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## Middle School Teacher Perceptions of Incorporating Multicultural Instructional Practices

Jacob Isom  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Jacob Isom

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2023

Abstract

Middle School Teacher Perceptions of Incorporating Multicultural Instructional Practices

by

Jacob Isom

MEd, Northern Arizona University, 2018

BSW, Middle Tennessee State University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Walden University

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## Abstract

With increasing diversity in the U.S. student population, implementing multicultural instructional practices (MCIP) to support student success is an essential skill for effective educators. However, teachers often struggle to address the multicultural educational needs of diverse students, a professional practice problem that has been adequately explored by researchers. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore Grade 6–8 teachers' perceptions of incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms. The conceptual framework was Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education. The research questions addressed the perceptions of how middle school teachers incorporate MCIP, the challenges of incorporating MCIP, and the support and resources needed to implement MCIP. A basic qualitative study design was used featuring semistructured interviews. The participants were eight middle school teachers from a single district in the Southeast United States with 3 or more years of experience. The interview data were analyzed using a priori, open, and axial coding, which yielded three thematic findings encompassing what participants viewed as essential to the development of MCIP: (a) cultural self-awareness; (b) administrative intentionality in providing culturally focused and integrated events; and (c) MCIP materials, resources, and expert guidance to support more inclusive, self-aware classroom environments. The study may support positive social change by informing administrators and other stakeholders of (a) approaches they can use to address teachers' challenges in incorporating MCIP and (b) the benefits of providing more opportunities for teachers to grow in their collective and individual MCIP.

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## Dedication

This work is dedicated to Jaciaye Iyndeia Isom, Naseer Savior Isom, Jennie Ann Rodgers, and all those I love who are no longer here to see my achievements and see my growth. This project would not have been possible without the feedback, encouragement, and constructive criticism of Dr. Anissa Harris and Dr. Barbara Schirmer, may she rest in peace. This work is also dedicated to all those devoted to progress and who never give up in the face of struggle.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

U.S. classrooms have increasingly diverse students in them. Providing effective instruction to students of different backgrounds may be difficult for educators, in particular, novice teachers, who have reported student diversity as one of their greatest challenges (Magaldi et al., 2018). Teachers' perceptions of and attitude toward other cultures influence their instructional practices, and they often rely on personal experiences to understand the struggles and strengths of diverse students (Magaldi et al., 2018). Teachers of all races, ethnicities, and cultures enter the field of education with limited or no cross-cultural preparation in their academic training. *Multicultural education* is defined as the provision of knowledge to students about their histories and cultures and the contributions of diverse groups, including respect for gender, race, and socioeconomic background (Aragona-Young & Sawyer, 2018). In this study, I sought to identify approaches for addressing the challenges in incorporating multicultural instructional practices (MCIP) with diverse learners.

In Chapter 1, I discuss the gap in research on MCIP with diverse learners and the research problem involving the incorporation of MCIP in many middle school classrooms. Next, I identify the purpose and research questions (RQs) and briefly describe the conceptual framework of Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education. To follow, I discuss the rationale for selecting basic qualitative as the methodological design to explore the participating teachers' perceptions of incorporating multicultural education as the phenomenon of interest. Also, I provide definitions of key

terminology and describe the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. Finally, I provide a summary and a transition to Chapter 2.

### **Background**

Many teachers are restructuring their classroom practices to bring more engagement to students. Differentiating instruction for students academically, culturally, and socially is a key component of multicultural education and academic success of all learners (Watters et al., 2020). Teachers who create an environment where diverse learners feel comfortable and safe provide a context for successful learning. Kuppens et al. (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study in which they examined secondary school teachers' perceptions of multicultural education. Findings indicated that the participants connected the importance of promoting unity, as well as recognizing and celebrating diversity at school. Given the disparaging academic achievement of many U.S. public school students, the benefits of culturally responsive instruction on students' academic performance are well documented in educational research studies.

