groups of individuals. According to Allen (2018), when hegemonic practices become the norm in an educational space, multicultural practices may become stifled and consequently deemed impractical. This can be counterproductive to a diverse student's learning. Daniel and Burgin (2021) studied 96 Guatemalan teachers and their perceived ability to advocate within their schools for multicultural literature and instruction. Daniel and Burgin concluded that students' education is directly influenced by the political views and actions of the predominant culture due to the predominant cultures' ability to dictate what curriculum teachers teach and the privilege that the predominant culture uses to direct the curriculum itself. This example of hegemony can isolate multicultural narratives, which dangerously excludes a specific population from engaging with the curriculum. Badrkhani (2018), a researcher at Islamic Azad University of Shiraz, highlighted how multicultural education and practices can help a person living in a hegemonic environment interact and engage with their peers and the surrounding environment. Kibler and Chapman (2019) found that when teachers use culturally relevant texts, students are more likely to be more engaged in terms of having more positive attitudes about reading and fostering love for reading. Bickford and Bickford (2021) conducted a study in a 7th grade middle school classroom using the

inquiry design model where the teachers used juxtaposed perspectives to challenge students' understanding of the perceived villains and heroes of history. The researchers found that it was important for teachers to consider how their curriculum is postured and be mindful of how the presentation of a curriculum or topic of study may influence students' ability to connect and analyze it through a non-biased lens. Bickford and Bickford also explored different modes of assessment that allowed for critical thinking when working with multicultural literature. These modes of assessment included text-based writing, meme creation activities, artistic symbolism narratives, close reads, and group narrative sharing. These methods can challenge hegemony by offering students of color ways to demonstrate mastery through the study of perspectives that mirror their own and the flexibility to present their knowledge in ways that support their cultural background.

While multicultural literature and practices are beginning to increase, they still are not readily available in educational settings. Cruz (2019) investigated the intentional integration of diversity ideals in academic libraries in the Association of College and Research Libraries and the library profession by reviewing the lack of diversity in literature that stems from the lack of librarians from diverse ethnic background. The researcher concluded that the scarcity of diversity in literature is a systematic plague that does not simply appear, but rather is built, whether that be intentionally or unintentionally. Cruz demonstrated that it is important for diversity to be evident in not only the literature found in libraries, but also the staffing, collections, and services offered within the Association of College and Research Libraries to support inclusion.

Ethnocentrism is the concept of viewing one's own group or ethnicity above others. Wagner (2021) defined ethnocentrism as the inclination for people to put their own group at the center of observation as opposed to others. Wynter-Hoyte and Smith (2020) studied the relationship between teachers and their ability to incorporate African Diaspora literacies in a first-grade classroom. Wynter-Hoyte and Smith found that by using African Diaspora literacy paired with Afrocentrism, students were able to build more community in the classroom and develop more positive linguistic identities. Tezera (2020) studied the current educational practices from a multicultural perspective in secondary schools in Ethiopia. Tezera found that while there is sufficient knowledge of multicultural literature, participants found that it is not practiced consistently in the classroom largely due to ethnocentrism.

Many educators select their classroom literature based on literature awards and literature award reading lists. Koss et al. (2017) studied the cultural representation of Caldecott winners. The Caldecott medal is awarded to books that are named the best illustrated book of the year. Koss et al. found that of 300 Caldecott winner and honor books, White illustrators dominated the Caldecott book winners. The researchers also found that only 5.0% of the Caldecott medals were won by Black authors, only 1.5% of the Caldecott medals were won by Latinx authors and only 3.2% of the Caldecott medals were won by Asian authors. The researchers concluded that the problem of lack of multicultural representation of winners was the reason for the deficit of diverse characters in the books that have earned Caldecott medals. If diverse narratives of equal quality to their White counterparts are not selected as winners of literature awards, it is possible that

they may not have the opportunity to be used in educational spaces. McDonough (2016) explained that not using diverse texts in the classroom has an effect on both the marginalized and diverse population and the hegemonic and dominant culture present. Hegemony is an issue in the landscape of multicultural literacy.

To synthesize what is known on the topic of the application of culturally relevant pedagogy is that hegemony and ethnocentrism stifle diversity and multiculturalism in education (Allen, 2018; Daniel & Burgin, 2021; Glăveanu, 2009; Tezera, 2020). Another main point that was highlighted in the literature is the continued lack of access to multicultural literature in educational settings (Cruz, 2019; Koss et al., 2017), which continues to affect marginalized groups (McDonough, 2016). One issue that is controversial is how hegemony and ethnocentrism can be addressed so culturally relevant pedagogy can flourish (Badrkhani, 2018; Bickford & Bickford, 2021; Daniel & Burgin, 2021; Kibler & Chapman, 2019; Tezera, 2020; Wagner, 2021; Wynter-Hoyte & Smith, 2020). What remains to be known about culturally responsive teaching are the perceptions of middle school teachers regarding the use of multicultural literature to teach language arts that can address the needs of the growing diverse population of students, including in school districts predominated by White students.

Summary and Conclusions

This literature review indicates that literature should be used as a window, mirror and door for not only multicultural learners, but learners of all backgrounds. The research presented in this literature review for this study shows the foundation of multicultural literature and its influence on student success in the classroom environment. In addition,

CRT offers students the opportunity to connect their prior knowledge and cultural background to the concepts and topics that they are learning about in class. Using the concept of schema theory as a model, studies show that reader's perceptions are based on what they already know and understand. Studies have also alluded to the idea that the use of multicultural literature in the classroom may assist in closing the academic achievement gap due to its ability to enhance student engagement. The idea of hegemony and its effect on the use of multicultural literature in the classroom is also discussed.

While these studies show the foundational concepts of using multicultural literature and the possible benefits of using multicultural literature in the classroom setting, no study focuses on teachers' perceptions on the use of multicultural literature in the middle school classroom. This study will contribute to filling in the gap in literature because it is possible that the results of the study could help teachers begin to feel more comfortable using multicultural literature more consistently in the classroom and more voices will begin to be heard across the literacy instruction landscape. Chapter 3 includes an explanation of the research method that will guide the current study and also addresses how the methodology will be used to ensure that the research is trustworthy and ethical

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Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' perceptions of using multicultural literature to teach language arts to address the needs of the growing diverse population of students. Chapter 3 includes information on the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher and overall methodology. This chapter also includes information regarding participant acquisition, the plan for data collection and analysis, and an exploration in ethical procedures surrounding this study.

Research Design and Rationale

The phenomenon of study was the use of multicultural literature in the middle school classroom. The problem was that that multicultural literature is not being used consistently to address the needs of the growing diverse population in the local middle school language arts classroom. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' perceptions of using multicultural literature to teach language arts to address the needs of the increasing population of students. The following research questions that were used in this study:

RQ1: How do local middle school teachers perceive the use of multicultural literature to teach language arts to address the increased diversity in the English language arts classroom?

RQ2: What supports do local middle school teachers think are needed to help them use multicultural literature with fidelity to teach language arts?

According to Ravitch and Carl (2019), qualitative research begins with a problem and is an iterative process of investigation that helps the researcher arrive at an overall

understanding. I conducted a qualitative study using a basic qualitative research design to address the research questions. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stated that basic qualitative studies should originate from genuine inquiry; meaning that a study should be based in the organic need to find out more information about a phenomenon.

Although there are many different types of qualitative research approaches, such as case study, ethnography, phenomenology, narrative, or grounded theory, it is important to analyze each approach carefully to select the best approach for the study. Creswell and Creswell (2017) stated that narrative methodology is best used when there is a continuation of engagement with study participants through a series of interviews. Narrative methodology was not appropriate for this study, because the intention of the study was not to compile data based on multiple articulated events. Creswell and Creswell (2017) also offers that ,like narrative methodology, phenomenology methodology focuses on the lived participants of participants, it is usually coupled with multiple interviews . This approach would not work for the current study, because I would only conduct one round of interviews. Corbin and Strauss (2014) stated that grounded theory methodology would be best used if the purpose of the study were to develop a new theory based on the phenomena of study. Grounded theory was not appropriate for this study because my intent was not to develop a new theory. According to Atkinson et al. (2001), ethnography methodology focuses heavily on the observation of study subjects in a designated environment. Ethnography methodology was not appropriate for this study because while teacher participants were observed during their interview, I was not observing them in their classrooms or on a continual basis. Yin

(2009) stated that case study methodology generally uses many different data sources such as observations, document artifacts, and interviews. Case study methodology was not appropriate for this study because I wanted to get a proverbial glimpse of teachers' perceptions toward the use of multicultural literature in the middle school classroom.

For the reasons previously listed above, I used qualitative individual interviews to facilitate this genuine inquiry. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), interviews help an evaluator understand the full picture and may provide extra details that quantitative data may not offer. This method of research was chosen because qualitative interviewing allowed me to find out more about the metacognition of teachers using multicultural literature in the classroom.

Role of the Researcher

For this study, I was the researcher. In this role, I developed the interview questions and conducting the interviews for research analysis purposes. I also created a rapport with the interviewees so that they might feel comfortable enough to share freely during their interviews. I analyzed the data collected from the interviews and used this data to draw conclusions and offer recommendations on the use of multicultural literature in the middle school classroom.

I am currently a middle school language arts teacher in Private County. The population that I interviewed included peers and possible coworkers. This is because I recruited using social media and some of my participants ended up being teachers from my school. However, the other participants were from other parts of the district. I did not have any evaluative leverage over the interview participants. I have a bias in the fact that

I have seen the power of using multicultural literature in the middle school classroom and I have seen how important it is to make sure that all students have a voice. According to Ravitch and Carl (2019), data analysis efforts should remain true to the data in which they are based on. Therefore, I took steps to separate my thinking from the data. To monitor this bias, Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested that researchers keep a research journal to jot down ideas that are represented in the data and research. I kept a research journal to record my findings and remain unbiased in my study. This kept the data analysis objective and data focused.