Multicultural education is not a new phenomenon. The research literature addresses teaching programs; culturally responsive teaching; and teachers' understanding, self-efficacy, and equity mindset as it relates to multicultural education (e.g., Lew & Nelson, 2016). Cherng and Davis (2019) conducted a quantitative correlational study to examine the relationship between characteristics of teacher education candidates and their multicultural awareness. Findings for 2,357 preservice undergraduate and graduate candidates showed greatest multicultural awareness among African American and Latino,

less among Asian American, and least among European American teacher education candidates. Cruz et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between perceived self-efficacy for culturally responsive teaching and the sociodemographic and school characteristics of 245 preservice and inservice teachers. Based on responses on a survey questionnaire, it was found that the teachers felt more confident in building personal relationships with students but less confident in cultural knowledge and being able to teach students about their culture's contributions. The research on culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy involves studies on incorporating students' culture to make learning relevant and to support learning (e.g., Bonner et al., 2018). The research also entails studies that focus on how teachers are prepared to work with diverse students, teachers' perspectives on culturally responsive pedagogy, and how teaching programs address multicultural education (e.g., Delk, 2019; Toms et al., 2019). The recent research on multicultural education involves teachers' perspectives on using multicultural literature, beliefs about teaching race, understanding of MCIP, and the role of cultural diversity and social justice in instruction (e.g., Barton et al., 2020; Yilmaz, 2016). Researchers have found that implementation of culturally relevant practices for teachers requires professional development.

Many efforts have brought harmony and unity to the forefront. Yet, there is a lack of extant research on practicing teachers' experiences and attitudes toward the incorporation of MCIP in diverse classrooms (Titu et al., 2018). Teachers have very little experience with incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms. This study was needed to

explore practicing teachers' perceptions about incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms, the challenges in implementing MCIP, and the supports and resources they perceive needing to implement multicultural education.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem addressed in this study is that teachers often struggle to address the multicultural educational needs of students in diverse classrooms. Most teachers are employed in communities with diverse populations of students and have received relatively little preparation for working with diverse student populations (Magaldi et al., 2018). Researchers have found that European American teachers' race and socioeconomic background, combined with limited experience teaching diverse cultures, result in cultural disconnects with diverse students, and these factors contribute to the teachers' lack of confidence in addressing multicultural content (Cutts, 2020). Students of diverse backgrounds become more community oriented, have a greater sense of personal growth, and achieve more academically when they are taught by faculty who are trained in multicultural education (Booker et al., 2016).

*Multicultural education* is defined as the provision of knowledge to students about their histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups, including respect for gender, race, and socioeconomic background (Aragona-Young & Sawyer, 2018). Research has supported the effects of teachers' beliefs regarding culturally diverse students in the classroom. Teachers are the most relevant factor when it comes to making a difference in the educational life of students (Alismail, 2016). Although studies have



been done on preparation for diverse classrooms, teacher attitudes and beliefs, self-efficacy, and equity mindset about multicultural education, I identified no research studies on middle school teachers' perceptions on incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms. Exploring teachers' perceptions of MCIP is important because of the ever-increasing diversity in U.S. schools requiring teachers who are knowledgeable and skilled in addressing the needs of all students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In this basic qualitative study, I explored middle school teachers' perceptions on incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms. The benefits of MCIP have been identified. Students are more likely to be engaged in the classroom environment and find relevance in the instructional practices being used (Booker et al., 2016). The perceptions of teachers about these practices, the challenges in implementing these practices, and the supports and resources that teachers perceive needing to implement these practices are not known, according to my review of the literature. I identified approaches for assisting teachers in incorporating MCIP, the challenges that teachers face in implementing MCIP, and the MCIP used to promote the academic achievement of diverse students.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What are the perceptions of middle school teachers about incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of middle school teachers about the challenges in implementing MCIP?

RQ3: What supports, and resources do middle school teachers perceive needing to implement MCIP?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that informed this study was Banks's (1995) five dimensions of multicultural education. These dimensions reflect practices that, if implemented, can create equal educational opportunities for all students by changing the total school environment so that it will reflect the diverse cultures and groups within the classroom. The five dimensions of multicultural education include content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowerment of school culture. Content integration is about teacher use of examples and content from multiple cultures to demonstrate key concepts, principles, and generalizations. Knowledge construction involves intentional teaching students to understand and investigate how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and biases of social influencers affect the creation of intelligence, judgments, and decisions. Prejudice reduction helps students develop democratic racial attitudes. Equity pedagogy involves teachers modifying their instruction to facilitate the academic achievement of students from all backgrounds. Empowerment of school culture entails reforming the culture of the school so that students from various cultures and language groups can experience fairness in the school building.