In this study, I worked on taking research steps to avoid harm and risk to the participants. This means that all reported data remained anonymous and that participants were notified that they were free to leave during the interview should they begin to feel uncomfortable. Ravitch and Carl (2019) stated that the interviewer must create a safe space for the interviewee to have a successful interview. According to Laureate (2016), the objective of a productive interview is to extract as much information from the interviewee as possible and the productivity of an interview can be hindered if an interviewee is made to feel uncomfortable, anxious or confused. As a measure towards showing honorable research steps, I also reassured participants that no retribution will be taken for what they state in our interviews. I have attained the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) research certificate as well to ensure that I have made myself aware of any deficits and possible complications that could arise.

Methodology

The methodology used for this study was basic qualitative. The participants of this study were middle school teachers who teach in English language arts in Private County. Qualitative interviews were conducted on 11 participants.

Participant Selection

The participants of this study were middle school teachers who teach in English language arts in Private County. In the county of study, teachers are encouraged to participate in a community of practice which is housed on Twitter and Facebook. Within the community of practice, teachers, administrators, and county officials engage and collaborate with one another. I recruited interview participants using my initial letter of invitation using Google Formposted on the county virtual community of practice via Twitter and Facebook.

I only used participants from the county of study which will be verified through an initial letter of invitation. I recruited 11 participants in 2 weeks to ensure that I had a purposeful sampling, but the process could have been extended if the required sample size was not reached in the initial time frame. According to Ravitch and Carl (2019), the purposeful sampling can best be described as cases that are selected in a way that will create an "information-rich" group that reveals group patterns. Guest et. al. (2006) stated that data saturation is defined as the point when the data that is being added to the data set is not different and/or no longer adding to the already established data set. Ten interviews is an acceptable number of interviews for a qualitative study. From the responses of the Google Form which contains the initial letter of invitation, I determined

11 primary interviewee volunteers who would meet the criteria of the study. Saturation was met; therefore, I did not have to continue recruitment.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation that I used for my study was the interview questions that I developed. Moustakas (1994) stated that a lengthy interview can be one of the most informative sources of data. The interview protocol can be found (see Appendix A) that was followed for each interview. I started my interview protocol by setting the agenda for each interview. This agenda was shared with each interview participant as I welcomed them to our interview session. Interviewees were notified that the interview was audiotaped. I asked the interview questions of the participants, and I was ready to prompt the interviewees if the response seems incomplete.

I developed the interview questions based on related literature and the conceptual framework. For instance, questions were asked based on participants' knowledge and perceptions of culturally responsive teaching, multiculturalism, diversity, and student engagement and achievement. The methodology aligns with the study's research questions because the research questions were used to construct the interview questions. The interview questions were developed with the research questions as the primary consideration in order to demonstrate alignment.

To ensure that the content maintains validity, I had three colleagues look over the research questions and review them for thoroughness and clarity. Clear research questions are ones that address the topic and offer the participant an open-ended opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings. My peers were Language Arts teachers

who are familiar with the field of research. Their comments were minimal and primarily pertained to the phrasing of the questions, which were insights I used to improve the clarity and readability of the interview questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection Recruitment

Once I received approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), I planned for the recruitment of participants. To recruit participants for my study, I posted an initial letter of invitation via Google Form on my online community of practice via Twitter. By completing the Google Form, participants volunteered to participate in my study. Participants were selected based on their ability to meet the study criteria. The criteria for participants in this study are teachers who were teaching or have taught middle school language arts in the local district for more than 1 year. I contacted the first 11 participants who met the criteria and completed the Google Form. Saturation was met so I did not have to return to the Google Form for more participants.

Participation

I placed a link on the community of practice that linked to the Google Form which was housed on Twitter. The exact social media post said "My name is Kearstin Jacobs and I am conducting a study on the use of multicultural literature in the middle school language arts classroom. Click here for more details". The consent form was the first part of the Google Form. Participants indicated their consent by clicking 'yes' and then provided the requested information. From the responses of the Google Form, I determined 11 primary interviewee volunteers who met the criteria of the study. I suggested to participants that they should print out the informed consent for their files. I

also kept a copy of their consent for filing purposes. Participants were selected based on their ability to meet the study criteria. Selected participants were interviewed using Rubin and Rubin's (2012) responsive interviewing method. This method allows a researcher to gather more understanding of the interviewees' experience through narrative and personal example. Using interviews allowed the participants more detailed and expressive thought as opposed to using quantitative data, which left little room for elaboration. According to Rubin and Rubin, interviews are the best platform to investigate someone's perception because it allows the researcher to draw their own conclusions based on the authentic responses of the interview participants. I also offered a monetary incentive (Amazon gift card) of 10 dollars to participants for their time.

Data Collection

I emailed each participant who volunteered and asked them to choose two different days to set up an interview schedule. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, which was approved from the IRB in order to record the audio of the interviews. I used the record feature within the Zoom platform to produce audio recordings of the interviews. The targeted population of the study was middle school language arts teachers. I conducted conduct an average of two interviews a week until data saturation was met. It took me about 2 months to schedule and conduct the initial 11 interviews. I conducted the interviews using Zoom and I transcribed the interviews and use a digital transcription service called Otter as well.

I did not feel that the data was limited. However, had I felt that the data was limited, I could call the participants back and get more information if needed. Once all

the required interviews were complete, I analyzed the data then wrote up my initial conclusions. I sent a summary of the study findings through the emergent themes to each participant. A brief explanation of each theme was provided. Participants were asked to comment if they agree with the summary that was provided to them or would like to suggest additional ideas. None of the participants provided commentary to the data summary provided.

Member Checking

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), member checking is done when participants are asked to review their interview commentary. I asked participants for their preferred email in order to conduct member checking at the end of analysis. I sent each participant an email containing a summary of the study findings through the emergent themes. A brief explanation of each theme was provided. Participants were asked to comment if they agree with the summary that was provided to them. None of the participants provided commentary to the data summary provided.

Data Analysis Plan

A basic qualitative analysis was completed for this study. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), basic qualitative studies are rooted in genuine inquiry. This means that the researcher will develop a structured pattern of organization to demonstrate the work and research. I started by printing out the interviewees' transcripts created by Zoom and corrected by me. According to Creswell and Creswell (2016), researchers are able to better comprehend their data when they annotate their own research. I read each interview transcript within 48 hours of each interview completion. This allowed me to

maintain analysis integrity while the interview was still fresh in my mind. While Saldana (2021) suggested that two cycles of coding are the minimal requirement for completing exemplary qualitative coding, I read each interview transcript at least three times before coding began. After an interview was read a third time, I completed two cycles of coding. I used open coding and allowed ideas to organically formulate as I read and made connections between each of my participant interviews. A table was used to keep track of develop codes and interview participants. This provided a visual of how many times a thought was captured. From these codes, I developed categories of ideas then final themes. Using this process, I derived four – six organic themes through open coding data analysis.

According to Engle (2014), researchers should analyze their data more than one time to gather a more in-depth understanding of their findings. The commonly developed themes were identified through a cyclical investigation that allowed me to revisit each interview several times to synthesize the common themes and determine what the outcomes might mean in relation to the study. I created memos throughout the analytical process in order to aid in the meaning-making process of the coding and minimize potential biases (Saldana, 2021). I wrote my thoughts and impressions throughout the analysis in a journal to document the process of analyzing the data, which could also be helpful in the validation of themes.

Connecting Data to Research Questions

I used themes to organize the coded data and answer the research questions. To code my transcripts, I printed the transcript from each interview in a triple-spaced format

and coded them by hand. Saldana (2021) suggested that qualitative researchers complete at least two cycles of coding. I used inductive coding to establish initial preliminary codes and seek to find similarities among all of my interview transcripts. Therefore, I started analyzing by reading each interview transcript at least three times and identifying words and phrases that repeated at least three times. From there, I established initial codes. The code is the meaning-making part of analysis, and these codes were used to categorize data.

As codes begin to be established, I set up a table (Appendix E) that consists of all of my interviewees across the top of the table and the list of established codes vertically on the left side of the table. This table helped me visualize the data and help develop categories of meaning and eventually themes. As each transcript is coded, I entered a check beneath each participant whose transcript I marked with each particular code. This provided me with a visual picture of the frequency of the ideas. As I completed the 2nd cycle of coding, I will mark each code as it presents within each interview transcript. This helped with categories and theme development.

Treatment of Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases may arise if a participant has very different ideas than most of the other participants or disagrees with the majority. There were no discrepant cases in this study's findings.

Trustworthiness

It is important that the results of this study be deemed trustworthy. The concept of trustworthiness includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For

this reason, it was imperative that I contained any possible bias and strictly used the data to formulate the findings and reports.

Credibility

To enhance the credibility of the data, I conducted a member check. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), member checking is a way to ensure internal validity. To conduct this member check, I will present all interview participants with a summary of the study's findings through the emergent themes. A brief explanation of each theme was provided. Participants were asked to comment if they agree with the summary that was provided to them or would like to suggest additional ideas. No participants responded to the summary provided.

After all data was collected, I personally audited my transcripts using the audio recordings to ensure that the transcripts accurately reflected the ideas shared during each interview. I also used and kept a research journal so reflexivity helped me work to maintain credibility.

Transferability

According to Merriam & Tisdell (2015), transferability refers to the ability of the results gathered from the study to be applied in a different setting. To obtain transferability, I thoroughly described the research setting and participants while also presenting a detailed explanation of findings and results from all participant interviews. According to Yin (2009), ensuring transferability through detailed setting description allows other researchers to possibly use my research and outcomes in their academic endeavors. My participants came from a variety of middle schools which added to the

transferability of my study's findings. However, due to the specific nature of Private County and these participants, results from other studies may differ.

Dependability

Korstjens & Moser (2018) stated that dependability can best be described as the stability of the study's findings over time. The concept of dependability works in tandem with reliability in that it ensures that the data collected is reliable. To guarantee dependability, I recorded each participant interview using the laptop computer as a reliable record. I also recorded and followed each step of the research process used to conduct my study. I kept an audit trail of my coding process noting each session and what was done.

Confirmability

Cypress (2017) stated that confirmability is part of establishing research credibility. This is also how another researcher may be able to conduct a study similar to mine. For this study, confirmability was met by keeping a reflective journal throughout the research process. This journal will reflect daily reflections and provide an audit trial of data collection. To add, each interviewee was asked the same questions and I used reflexivity to make sure that I wase presenting the ideas of my participants and avoiding bias. These actions were taken to establish trustworthiness.

Ethical Procedures

To ensure that I maintained ethical research procedures, I obtained a CITI training certificate. This certificate confirms that I have taken the research course about research risks to ensure that I conducted the research ethically and protected all study participants.

Before I conducted the research for this study, I applied and obtained IRB approval through Walden University. The IRB approval number for this study is 07-26-22-1010051. Since I used social media to contact the research participants, I received consent of their participation on an individual basis prior to their research interview. It is ethically important to protect all research participants. For this reason, I made sure that they understood that they may leave the research study at any time. This was stated to them at the beginning of their interview. With the intention of protecting each participant, I provided each participant with the Letter of Invitation and the Informed Consent. After the interviews were completed, they were kept in a password protected space within the cloud. Additionally, hard copies and electronic copies of the data were kept in a locked file cabinet in the home office of the researcher for five years and then they were deleted and shredded.

Summary

This study addressed the problem that multicultural literature is not being used consistently to address the needs of the growing diverse population in the local middle school language arts classroom. This problem was supported by the literature indicating that despite the benefits associated with the use of multicultural literature (Dillon, 2020; Linder, 2021; Rodgers, 2020), culturally responsive teaching remains lacking (Lobato-Creekmur, 2021; Rosenow, 2020). In Chapter 3, I thoroughly described the methodology that were used to guide this study using the cultural relevant pedagogy (CRP) framework of Ladson-Billings. In Chapter 3, I also explained how participants would be selected, how data would be analyzed, how trustworthiness and validity of data would be

established and how I would address ethics within the research. In Chapter 4, I will

include a detailed description of the study's setting and data collection methods. It will

also include a thorough analysis of the data found in the interviews that were completed

and the results that were rendered.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers'
perceptions of using multicultural literature to teach language arts that can address the
needs of the growing diverse population of students. To investigate the perceptions of
using multicultural literature being used in the middle school language arts classrooms, I
intended to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do local middle school teachers perceive the use of multicultural
literature to teach language arts to address the increased diversity in the English language
arts classroom?

RQ2: What supports do local middle school teachers think are needed to help
them use multicultural literature with fidelity to teach language arts?

Chapter 4 includes the data analysis procedure and the research adopted to
collectively understand the perceived use of multicultural literature to teach language
arts. Using the qualitative data analysis procedure, I analyzed and presented the answers
to the research questions of the study within the context of present data and past
literature. This chapter ends with a summary of the study.

Setting

During the conduction of the interviews, the state in which Private County resides
passed Senate Bill 377 (2021), also known as "The Divisive Concepts Bill". This bill
inherently empowers parents and other stakeholders to censor what is being taught in the
elementary and secondary classroom if the material can be characterized by any of the
following: (a) causes one's race to feel guilty of acts done in the past; (b) discusses

systemic racism, meritocracy, and/or the oppression of one race by another; or (c) assigns culpability to a race or ethnicity for historical mishaps or events (Bill 377). In addition, at the start of the school year, an internal email was discreetly issued to all Private County employees urging them not to speak critically about the county in public, particularly on social media. Although participants in the study were assured that their identity would be kept confidential and that no one else would have access to my research data, this may have contributed to participants' reluctance to share openly about controversial topics such as the lack of training on multicultural literature and the difficulty to retain support when using multicultural literature in the classroom findings.

Data Collection

The participants of this study were 11 middle school teachers who teach in Private County. Private County resides in a southeastern state that predominately consists of White students. These teachers were certified reading and language arts instructors who taught in the classroom for at least 1 year.

I asked each participant to choose two different days so that I could set up an interview schedule. All interviews were conducted via Zoom, which had been approved by IRB. I used the record feature within the Zoom platform to produce audio recordings of the interviews. Using these audio recordings, objective transcriptions of the interviews were obtained. I also transcribed the interviews myself verbatim and cross-examined the Zoom transcripts to ensure that I did not miss any key details and information. I targeted middle school language arts teachers who had been teaching middle school for at least

one year as the population of the study. I contacted the interview participants through information provided on the initial invitational questionnaire that was initially posted on Twitter and Facebook to confirm their 1-year teaching experience to participate in the study.

All participants in the study met the criteria of teaching middle school language arts in the local area for more than one year. to participate in the study. I interviewed the participants using Rubin and Rubin's (2012) responsive interviewing method. The method of responsive interviewing developed by Rubin and Rubin is built on the conversational interaction between researcher and participant This strategy allows the researcher to generate the meaning of the experience from the words and stories of the participants. I opted to use semistructured interview as according to Rubin and Rubin (2012), the method allows a two-way communication between the interviewer and the participant which provides opportunity for both to clarify their thoughts and experiences. Interviews are the best platform to investigate someone's perception because it allows the researcher to draw their own conclusions based on the authentic responses of the interview participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

I conducted an average of three interviews a week until data saturation was met. It took me several weeks to schedule and conduct the initial 11 interviews using Zoom. A total of 11 middle school teachers participated in the study. I performed member checking to ensure the validity and reliability of the results by furnishing the participants with copies of their transcripts and the initial themes emerging from these transcripts (see

Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). There were no changes to the plan in Chapter 3. There were

no unusual circumstances during any of the interviews.

Data Analysis

I completed my data analysis using steps prescribed by Braun and Clark's (2006)

six-steps for thematic analysis: (a) become familiar with the data, (b) generate initial

codes, (c) search for themes, (d) review themes, (e) define themes, and (f) write-up. The

first step was to transcribe the audio files into an acceptable electronic format after each

interview. As I completed the transcription and moved to Step 2, I conducted two rounds

of descriptive and pattern coding suggested by Saldana (2021). I determined the meaning

of the participants' responses and grouped together the words, phrases, and sentences that

were similar develop initial codes. In this study, similarities were first noted, and then

emergent themes were developed. I used a self-created color-coding system to better

comprehend the participants' points of view and analyze their collectivized experiences.

The transcriptions were coded and broken down into more digestible and evocative data

bits as part of the analysis process. According to Saldana (2021), the use of codes in

qualitative research is crucial for narrowing the emphasis of the interview analysis to the

participants' actual experiences. I then organized the codes according to descriptive

meanings and interrelated concepts to form the thematic and subthematic categories. This

process is essential in the development of the themes of the study (Saldana, 2021).

Within the 11 transcripts of the participants' interviews, I initially identified 75

codes using the hand-coding process. By referring to the descriptive meaning of the

codes, I was able to group codes of similar meanings into 12 categories These 12

categories were determined using the frequency in which they appeared across the interview data. If a topic appeared across the interview data, more than four times, it became a category. I then used the meaning of the categories to determine the interrelatedness of the concepts and developed four overall themes. The themes were (a) perceived meaning of multicultural literature, (b) perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English language arts classroom, (c) challenges in using multicultural literature in English language arts classroom, and (d) training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom. These themes are further discussed in the subsequent section. A full list of codes and themes appear in Appendix C.

I reviewed the themes that represented the narratives of at least three participants in the study. I classified the code that falls below the three-response threshold as a discrepant case, which helped me understand the limitation of the theme developed for this study. For instance, while seven participants viewed student engagement as an advantage of multicultural literature among minority groups of students, two of the participants also cautioned that insensitivity of cultural norms in the use of multicultural literature could alienate students.

I defined the themes consistent to the meanings of codes used to develop the thematic categories. I re-classified the grouping of codes into subthematic categories to define the components of thoughts within the theme. This was done by grouping together the words, phrases, and sentences that were similar using my own color coordinated sticky note system. From there, I grouped the codes into categories and themes using a

spreadsheet This process allowed me to identify and differentiate notable elements under the umbrella of the theme by allowing me to see even more similarities between congruent ideas. For instance, Theme 1 articulated the perceived meaning of multicultural literature as written information showing diversity and as a part of curriculum. Differentiating the two categories illustrates the dominant and discrepant views about multicultural literature. I then collated the responses labeled with a code for analysis and write-up. I used these responses as evidence supporting the analysis. I then used the themes developed for this study to answer the research questions. There were no discrepant cases.

Results

In this section, the findings and interpretation of data were generated from the participants' answers to semistructured interview questions that are meant to answer the research questions. In response to these inquiries, I developed four overarching themes in the analysis. Themes were developed using the categories elements derived from the descriptive meaning of the identified codes.

Theme 1: Perceived Meaning of Multicultural Literature

Theme 1 was that the teachers perceived meaning of the term multicultural literature. It was developed from the direct responses of participants that articulated their understanding of multicultural literature. All participants of the study could be summarized as viewing multicultural literature as any informative materials about culture and the people embracing it. P1 viewed the concept as, "literature that embodies different cultures…I think of diversity." P6 defined the term as written information that

"represents and is inclusive of all parts of a community that is present in a particular setting."