MCIP was an appropriate conceptual framework for this study because I explored participating teachers' perceptions when incorporating MCIP from the perspective of the

framework's five dimensions. The five dimensions approach provides direction for teachers in modifying their teaching styles so that they use a wide range of strategies and teaching techniques to enable all students to learn more effectively. I used the dimensions to explore middle school teachers' perceptions of incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms, the challenges they perceive, and the supports and resources they perceive needing to implement MCIP. Several of the interview questions used for data collection incorporated concepts from the five dimensions. I also drew from the dimensions to explore the participants' perceptions about MCIP with diverse learners.

### **Nature of the Study**

The methodological design that informed this study was basic qualitative. This design is used to pursue an understanding of the ways that people view, approach, and experience the world and make meaning of their experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). A basic qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because perceptions of middle school teachers were explored about incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms. I conducted semistructured interviews with eight middle school teachers from one school district in the Southeastern region of the United States. Open, axial, and selective coding were used to analyze the data.

### **Definitions**

*Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education:* A framework that outlines five dimensions— content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction,

equity pedagogy, and empowerment of school culture—that educators can use to design, implement, and assess programs that target diversity among students (Banks, 1995).

*Cultural competence*: The integration of knowledge, concepts, attitudes, and skills to develop cross cultural communication and effective interactions with others (Ford & Whiting, 2007).

*Culture*: The shared beliefs, social norms, and traits of a racial, religious, or social group (Katrini, 2018).

*Multicultural education*: The preparation of students to understand various cultures and provide students with a healthy self-concept by instructing on the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups (National Association of Multicultural Education, 2022).

*Multiculturalism*: The point of view that cultures, races, and ethnicity, mainly those from oppressed minority groups, should be informed about cultural differences (Alismail, 2016).

### **Assumptions**

One assumption that cannot be demonstrated but was critical to the meaningfulness of the study is that all participants were forthright and honest in their answers to the interview questions. The second assumption is that participating teachers had considered the role of multicultural education in their instruction. These two assumptions were necessary in the context of my study to have confidence in the accuracy of the participants' perceptions about the incorporation of MCIP in diverse

classrooms, challenges in implementing these practices, and supports and resources needed to implement these practices.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study encompassed the perceptions of middle school teachers about incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms. The eight teachers in the study worked at the same school in the district and had at least 3 years of teaching experience to ensure sufficient experience in providing instruction to diverse learners; thus, 1st- and 2nd-year teachers were excluded. I considered using a case study methodological design, but, because I planned to use only one data source, I determined that a basic qualitative design was appropriate. Critical race theory was also considered as a theoretical framework but was not used because I wanted to explore other areas of multicultural education that went beyond race, such as religion and gender. The findings of this study may be transferable to other settings where stakeholders have concerns about the implementation of MCIP and the support needed by teachers to effectively implement these practices.

### **Limitations**

A limitation of this study is that only Grade 6 and 7 teachers were included although Grade 8 is part of the local middle school site. The reason for this limitation is that I hold a leadership position for Grade 8 and cannot recruit participants from this grade level. Another limitation involves transferability given that participants were from one middle school in the Southeast region of the United States. A third limitation involves dependability, which refers to the likelihood that other researchers could repeat

the study and would arrive at the same findings with the same data (Burkholder et al., 2016). To mitigate the limitation of transferability, I thoroughly explained each step in carrying out the study. Though these descriptions cannot ensure transferability, they can enable readers to determine whether the findings may be pertinent to their settings. To mitigate the limitation of dependability, I kept an audit trail. I carefully tracked every step in the collection and analysis of data. As Carcary (2009) explained, audit trails provide a documented account of decisions made in the research study and how elements develop in relation to the theoretical, methodological, and analytic aspects of the research.

I have pursued the topic of multicultural education because of my strong opinions about the importance of developing relationships and creating a caring educational environment for all students. I acknowledged my bias about the importance of multicultural education. To help ensure that my bias did not influence my behavior as the researcher, I maintained a reflective journal to assist in recognizing my bias and identifying steps to avoid letting my bias influence data collection and analysis. I discuss this topic in further detail in Chapter 3.