Two of the participants also explained the term multicultural literature as a "curriculum" and as a "instructional strategy." P4 described the term as a learning tool that captures diverse lessons from different groups. P4 described multicultural literature as

> A textbook or standard [that] addresses every ethnic group in the classroom, so when they give the scope and sequence of a lesson provided by the district, then they will provide different multicultural lessons or books worksheets, Internet access that addresses each child in the classroom for them to be successful understanding the standards.

All 11 interviewees alluded to multicultural literature being inclusive to diverse cultures and backgrounds. Table 3 reflects the participants' perceived definition of multicultural literature.

Table 3

Perceived Meaning of Multicultural Literature

Categories	Sample verbatim responses	# of Occurrences	% of Occurrences
Embodies written information of diversity of people and culture	*...represents and is inclusive of all parts of a community that is present in a particular setting. – P6*	11	100%
A curriculum addressing diversity	*...a textbook or standard [that] addresses every ethnic group in the classroom, so when they give the scope and sequence of a lesson provided by*	3	27%

the district, then they will provide
different multicultural lessons or books
worksheets, Internet access that
addresses each child in the classroom
for them to be successful
understanding the standards. – P4

Theme 2: Perceived Advantages in Using Multicultural Literature in English

Language Arts Classroom

Theme 2 was the perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in the

English language arts classroom. While I asked both the advantages and disadvantages of

using multicultural literature in the English language arts classroom, all participants

asserted the valuable importance of multicultural literature to teaching language arts in

the middle school classroom. Two subthemes developed in the analysis of this category:

(a) promotion of students' engagement, and (b) enhances community understanding and

respect. A summary of the subtheme categories associated to the perceived advantages in

the use of multicultural literature is presented in Table 4. This is important to share

because it captures the advantages to using multicultural literature in the middle school

classroom.

Table 4

Perceived Advantages in Using Multicultural Literature in English Language Arts
Classroom

Categories	# of Occurrences	% of Occurrences
Promotes students' engagement	7	55%
Promotes community understanding and respect	5	45%

Subtheme 1: Promotion of Students' Engagement

The subtheme *promotion of students' engagement* suggests that multicultural literature promotes students' engagement particularly those students belonging in the culture being discussed within the multicultural literature. P1 observed that students who can connect to the literature "become highly engaged" and recalled that the topic sparks interest among students who were able to connect themselves to being like the character told in the story. P1 shared:

Maybe they can understand some of the dilemmas or experiences that the characters experience based on their own knowledge and some of them take agency in the discussion because they feel like they have experienced something they can definitely make connections to the text. When students can make connections then the learning is evident.

P5 also observed that the use of multicultural literature in the middle school language arts classroom is effective in promoting students' engagement particularly in a class predominantly consisting of students of color. P5 said: "it promotes student engagement with, you know, those groups that tend to be underrepresented in literature." P5 goes on to suggest indicators for engaged learning within a middle school language arts classroom. She described this experience as:

When you start reading and writing about things that they are familiar with and connected to, they start to sit up and pay attention. You know, they raise their hand, they have something to say, they know about what you're reading and

writing and teaching and talking about. I think it [multicultural literature] really

promotes student engagement.

P5 associated the use of multicultural literature with student engagement stating that "confidence level is increased." They observed that overarching inclusion of diverse students in the classroom is feasible when using multicultural literature to teach the standards in the middle school language arts classroom.

P11 also viewed multicultural literature can "increase engagement and meaningful learning" to students. P11 explained that broadening students' view about their own classroom environment and exploring the application of these views would entice interest in learning the world they would explore in the future. P11 was directly quoted in this statement.

By bringing in multicultural literature, I think you increase engagement and meaningful learning by offering either a mirror of what you see in your room for those students or broadening students who may not have wide worldview because they have lived in the same town forever and everybody looks like them and they haven't had a chance to see what the world is going to look like when they get there sooner than later.

There are potential disadvantages to multicultural literature use according to two the participants that should be noted. Although P4 also observed students' engagement as an advantage of multicultural literature among minority groups of students, P4 also cautioned that engagement is also linked to the delivery of the material and that insensitivity of cultural queues could alienate students. To add, P8 warns against viewing

multicultural literature as a panacea for student engagement stating, "I'm not gonna pretend like it's the fix- all. Right? Like we can't pretend that. We also can't pretend that one text is going to go for every student." However, P8 does offer the prospect of higher student achievement when students are offered diversity within their literature options by explaining that "when we read literature that is not relevant to students, something that's more archaic to students, or if we're constantly just reading about white men, then my students are far less engaged."

Subtheme 2: Enhances Community Understanding and Respect

Subtheme 2 developed from the five responses of the participants who claimed that use of these materials is an avenue of sharing cultural knowledge among diverse group who may not have heard of or understood behaviors and norms of groups.

P9 stressed that the cultural information builds community, develops "empathy, growth, and a broader comprehension growth and a broader comprehension of our realistic world and shaping minds to better understand the world that they're in and the others that they share it with." This offers the narrative that multicultural literature can be used to breed tolerance and citizenship in the middle school language arts classroom. P5 provided a wider perspective concerning the use of multicultural literature by saying that it promotes "a sense of awareness" that fuels community understanding. P5 explained that students with limited knowledge and understanding of a particular culture tend to judge the character of others without making efforts to understand the person and the environment the person grew up in. P5 said:

There's always some obstruction and prejudice when you begin to enlighten

students. You have students who, you know, the learning thing about the plight of

the migrant worker or those trying to cross the border or whatever, they don't-you

know, there's a sense of entitlement sometimes where they don't care about what

other cultures are going, you know, going through and I felt like, why the

obstruction, we're learning. Why the prejudices? We're learning. You know, all of

our literature doesn't have to be about, you know, the Cau- the protagonist doesn't

always have to be a Caucasian.

P2 cited a more detailed perspective stating that multicultural literature provides a

"richness of discussion" that promotes understanding and respect among students in the

middle school language arts classroom. P2 shared:

I think one of the things language arts was built around is teaching people to

think and to help them become better citizens and to do that they have to

understand the world for more than just their narrow perspective. And that doesn't

matter and that's regardless of what color their skin is, what their religion is that

they're good doesn't matter who they are. We all benefit when we all understand

the other side of an issue.

Theme 3: Challenges in Integrating Multicultural Literature in English Language

Arts Classroom

Theme 3 is the challenges in integrating multicultural literature in English

language arts classroom. While all participants in this study valued the importance of

multicultural literature in English language arts education, particularly in promoting

students' engagement and community understanding and respect, several setbacks were noted in teachers' integration of multicultural literature use in the classroom. Two subthemes were identified in the analysis. These are (a) teachers' lack of administrative training in managing community pushbacks, and (b) focused integration of activating prior knowledge among a diverse group of learners.

Table 5 summarized the perceived challenges associated with the integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom. These categories described that the teachers' expertise and professional obligations are limited to classroom management and instruction and different interests and knowledge of the students in the classroom made multicultural literature difficult to select resources at the classroom level requiring teachers' in-depth assessment of students' prior knowledge about the topic before introducing in classroom.

Table 5

Challenges in Integrating Multicultural Literature in English Language Arts Classroom

Categories	# of Occurrences	% of Occurrences
Teachers lack of administrative support and training in managing community pushbacks	5	45%
Focused integration of activating prior knowledge among diverse group of learners	4	36%

Subtheme 1: Teachers' Lack of Administrative Training in Managing Community Pushbacks

The first subtheme articulates the *lack of administrative support and training in managing community pushbacks* which made policy support and effective

implementation of multicultural literature integration in classroom difficult. The articulation of this subtheme came from the participants' views about polarized opinions and stereotypes from parents who kept traditional homogenous values and worldviews imposed on their children' educational progress. P5 explained the effect of having a diverse population when using multicultural literature in the middle school language arts classroom. P5 said: "prejudices are in place, and some groups may not want to know anything about others." P5 shared a parent who heard the lecture about migrant workers, missed understanding the lecture, and described the race lesson as offensive. P5 shared the reaction of the parent:

> A parent emailed me and said, what is going on in your classroom? I really don't want my son, you know, going down that road, and she was talking about Black Lives Matter. When we were talking about migrant workers and it ended up getting into a we end up getting another thing. So she emails the assistant principal and was like, What is going on in this lady's class? I want my son out of the class.

P5 described that this parent pushbacks in the use of multicultural literature in classroom impede students' learning about worldview differences and how these differences should be respected in the light of learning English language arts. P5 said:

> …there's always some obstruction and prejudice when you begin to enlighten students… these parents that are sitting back remotely listening did not want us to read and study about what they know her son and the class that was reading and studying about, the plight of the migrant worker and one thing led to another…

for me, the challenge is making sure that students and their families don't shut down, you know, the opportunity for growth and teaching the sense of tolerance and community.

While multicultural literature is able to represent the diverse member of the classroom, five participants viewed that selection of materials that represents these diversity is difficult. P8 related an obstacle in a classroom where literature about "Jesus" was used to expose students to the ancient world. Some parents find the material offensive and suspicious of teaching their children values outside of their own culture and racial beliefs. P8 said: "…parents…do not want their students to be exposed to multiple races and cultures. They'll say…that's my job as a parent, or they'll say… the teacher is trying to instill certain values in the kids [that] don't necessarily align with their own."

P7 added that while teachers are knowledgeable about the advantages of multicultural literature in learning language arts, "it makes other adults of different races uncomfortable." This posed a challenge for teachers who were not trained to handle teaching challenges beyond their classroom. P7 said that while teachers know that these materials "allow open dialogue... [and making] students feel comfortable with getting their ideas and thoughts out instead of us telling you what the theme is and what you should get from it," teachers are unable to defend their intentions among parents who rely on their own knowledge about individualism and cultural respect.

P6 offered a coherent explanation about community pushback as a challenge in multicultural literature integration in the middle school language arts classroom. P6 said: "some of the people in charge of me are not trained either… they don't know… what's

appropriate, how to support me in the delivery or the using it in my classroom." P6 further shared a scenario where she received pushback from parents who did not want multicultural literature being taught in her classroom:

 Parents sometimes resist some of the topics that the books cover. And so there really is no administrative support once the parents you know, starting to complain…about the title, the topic author, what have you. And so I think that's huge, right? Because I'm not trained, you aren't trained and so ..it's difficult to integrate it in a manner where you're not pressing or offending the rights of others.

P11 also expressed that integration of multicultural literature in the classroom is a state-wide issue that could have been resolved by pushing approved resources that parents can refer to when resisting the use of multicultural literature in classroom instruction. P11 stated that he teachers being experts in the field should have the power to decide on the learning material according to the appropriateness of use in the classroom. P11 believed that for teachers to use multicultural literature effectively in the classroom, "a push to have more diverse literature, resource options and then ways to incorporate that into the classroom" was needed.

Subtheme 2: Focused Integration of Activating Prior Knowledge Among a Diverse Group of Learners

The second subtheme articulates the focused integration of activating prior knowledge among a diverse group of learners as a challenge in teaching multicultural literature in teaching language arts. While four P6, P2, P1, and P11 students were directly

quoted on the value of activating past knowledge, they also noted that the different interests and knowledge of the students in the classroom made it difficult to select resources at the classroom level. P6 shared the learning outcome of students who require prior knowledge of the beliefs and culture discussed in the classroom among students who have once or presently identified with those beliefs and cultures. P6 shared how other students reacted to readings about values and how these values are viewed by other countries. P6 shared: "People often…complain about those (MC) texts because they feel like you are putting that group above another group or what the group thinks or feels about. And that's, that's not true at all and nor is it indoctrination."

P2 expounded the dichotomy of activating prior knowledge and how prior knowledge is viewed by middle school students. P2 shared her difficulties in establishing connections among diverse students who already had preconceived cultural biases. P2 believed that teaching multicultural literature should "not be hostile" and also offered that establishing connections between the lesson and the learners is important in multicultural literature teaching.

P1 shared a teaching strategy to convey the importance of prior knowledge in teaching multicultural literature in the classroom. P1 shared:

I also work on any specific vocabulary that might be unique to that specific culture and do a book walk such that students are familiar with terms or ways to figure out what words mean… have discussions and activities sometimes regarding what their understanding is of a chapter. I have them to definitely provide some form of a graphic organizer that helps me to understand their

understanding of characters and settings and some of the conflicts that are arriving

in this …in the book and how everything is playing out in terms of the plot.

Within this strategy, P1 emphasized the challenge of determining the level of students'

knowledge and appreciation of the culture and beliefs contents of the material before

classroom use and instruction. P11 described this similar scenario as material that

"engages students" and explained that the diversity of the student population in class

prompts the teachers to carefully select multicultural literature. P11 said: "it is important

for students to be able to see themselves in the literature that you teach."

Theme 4: Training Requirement to Support Integration of Multicultural Literature in Language Arts Classroom

When asked about their perceived efficacy in the use of multicultural literature in

the middle school language arts classroom, majority of the participants claimed that they

either learned it through self- taught online research, previous jobs held outside of Private

County, or during rare county-provided professional development sessions that were

optional and based on teachers' choice and interest. Considering their exposure and

practice in their respective classroom, I asked them what training they might need to

improve their practice and use of multicultural literature to teach language arts in the

middle school classroom effectively. Three subthemes developed: (a) Use of resources

and options of use, (b) Selection and evaluation of qualified multicultural literature, and

(c) Embedding multicultural literature in consistent classroom practices

Subtheme 1: Use of Resources and Option of Use

Subtheme 1 described the *use of resources and option of use* emphasized the importance of knowing how to use multicultural literature to enhance students' learning. P11 shared the following training needs:

I would love training and resources of texts that are county-approved that they have available for us to use and then different strategies on using those texts in the classroom and what that could mean for students. So I would love to maybe get a list from the county. I know that's a big ask, but um, I think further into 2022 and the political climate that we are in right now there's a lot of push towards county-approved resources. And so I would love for the county to [provide that] I don't know where that starts.. teachers…community, I'm not sure, but a push to have more diverse literature resource options and then ways to incorporate that into the classroom.

P8 expressed that while they liked more available text resources for use, they are anxious about using multicultural text in this climate as it may not be safe for teaching. P8 implied that the issues about diversity are a sensitive topic in education with several new legislations that may hinder the use of multicultural literature and student learning if teachers are not knowledgeable on the appropriate uses of multicultural literature. P8 said:

However, I will say Georgia, for example, recently passed a law that has really transformed the landscape for teaching multicultural literature. The seeds for it were planted years ago, when multiple other states and counties and regions were

really working hard to ban books and work to stop this threat of CRT and I can't

think of what the acronym stands for because I always call it …. what it turned

into. …..This threat of CRT and so multiple agencies were banning books, were

putting laws on the books about what teachers can and cannot teach. Well,

Georgia just came out with very specific guidance around what can and cannot be

taught and one of the pieces is one culture cannot be made to feel guilty about

something that happened in the past.

In this instance, the acronym "CRT" used by the participant stands for "critical

race theory". According to Lobato-Creekmur (2021), critical race theory evolved in the

1970's and stemmed from the foundational principle that racism was deeply rooted in the

United States and therefore created ideal opportunities for systemic racism to take place

and affect people of color. This affects teachers in the classroom today because, as P8

goes on to say, many outside parties do not want to be blamed or made to feel bad based

on their race and the race of their predecessors.

P8 continued telling challenges teaching about the Holocaust.

And just thinking about middle school students like when I taught the Holocaust,

students would feel really bad about the whole aspect of just being a bystander

and maybe then in their lives, times that because we I always try and make these

things relevant right so times in their lives, or maybe they've been a bystander,

and what they could do differently. Well, I could potentially have made them feel

guilty and I would have been in trouble right? So … but also I can't help it if we

are reading… I know "To Kill a Mockingbird" is a popular book that is taught I

have not taught it but several teachers I know have and I cannot help it if a teacher

is teaching that in a kid in a modern era feels bad about what happened then and

feels some sense of guilt which empowers them to want to do something different

like that. It's not necessarily the teacher's intention, but because the student feels

that way, there are consequences to this decision to teach that book. Parents can

basically at this point, opt out of anything in education if they think it violates

these new parameters that were put out there. And some of them are pretty loose.

Like I said, if they are like made to feel guilty or feel like one "culture is better

than the other or superior" is the wording they use.…

This quote displays the inevitable conundrum that 8 out of the 11 participants found

themselves in when using multicultural literature in the middle school classroom to teach

language arts. Participant #2 delves deeper into the type of training that she thinks she

needs in order to successfully embed multicultural literature into the curriculum of her

classroom:

So, I don't need to be taught not to .. to not be biased. I don't need to be taught that

I need to be sensitive. Like I don't need sensitivity training. I need you to teach it

to me like I should teach it to the kids. What sections do I highlight? What do

these things need? Why are they important? Should I ask kids about this question?

This specifically offers more insight to the type of resources and options that teachers

need in order to use multicultural literature with fidelity because it identifies the specific

needs and areas of opportunities that some teachers may face. Sensitivity to cultural

norms of each learner is a crucial element in the appreciation and adoption of ML as a learning tool.

Subtheme 2: Selection and Evaluation of Qualified Multicultural Literature

Subtheme 2 illustrates the increase in publications focusing on African American and indigenous people. This observation illustrates the propensity for middle school language arts educators to use multicultural literature as a tool to promote understanding of cultural differences. Given that not all published works of literature are created equal, the participants viewed the importance of caution while choosing reading material for the classroom. To provide genuine and realistic depictions of cultural groups, it is necessary to choose appropriate multicultural literature. P7 explained:

…because of a specific law that's been passed, we are now censored to what we can share with our students. And so a lot of the books that are brought to us in the past- it gives me pause because one, I don't want to lose my job. We have specific groups that don't want certain stories told.

This participant alludes to certain groups having perceived power over what is being taught in the classroom to propagate the narrative of the perceived majority. On the other hand, P 8 warns against perpetuating character monoliths when it comes to characters or color. P8 offers:

..also think there needs to be training around avoiding a single narrative, like not every black student is going to do drugs, sell drugs and wind up in jail, like not every black student is in a gang. Not every Jewish student wants to learn about the Holocaust. They're learning about that in religious school. Like, you know, like,

how do we expose? How do we make educators aware? Yes, like, okay, good.

Like, let's definitely make sure that we are showing something but let's not only

live in the stereotypes, either.

While this places the onus on the classroom teacher to ensure equality and accuracy when selecting multicultural texts for the middle school language arts classroom, it also highlights the need for academic responsibility when handling multicultural texts to educate young minds.

Subtheme 3: Embedding Multicultural Literature in Classroom Practices

Subtheme 3 relates to the responses surrounding the incorporation of multicultural literature into the classroom and how it can help students put themselves in the shoes of characters from other cultures while potentially sparking the beginning process of empathy development for people from different backgrounds. P2 expressed this exact need in the following statement: "I want to know how to integrate this type of content into a sensitive world and how to talk about real subjects." P2 goes on to say:

My students need to be exposed to things, but they also need to see themselves in

our literature…. What our kids read might need to be different than what sits

somewhere else …. And they're sensitive culturally. So many of my students

watch the news. They're educated, their parents are educated. They watch the

news in the morning and watch the so they know some of the cultural things

going on. And they make those connections to what they're reading.