### **Significance**

The study findings offer insights about addressing the challenges related to implementing multicultural education and the supports and resources needed for successful implementation. Due to the diversity in the student populations of most U.S. public schools today (Adams et al., 2018), the study may support positive social change by highlighting strategies that stakeholders can potentially use to improve teachers'

capacity to implement multicultural education. The use of such strategies may enable teachers to be prepared to teach in any classroom environment regardless of the diversity of their students.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 1, I introduced the topic, discussed the gap in knowledge about multicultural education, and described why my study was needed. I provided the purpose of the study and the RQs I formulated to explore teachers' perceptions on incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms. In this chapter, I also described Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education as the conceptual framework and identified the nature of the study as a basic qualitative design. Finally, I provided definitions of key terms and discussed the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and potential significance of the study. In Chapter 2, I identify the strategy I used to search the literature, describe Banks's five dimension of multicultural education as the conceptual framework, and provide an exhaustive review of the recent research literature related to key concepts of multicultural education.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The problem that was addressed in this basic qualitative study was that teachers often struggle to address the multicultural educational needs of students in diverse classrooms. Most teachers are employed in communities with diverse populations of students and have received relatively little preparation for working with diverse student populations (Magaldi et al., 2018). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions on incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms. An increasingly diverse U.S. student population makes teaching and instructing all student cultural groups a significant issue in education. Researchers have found that European Americans teachers' race and socioeconomic background, combined with limited experience teaching diverse cultures, result in cultural disconnects with diverse students, and these factors contribute to the teachers' lack of confidence in addressing multicultural content (Cutts, 2020).

The research on culturally relevant teaching shows that teachers are more likely to be successful in diverse classrooms if they (a) implement instructional practices that include students' cultural backgrounds, (b) are student-centered, and (c) create a safe and inclusive environment. Dixson and Ladson-Billings (2017) proposed that culturally relevant pedagogy must support students in accepting and affirming their cultural identities. As I discuss in the literature review, preservice teachers understand the importance of students' lived experiences and have a broad understanding of



multicultural concepts but express a lack of preparation in their teacher education programs. Although teachers have been found to agree with key aspects of multicultural education, their' attitudes and perceptions about race, culture and identity are tied to their own understanding of culture and their lack of understanding of the cultures and beliefs of the diverse students they have taught (Delk, 2019). Teachers in the Aragona-Young and Sawyer (2018) study described culture as being a way of life or your personal background, were unable to recognize specific cultural identities, and showed low endorsement of multicultural practices because of incomplete understanding of multicultural practices, reluctance to implement these practices, and time constraints and pressures. In this chapter, I discuss the literature search strategy, describe the conceptual framework, and provide an exhaustive review of the current literature related to key concepts of multicultural education. The chapter ends with methodological considerations and a transition to Chapter 3.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I searched for pertinent literature published in peer-reviewed journals in the following databases: Academic Search Complete, Education Source, and Sage Journals. I used the following keywords: *multicultural education*, *culturally responsive pedagogy*, *culturally relevant teaching*, *multiculturalism*, *intercultural sensitivity*, and *multicultural curriculum*. I applied the following criteria to select the studies: peer reviewed; pertinence to the topic of multicultural education; and published within the last 5 years,

except for seminal studies. I initially identified more than 100 articles, of which 66 are included in the literature review.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that informed this study was Banks's (1995) five dimensions of multicultural education. These dimensions are designed to ensure that all students are provided equal educational opportunities. The total school environment must reflect the diverse cultures and groups within the classroom. The five dimensions of multicultural education include content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowerment of school culture. Content integration is about teachers' use of examples and content from multiple cultures to demonstrate key concepts, principles, and generalizations. Knowledge construction involves intentional teaching students to understand and investigate how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and biases of social influencers affect the creation of intelligence, judgments, and decisions. Prejudice reduction helps students develop democratic racial attitudes. Equity pedagogy involves teachers modifying their instruction to facilitate the academic achievement of students from all backgrounds. Empowerment of school culture entails reforming the culture of the school so that students from various cultures and language groups can experience fairness in the school building.