Table 6 summarized the subthemes developed in response to the training

requirements identified to effectively integrate multicultural literature in language arts

classroom. The categories of needs focus on multicultural literatures' (a) usage, (b)

selection and evaluation, and (c) embedding. The review of participants' narrative on

these training needs requires policy support and funding.

Table 6

Training Requirement to Support Integration of Multicultural Literature in Language

Arts Classroom

Categories	# of Occurrences	% of Occurrences
Use of multicultural resources and options	6	55%
Selection and evaluation of qualified multicultural literature	4	36%
Embedding multicultural literature in classroom practices	3	27%

With four themes developed to understand the middle school teachers'

perceptions of using multicultural literature to teach language arts that can address the

needs of the growing diverse population of students, I utilized these themes to answer the

research questions I posed for this study.

Few participants considered multicultural literature as a "curriculum" or a

"instructional method," whereas all participants viewed multicultural literature as any

instructive resource about culture and the people who embrace it. When multicultural

literature is seen as an educational method, however, two subthemes emerge: : (a)

promotion of students' engagement, and (b) enhances community understanding and

respect.

When machine learning is utilized in the classroom, student involvement is evident. The multicultural literature theme piqued the interest of students who could relate to the story's protagonist. Exploring the application of these perspectives would pique the students' interest in learning about the world they would explore in the future. As minority student engagement with the use of multicultural literature is clear, a participant notes that the use of multicultural literature that is insensitive to cultural cues could alienate other students who find the material less relevant to their culture.

I discovered that participants utilize multicultural literature to share cultural knowledge among diverse groups who may not have heard of or understood group practices and norms. This suggests multicultural literature can promote tolerance and citizenship in middle school language arts classes. Sharing cultural material in the classroom fosters community understanding and respect. Multicultural literature classroom material encourages discussion and explanation.

On the question about, what supports do local middle school teachers think are needed to help them use multicultural literature with fidelity to teach language arts? Participants who observed the reluctance of educational stakeholders to multicultural literature integration generated a theme that encapsulated the difficulties instructors face while incorporating multicultural literature into English language arts classrooms. Two subthemes developed in the analysis. These are (a) teachers' lack of administrative training in managing community pushbacks, and (b) focused integration of activating prior knowledge among a diverse group of learners.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As a researcher, I am committed to preserving the validity of the findings and analysis of this study. Credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability were all considered in the design and procedure of the study. This section details how these processes were kept throughout the study.

I performed a member check to increase the credibility of the data. Member checking, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), is a method of ensuring internal validity. To do this member check, I distributed a short summary of my findings to my participants. In addition, I used the audio recordings to check my transcripts to ensure that they accurately reflect the concepts presented throughout each interview. I also used and maintained a research journal, so reflexivity aided in my efforts to preserve credibility.

I discussed the research environment and participants, as well as a full description of all participant interviews and results that may allow other teachers to relate to the information. According to Yin (2009), guaranteeing transferability through precise setting descriptions enables other academics to potentially employ my research and results in their academic undertakings. My study's findings were more transferable because my participants came from a variety of middle schools. However, results from other studies may differ due to the unique nature of Private County and these subjects.

To ensure dependability, I recorded each participant interview on a laptop computer, which served as a dependable record. Per Yin (2009), I also documented and

conducted an audit trail by following each step of the research procedure that was employed to carry out my study.

Keeping a reflective notebook during the research process provided confirmation. This notebook recorded daily reflections and served as a data collecting audit trial. In addition, each interviewee was asked the same set of questions. I used reflexivity to ensure that I was accurately representing the opinions of my participants while avoiding prejudice.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' perceptions of using multicultural literature to teach language arts that can address the needs of the growing diverse population of students. With four themes developed to understand the middle school teachers' perceptions of using multicultural literature to teach language arts that can address the needs of the growing diverse population of students, I utilized these themes to answer the research questions I posed for this study.

On the question about, *how do local middle school teachers perceive the use of multicultural literature to teach language arts to address the increased diversity in the English language arts classroom?* Two major themes were developed that describes the "meaning" and the "perceived advantage in the use" of multicultural literature in English language Arts classroom. These themes were developed from the responses that associates the participants' understanding of multicultural literature and how they viewed the use of it in their English language arts classroom.

All participants viewed multicultural literature as any informative materials about culture and the people embracing it, with few associated the term "multicultural literature" as a "curriculum" and as a "instructional strategy." However, when ML is viewed within the meaning of instructional strategy, two subthemes developed: (a) promotion of students' engagement, and (b) enhances community understanding and respect.

Data analysis revealed that when ML is used in classroom, students' engagement is observable. ML topic sparks interest among students who were able to connect themselves to being like the character told in the story. ML broadens students' understanding about their own classroom environment and exploring the application of these views would entice interest in learning about the world they would explore in the future. As student engagement with the use of ML is evident among minority groups of students, a participant acknowledges that use of ML with insensitivity of cultural queues could alienate other students who find the material less relevant in their culture.

Other than boosting the engagement of students as a result of using ML, The study found that participants find the use of these materials as an avenue of sharing cultural knowledge among diverse group who may not have heard of or understood behaviors and norms of groups. This offers the narrative that multicultural literature can be used to breed tolerance and citizenship in the middle school language arts classroom. Sharing diverse cultural information in classroom "a sense of awareness" among students fueling community understanding and respect. An ML material use in classroom provides avenue for discussion and clarifications.

On the question about, *what supports do local middle school teachers think are needed to help them use multicultural literature with fidelity to teach language arts?* A theme that captured the challenges of teachers in integrating multicultural literature in English language arts classroom developed from participants who have observed the educational stakeholders' resistance of ML integration. Two subthemes developed in the analysis. These are (a) teachers' lack of administrative training in managing community pushbacks, and (b) focused integration of activating prior knowledge among a diverse group of learners.

On teachers' lack of training, the study found that teachers' expertise and professional obligations are limited to classroom management and instruction. They are not professionally trained in the management of parents' resistance and lobbying policy support for an effective integration of ML in classroom. The articulation of this subtheme came from the participants' views about polarized opinions and stereotypes from parents who kept traditional homogenous values and worldviews imposed on their children' educational progress.

On the need for focused integration of activating prior knowledge, the study found that different interests and knowledge of the students in the classroom made ML difficult to select resources at the classroom level requiring teachers' in-depth assessment of students' prior knowledge about the topic before introducing in classroom. The inability of teachers to assess the presence of students' cultural biases can make ML hostile and divisive. These results were further evaluated in the context of known literature about multicultural literature in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' perceptions of using multicultural literature to teach language arts that can address the needs of the growing diverse population of students. The participants of this study were middle school teachers who teach in Private County. Data were collected using individual semistructured interviews, which were developed according to the conceptual framework along with the literature review. I developed the interview questions based on the research questions of the study. All interviews were conducted using the teleconferencing platform Zoom. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clark's (2006) six steps for thematic analysis, which resulted in themes that served as the findings of this study. The results of the analysis revealed four themes: (a) perceived meaning of multicultural literature, (b) perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English language arts classroom,(c) challenges in using multicultural literature in English language arts classroom, and (d) training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom. The findings indicated that all participants viewed multicultural literature as any informative materials about culture and the people embracing it, while a few associated the term multicultural literature as a "curriculum" and as a "instructional strategy." The findings showed that teachers' lack of administrative training in managing community pushbacks and struggle to activate prior knowledge among a diverse group of learners can often be a challenge when striving to integrate multicultural literature in the English language arts classroom. The findings also indicated that teachers were lacking in administrative training in managing community

pushbacks and focused on the integration of activating prior knowledge among a diverse group of learners.

Interpretation of the Findings

This section presents the interpretation of the research findings in comparison to the current literature. The discussion of the research findings is organized based on the four themes that were generated from this study. The discussions of the themes were framed using the literature and the theoretical framework of the study.

Interpretation of Theme 1: Perceived Meaning of Multicultural Literature

The first theme addresses the perceived meaning of multicultural literature. The participants in the study viewed multicultural literature as any informative materials about culture and the people embracing it. This perception is consistent with most of the literature indicating the positive perception of educators regarding multicultural literature (see Bonner et al., 2018; Gay, 2013; Larson et al., 2018). Past research recognized the benefits of culturally responsive teaching to students based on the perceptions of teachers (see Bonner et al., 2018; Gay, 2013; Larson et al., 2018). Previous researchers indicated that some of these perceived benefits include enhanced efficacy in teaching diverse students, enhanced ability to anticipate positive student outcomes, and enhanced engagement of students for reading (see Bonner et al., 2018; Ford et al., 2019; Larson et al., 2018). Like previous studies, the current study provides incremental evidence supporting the positive views and perceptions of teachers regarding the use of culturally responsive teaching such as the integration of multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms.

When viewed within the context of the Ladson-Billings' CRP and Austin et al.'s ideas about student representation in texts, my findings support the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy in the effectiveness of teachers. Teachers have the responsibility to provide culturally relevant/responsive teaching practices that are developed from the understanding of equity, equality, and advocacy (Gay, 2021). The findings highlighted that teachers' perceptions of the meaning of multicultural literature are positive in nature. Overall, the research showed that teachers are open to using multicultural literature in the middle school classroom but require more guidance and training on best practices. This could have a large impact on not only students of color, but all students in the middle school classroom. The literature supports these results as Linder (2021) stated that multicultural literature allows students to understand other races and ethnicities.

Interpretation of Theme 2: Perceived Advantages in Using Multicultural Literature in English Language Arts Classroom

The second theme that developed from the analysis related to the perceived advantages of using multicultural literature in English language arts classroom. All participants recognized the valuable importance of multicultural literature to teaching language arts in the middle school classroom. These benefits manifest in terms of the promotion of students' engagement and the enhancement of community understanding and respect.

The research findings are consistent with previous studies highlighting the benefits of multicultural literature in the classroom (see Choo, 2020; Dillon et al., 2020;

Linder, 2021). For instance, children's literature plays a key aspect in the development of children's literacy skills (Dillon et al., 2020). Multicultural literature allows students to expand their understanding of other races and ethnicities (Linder, 2021). Multicultural literature affords the students the opportunity to explore global issues and concepts (Choo, 2020). Multicultural literature has also been found to be helpful in enhancing the engagement of students toward reading (Ford et al., 2019). These studies support the current findings indicating that teachers perceived that multicultural literature is advantageous to the overall learning experience of students.

The promotion of students' engagement was perceived by the participants in my study as a benefit of integrating multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms. This finding is somewhat new when viewed within the lens of the findings of previous research, wherein benefits were primarily focused on the expansion of students' understanding of other culture and diversity (see Linder, 2021; Rodgers, 2020). This finding suggests that the benefits of multicultural literature can also be based outside the notions of culture and diversity.

The findings indicated that participants believed that the advantage of integrating multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms is the enhancement of community understanding and respect. This is consistent with the notion that by using literature with multicultural concepts and characters, students are able to build upon what they already know about races and ethnicities that are not their own (Linder, 2021). This finding is more consistent with the anticipated benefits of using multicultural literature on expanding students' multicultural understanding.

When viewed within the context of the framework of the study, this theme supports Ladson-Billings' (2014) explanation that the purpose of CRP is to make literature and curriculum more inclusive for students from multicultural backgrounds. Consistent with previous literature indicating that teachers recognize the benefits of culturally responsive teaching to students (see Bonner et al., 2018; Gay, 2013; Larson et al., 2018), the current study provides incremental support about how teachers view multicultural literature as advantageous in the learning of their students.

Interpretation of Theme 3: Challenges in Integrating Multicultural Literature in English Language Arts Classroom

The third theme that developed from the analysis related to the challenges in integrating multicultural literature in English language arts classroom. Even though all participants in this study valued the importance of multicultural literature in English language arts education, challenges such as teachers' lack of administrative training in managing community pushbacks and focused integration of activating prior knowledge among a diverse group of learners. This is consistent with previous literature indicating that the integration of multicultural literature in classrooms can be difficult in terms of implementation (see Love-Kelly, 2020; Riley, 2019).

Focused integration of activating prior knowledge among a diverse group of learners was also identified as a challenge among teachers in the integration of multicultural literature in English language arts. The poor infrastructure that supports teachers' ability to integrate multicultural literature are supported by the literature (Adelani, 2020). For instance, many libraries were antiquated and that the librarians were

lacking in appropriate training to support multicultural resources (Adelani, 2020). Moreover, while multicultural literature and practices are beginning to increase, they still are not readily available in educational settings (Cruz, 2019).

When viewed within the context of the Ladson-Billings' CRP, the findings highlighted how contextual factors can affect the implementation of practices that champion multiculturalism despite the willingness of teachers to integrate these practices in their teaching. The continued lack of access to multicultural literature in educational settings underscores these implementation challenges (Cruz, 2019; Koss et al., 2017). Hence, Ladson-Billings' CRP provides the rationale for the importance of integrating multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms, but the implementation challenge may not be addressed if only relying on this framework.

Interpretation of Theme 4: Training Requirement to Support Integration of Multicultural Literature in Language Arts Classroom

The fourth theme that developed from the analysis related to the training requirement to support the integration of multicultural literature in English language arts classroom. The training requirements include the use of resources and options of use, selection and evaluation of qualified multicultural literature, and embedding multicultural literature in consistent classroom practices. How teachers can be actively supported in the implementation of culturally responsive teaching to solve the achievement gap remains a problem (Hendricks, 2021). These research findings provide some answers about how teachers can be supported in the implementation of culturally responsive teaching.

The use of resources and option of use emphasized the importance of knowing how to use multicultural literature to enhance students' learning. Culturally responsive teaching does not always involve race or racism (Lobato-Creekmur, 2021; Rosenow, 2020). The practice of culturally responsive teaching can be dependent on the available support from school leaders and administrators so that teachers can integrate multicultural literature in the classrooms.

Selection and evaluation of qualified multicultural literature was another training requirement that was identified by the participants. This research finding is unique to the study, providing new information about how teachers can be helped to increase their ability to provide culturally responsive teaching. This is particularly important because the need to teach multicultural literature responsibly falls upon the classroom teacher (Merga, 2020).

Embedding multicultural literature in consistent classroom practices was another training requirement that the participants in the study identified. This finding is unique to the study, providing new information about how teachers can be helped to increase their ability to provide culturally responsive teaching. Given that teachers play an important role in the implementation of culturally responsive teaching in their classrooms (Merga, 2020), this finding highlights the importance of consistency in the implementation of culturally responsive teaching.

When interpreted within the context of the Ladson-Billings' CRP (1995) and Austin et al.'s (2019) ideas about student representation in texts, the findings suggest that more training is needed to implement these pedagogical principles. Even though

culturally responsive teaching cannot address all the challenges that are present because of the increasingly diversified classrooms, teaching strategies that promote cultural responsiveness could minimize some of these issues (Mensah, 2021). Training for cultural responsiveness has become an essential component of teachers' preparation into the profession, but more efforts are needed to improve their ability to provide culturally responsive pedagogy (Hutchison & McAlister-Shields, 2020). Based on the current findings, CRP needs to be framed beyond the theoretical realm and expand its conceptualization to include the logistics of its effective implementation. Hence, Ladson-Billings' CRP provides the rationale for the importance of multicultural literature as a strategy, but the implementation challenge may not be addressed using this framework alone.

Limitations of the Study

The research findings should be taken with some caution and reflection based on the following limitations. First, the study was based on the subjective perceptions of middle school teachers who teach in Private County. The research findings may not be transferable in other settings that diverge significantly from the characteristics of Private County in terms of demographics, population, or socio-political history. Hence, the finding should be carefully assessed when using outside the intended site of the current research study. To bracket my bias, I kept a detailed research journal.

Second, the design of the study is a basic qualitative design, which is not the most intricate among the different qualitative designs. However, a basic qualitative research design is considered a legitimate design that can lead to important information and data

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The findings reported in this study were derived from rigorous methods that can sustain empirical scrutiny.

Third, another limitation of this study is the possible bias of self-reporting. Interview participants may fail to report and share details that they are asked about due to the possible fear of being perceived in a negative light (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). This bias can be particularly relevant in topics that are controversial or sensitive. This potential limitation was addressed by building a good rapport with the interview participants and by ensuring them that their responses will not be shared publicly without shielding their identity.

Lastly, teachers' lack of administrative training in managing community pushbacks was identified by the participants as a challenge. While several participants mention the "climate of the society" being an obstacle for them to overcome when using multicultural literature in the classroom, most do not go into depth; even after being asked to clarify what they mean. This challenge can be a significant factor because teaching multicultural literature responsibly rests on the ability of teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching (Merga, 2020). This finding suggests that the implementation of multicultural goes beyond pedagogy, underscoring the importance of also considering possible resistance from the community who may not agree with the principles of culturally responsive teaching.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, several recommendations are proposed. Informed by the research findings, the first subsection focuses on the recommendation for practice. The second subsection focuses on the recommendation for future research.

Recommendations for Practice

The first recommendation for practice is to instigate a larger sale effort to integrate multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms. Multicultural literature is needed because the mainstream curriculum often does not offer adequate representation of ethnic and diverse ideas (Chen & Gay, 2020). Hence, the findings of the current study support the feasibility and advantages of using multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms.

The second recommendation for practice is to address the challenges that were identified by the participants with regard to the integration of multicultural literature in teaching language arts. More specifically, educational leaders should address challenges such as teachers' and administrators' lack of administrative training in managing community pushbacks and focused integration of activating prior knowledge among a diverse group of learners. These recommendations were informed by one of the themes generated from this research study.

The third recommendation for practice is to support educators for the training requirements for the successful integration of multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms. More specifically, the use of resources and options of use, selection and evaluation of qualified multicultural literature, and embedding multicultural literature in

consistent classroom practices are training aspects that teachers should be assisted in order to improve their ability to integrate multicultural literature in their classrooms. These recommendations were informed by all of the themes generated from this research study.

Recommendations for Future Research

The first recommendation for future research is to expand the research findings by conducting a more in-depth exploration of the perceptions and lived experiences of teachers who have successfully implemented multicultural literature in their English language arts classes. The current findings can be expanded by the proposed research by focusing on aspects such as training needed for effective integration of multicultural language. The experiences of teachers who have encountered these specific trainings could provide insights into the actual usefulness in the integration of multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms.

The second recommendation for future research is to conduct a larger scale study that compares and contrasts the perceptions of teachers across different areas such as between urban and rural schools or between liberal and conservative areas. Through this proposed research, important distinctions can be made that can aid in the implementation of multicultural literature in classrooms based on the specific characteristics of a particular school or school district.

Finally, future researchers are recommended to conduct a quantitative study to validate or verify some of the key findings from this research. For instance, future researchers can examine if the challenges identified by the participants with regard to the

integration of multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms can be supported in a larger and more diverse sample size using quantitative descriptive designs. Future researchers can also conduct a study that examines if addressing the implementation challenges can lead to more effective integration of multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms. This could be done as a quantitative study that consists of survey in order to reach a larger population of people. Additionally, one could do am mixed method conduct a focus group where further information could be obtained. This would provide the study with a broader scope of participants which may lead to a larger population representation. However, I would not suggest a different methodology because, according to Saldana (2021), qualitative methodology allows the researcher to delve deeper into their findings which may be limited by choosing another methodology.