Several researchers have incorporated the five dimensions of multicultural education as a conceptual framework. Janakiraman et al. (2019) conducted a case study

in which they applied the five dimensions of multicultural education to study the instructional interventions applied by a college instructor. The five dimensions of multicultural education served as a lens for researchers to reflect on instructional techniques and their effectiveness in producing multicultural attitudes in students. Other studies have also focused on the implementation of Banks's (1995) five dimensions of multicultural education. Brady and Esmail (2019) conducted a descriptive mixed-methods study to investigate the lack of multicultural preparation for preservice teachers. Using the five dimensions of multicultural education as a framework, the authors found that preservice teachers must be provided with diverse teaching experiences and cross-cultural activities through service learning to be better prepared for diverse students. Teachers are social agents who should be trained to bring a culturally diverse perspective into the classroom and curriculum. Case in point, Jun (2016) conducted a qualitative case study to examine the ways in which two teachers put into practice multicultural teaching in a first-grade afterschool program. Using the five dimensions of multicultural education, Jun found that the two teachers were aware of multicultural concepts and applied their knowledge into culturally relevant practices.

The five dimensions of multicultural education was an appropriate conceptual framework for this study because I explored teachers' perceptions to incorporate multicultural practices in diverse classrooms. I explored the participants' use of content integration by examining the use of examples, data, and information from a variety of cultures to illustrate key concepts in their teaching. I explored teachers' knowledge

construction by examining the procedures used to create knowledge and how they helped students to understand and investigate how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and biases of social influencers affect how knowledge is created. I also explored how teachers helped students identify the biases within their own thinking and teacher selection of instructional materials that helped them learn how to deconstruct the accepted knowledge in the discipline.

I explored participating teachers' perceptions on prejudice reduction by examining how teachers planned lessons and how they used activities to help students develop positive attitudes toward different cultural groups. To determine equity pedagogy, I examined participants' techniques and methods that facilitate academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups. To identify their perceptions of empowerment of school culture and social structure, I examined how participants' spoke on structuring the culture and organization of the school so that diverse students may experience educational equality. The framework was used to interpret findings by using teachers' real-world experiences from open-ended questions to provide the context regarding their perceptions of incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**

Four patterns were identified in the research literature: culturally responsive pedagogy, multicultural education in teacher education programs, teacher attitudes and perceptions, and professional development. I discussed pertinent studies, identified

consonant and disparate findings across studies, and discussed methodological issues in the body of research literature to identify what is currently known and not known about multicultural practices.

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

The research on culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy involves studies on incorporating students' culture to make learning relevant and to support learning. Dixson and Ladson-Billings (2017) proposed that culturally relevant pedagogy must support students in accepting and affirming their cultural identities. Culturally relevant pedagogy is often used interchangeably with culturally responsive teaching, which Gay (2015) defined as using cultural knowledge, prior experience, frame of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse student to make learning encounters more relevant and effective.

The recent research on culturally responsive teaching has explored issues of teachers' understanding, classroom practices, and changes in professional development. The studies on teachers' understanding have been qualitative. Lew and Nelson (2016) interviewed 16 teachers who had graduated from a teacher education program within the past 2 years and found that some of them understood culturally responsive teaching in a simplistic way and viewed culturally responsive teaching as cultural celebrations disconnected from academic learning. Farinde-Wu et al. (2017) interviewed seven teachers who had earned teacher of the year awards to learn their approach to teaching and instructing students in urban schools and the strategies they used to build rapport and

actively engage students in the learning process. Results showed that five factors were foundational to their teaching. The teachers respected, acted immediately, communicated, celebrated, and encouraged students. They also used familial-style classroom management to create a culture of success, stressed student-centered instruction, and integrated multicultural perspectives.

In a recent intervention study, Flory and Wylie (2019) examined changes in the cultural competence of six secondary physical education teachers in an urban school district as a result of participation in workshops about cultural competence. Each of the four professional development workshops explored components of cultural competence and concluded with a focus group interview. Data from multiple interviews and three classroom observations were analyzed using constant comparison and inductive analysis. Though the authors described qualities of cultural competence exhibited by the teachers, they offered no evidence that the workshops changed the teachers' cultural competence. Borrero and Sanchez (2017) investigated asset mapping as a culturally relevant pedagogical tool. The participants were three classroom teachers and 15 students in a kindergarten (K) through Grade 8 urban public school. According to the authors, asset mapping includes identifying evidence that indicates a community's strengths and resources. Once strengths and resources are identified and represented in a map, the participants are expected to think about how to build on these assets to address community needs. These researchers collected data through teacher interviews and student focus groups during which they were asked about their experiences with asset

mapping and perceptions of the project. Three themes were identified: learning about self, learning about others, and building community in the classroom.