Implications

Several implications are apparent based on the research findings that were presented and discussed in this chapter. First, more efforts are needed to help educators successfully integrate multicultural literature in language arts classrooms. The findings indicated that educators have positive perceptions about the advantages of integrating multicultural literature in their teaching, but the practice of integration can be challenging. Diverse representations in the classroom remain lacking (Casto, 2020; Chen & Gay, 2020; Thomas, 2020). Hence, the results of the current study underscore the continued efforts to ensure that children are exposed to multicultural literature in their classroom experiences.

Second, culturally responsive teaching can be critical solution in addressing the problem of achievement gap between White and non-White students (Hinton & Dickinson, 2005; du Plessis, 2019). As supported by the study's findings indicating the positive perceptions of teachers regarding the integration of multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms, this is a strength that should be taken advantage by educational leaders. Additionally, teachers indicated that parents and outside stakeholders can sometimes pose a threat to integrating multicultural literature into the classroom. Professional development and training for teachers may be needed in order to help teachers learn how to manage and mitigate parents who oppose the use of multicultural texts in the classroom. More resources and support are necessary in order to maximize the benefits that can be accrued as a result of the willingness of teachers to integrate multicultural literature in their teaching.

Third, students have been found to be not engaged with learning (Gullapyan, 2020; Junker et al., 2021). New strategies and practices should be explored in order to address this issue in order to encourage students to be more engaged with their learning. The findings from this study provide support for the integration of multicultural literature in English language arts classroom as a potential strategy to engage students with learning.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' perceptions of using multicultural literature to teach English language arts that can address the needs of the growing diverse population of students. Based on the results of

the data analysis, several themes serve as the research findings of the study. The themes

that were generated included the perceived meaning of multicultural literature, the

perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English language arts classroom,

the perceived challenges in integrating multicultural literature in English language arts

classroom, and the perceived training requirement to support integration of multicultural

literature in language arts classroom.

The integration of multicultural literature in English language arts classroom

require resources, support, and training. The continued lack of access to multicultural

literature in educational settings remains a problem in the provision of culturally

responsive teaching (Cruz, 2019; Koss et al., 2017). Hence, it is important to view

culturally responsive pedagogy as both theoretical and logistical in natures, which means

that conscious efforts are needed in the implementation phase.

The results of this study provide incremental evidence about the positive

perception of educators regarding multicultural literature and the perceived advantages of

integrating multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms. These findings

generally support previous literature about culturally responsive teaching (Bonner et al.,

2018; Gay, 2013; Larson et al., 2018). This added empirical support about the positive

perception of educators regarding multicultural literature and the perceived advantages of

integrating multicultural literature in English language arts classrooms underscores the

need to take advantage of these positive assets in the successful implementation of

culturally responsive teaching practices.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

I will begin each interview by introducing myself and asking the interviewee to introduce themselves as well. I will ask them how long they have been teaching English Language Arts. I will also ask them what grade levels they have experienced teaching. I will remind each participant that the interview is being recorded and were used for research purposes but were kept confidential. I will also ask them to keep our interview confidential.

Appendix B: Research Question/Interview Question Alignment

Research Question	Interview Question
RQ1 How do local middle school teachers perceive the use of multicultural literature to teach language arts to address the increased diversity in the English language arts classroom?	1. In your opinion, what is the percentage of children of color in your classroom in comparison to White children in your classroom? 2. Please define what "multicultural literature" means to you. 3. As a classroom teacher, please explain the pros and cons of using multicultural literature in the English language arts classroom. 4. Please share about a time when you used a multicultural text in your language arts classroom. 5. What are some reading instructional strategies you have incorporated while teaching language arts with multicultural literature? 6. How do you think multicultural literature helped you address this area of reading instruction?

	7. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the level of student engagement when reading multicultural literature in your classroom? Please explain why you chose this rating.
	8. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the level of student engagement when reading non-multicultural literature? Please explain why you chose this rating.
	9. When you use multicultural literature, what are some of the things you do to ensure it is a productive experience for your students?
RQ2 What supports do local middle school teachers think are needed to help them use multicultural literature with fidelity to teach language arts?	10. Does your curriculum offer you a required set of novels to use with each unit? If so, are there any multicultural texts? Please share some titles.

	11. Does your county-established curriculum offer you a required set of novels to use for each unit? If so, what texts might be considered to be multicultural texts?
	12. Please describe county-provided training or other resources that support the use of multicultural literature in the middle school language arts classroom.
	13. What challenges have you encountered in terms of the training you received for incorporating more multicultural literature with fidelity in your classroom?
	14. Reflecting on your teaching practices, what types of training would you like to have to help teach language arts with multicultural literature?
	15. What other resources would you personally like to have to help you

	incorporate more multicultural literature with fidelity in your language arts classroom?

Appendix C: Codes and Themes

Codes	Categories	Themes
Diverse Protagonist Literature	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
Multicultural Literature	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
Code Switching	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
Other Cultures	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
Representation	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
Different Student Backgrounds	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
Black/African American	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
White/Caucasian	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
Cultural Storytelling	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
Windows, Doors and Mirrors Theory	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
Underrepresented Culture in Dominant Literature	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
LGBTQIA +	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
Hispanic Literature	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature

Novel Studies	Definition of ML	Theme 1- Perceived meaning of multicultural literature
Learning expectations	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English language arts classroom
Non-Fiction Literature	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English language arts classroom
Diverse Students	ML Engagement	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English language arts classroom
Student Experience	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Challenged Student Perspective	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
New Student Experience	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Student Confidence Level	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Lexile Level	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom

Differing Perspectives	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Teaching the "Whole Student"	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Activating Background Knowledge	ML Engagement	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Student Agency	ML Engagement	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
ESOL Learners	Non-ML Engagement	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Elliminating Racism	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Developing a Sense of Community	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Challenging Conversations	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Rich Discussions	Experience with ML in the Classroom	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in

		English Language Arts classroom
Exploration Opportunity	Non-ML Engagement	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Realisitic Worldview	ML Engagement	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Building Student Relationships	ML Engagement	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Academic Performance Connection	ML Engagement	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Student Centered	ML Engagement	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Reading Stamina	ML Engagement	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Richness of Texts	ML Engagement	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Making Connections Through Literature	ML Engagement	Theme 2 - Perceived advantages in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom

Different Cutures	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Ambiguity of meaning and purpose	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Dominant/Overt Culture	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Challenges with Differing Perspectives in Classroom	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Challenges with Differing Perspectives Among Stakeholders	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Student Invlovement	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Resource Options	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Parent Support	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Prejudice	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
District Provided Resources	Required Training to Integrate ML	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Retribution from overt stakeholders	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural

		literature in English Language Arts classroom
New Bill	Required Training to Integrate ML	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Controversial Discussions	Required Training to Integrate ML	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Negative Parent Involvement	Advantages of ML	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Student Bias	Non-ML Engagement	Theme 3 - Challenges in using multicultural literature in English Language Arts classroom
Student discussions	Instructional Strategies	Theme 4 - Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
	Disadvantages of ML	Theme 4 - Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Direct instruction	Required Training to Integrate ML	Theme 4 - Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Classroom discussions	Instructional Strategies	Theme 4 - Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Globalized instruction	Instructional Strategies	Theme 4 - Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom

Lack of Cultural Background Knowledge	Instructional Strategies	Theme 4 - Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Support from school administration	Approval Process for ML Texts and ML Trainings Received	Theme 4 - Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Specified Group Instruction	Instructional Strategies	Theme 4 -Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Grade Level Texts	Instructional Strategies	Theme 4 -Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Media Texts	Instructional Strategies	Theme 4 -Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Background Knowledge	Instructional Strategies	Theme 4 -Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Professional Development	Approval Process for ML Texts and ML Trainings Received	Theme 4 -Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Dominant Culture Viewpoint	Approval Process for ML Texts and ML Trainings Received	Theme 4 -Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Approved Resources	Approval Process for ML Texts and ML Trainings Received	Theme 4 -Training requirement to support integration of multicultural

		literature in language arts classroom
Quality Texts	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 4 -Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Writing Styles	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 4 -Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Best Teaching Practices	Approval Process for ML Texts and ML Trainings Received	Theme 4 -Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Supplemental Instruction Tools	Approval Process for ML Texts and ML Trainings Received	Theme 4 -Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Teacher-Bias	Challenges in ML Training	Theme 4- Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
Springboard Curriculum	Approval Process for ML Texts and ML Trainings Received	Theme 4- Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom
World-wide view/perception	Instructional Strategies	Theme 4 - Training requirement to support integration of multicultural literature in language arts classroom

Appendix D: Letter of Invitation

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Kearstin Jacobs.. As a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting a study titled: "Middle School Teachers Perceptions of Using Multicultural Literature in Their Classroom to Teach Reading". This is a letter inviting you to participate.

As a middle school teacher in the local setting, I would like to invite you to participate in this study to share your viewpoints on this topic. Your participation in this research were helpful and may influence positive change by providing specific strategies for administrators to retain teachers at their schools.

If you make the decision to participate in this study, all information were kept confidential and secure. Your responses were represented by a number and aggregated for the final support so information will not be traced to an individual.

To collect data, we will carry out an interview. Once you agree to participate, we will set up the time and date that are best for you. The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes via Zoom. There are demographic questions as well as 10 open-end questions.

If you are interested in participating in this research, please reach out to me by email,. Your response to agree to participate will count as your consent. Once you agree to participate, I will email you an informed consent form that you will also need to respond to with your consent. I suggest you keep it in your records. Please note in the informed consent paper that participation in this study is voluntary, you can drop out of the study at any time, and a small monetary honorarium were given as an appreciation for your time.

I would like to thank you for your time and I hope that you will decide to be a participant in my research.

Thank You,

Kearstin Jacobs