In one study, the authors investigated teachers' self-efficacy for teaching culturally responsive teaching in the absence of professional development. Bonner et al. (2018) probed the thoughts and beliefs of 430 teachers about culturally responsive teaching and their experiences and ability to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching. Results showed positive attitudes toward culturally diverse students, high self-efficacy, and competence in teaching diverse students.

### **Multicultural Education in Teacher Education Programs**

A substantial body of research literature on multicultural education has focused on the preparation of teachers for diverse classrooms. The following research studies focus on how teachers are prepared to work with diverse students, what teachers' perspectives on culturally responsive pedagogy are, and how teaching programs address multicultural education.

Two recent studies of teacher preparation programs have involved characteristics of teacher candidates and their needs in working with diverse students. Cherng and Davis (2019) conducted a quantitative correlational study to examine the relationship between characteristics of teacher education candidates and their multicultural awareness. Findings for 2,357 preservice undergraduate and graduate candidates showed greatest multicultural awareness among African American and Latino, less among Asian American, and least among European American teacher education candidates. The

researchers also found a positive relationship between candidates' multicultural awareness and creating a nurturing classroom environment. Toms et al. (2019) examined the diversity-related professional development needs of 492 students enrolled in a teacher preparation program in a qualitative survey study. Findings revealed the need for diversity-related professional development in six areas: mental illness, multicultural awareness and competence, gender affiliation, facilitating diversity-focused discussions, discrimination, and race/ethnicity.

Several studies have involved examination of the effectiveness of teacher education programs in preparing candidates for diverse education settings. Delk (2019) asked 12 preservice teachers who were in their second and final semester about their perceptions of preparedness to meet the needs of culturally diverse students and their preparedness to enter a diverse classroom. Findings showed that only one course included objectives geared towards diversity and the participants did not believe they were prepared to teach diverse classrooms of students. Similarly, Borrero et al. (2018) asked 13 preservice and inservice teachers who had completed their final semester in a master's credentialing program or their 1st year of teaching about their perspectives of culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally irrelevant pedagogy, consequences of culturally responsive pedagogy, what helped them to develop culturally responsive pedagogy, what challenges remained, and what works for them as a new teacher. The participants identified the importance of recognizing students' backgrounds as assets, building



community in the classroom, being flexible during student-centered instruction, and engaging in self-reflection.

A few research studies have involved investigations of how teacher educators develop and teach multicultural education courses. In the Gorski and Parekh (2020) quantitative descriptive study, 186 instructors who had taught at least one course in which multiculturalism was a central topic completed a survey questionnaire. Results indicated that they embraced multiple multicultural education approaches, including teaching with cultural sensitivity, multicultural competence, as well as teaching counter-hegemonic practice. Janakiraman et al. (2019) examined the course design and instructional strategies of one instructor of a multicultural education course. Findings showed that the instructor implemented most of Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education.

A body of research has focused on the incorporation of culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally relevant teaching in teacher preparation programs. Adams and Glass (2018) examined the perceptions of three university professors about culturally relevant pedagogy and how they engaged their preservice teachers in developing knowledge of the importance and use of culturally relevant pedagogy. The participants identified specific components that must be strengthened to be competent in culturally responsive pedagogy, they recognized unique challenges in culturally responsive pedagogy, and believed that hands-on experience can foster students' engagement and understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Research on culturally responsive/culturally relevant teaching has also preservice teachers experience during course work. Nash (2018) explored the development of dispositions among four preservice teachers and implementation of culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy during two early childhood literacy methods courses. The preservice teachers learned to understand and apply disciplinary norms different from their own, developed awareness of the specific dispositions of and practices of culturally relevant/responsive teachers. Findings indicated that teachers who include students' lived experiences and who provide colorblind discourse about race had a thorough understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy. The survey questionnaire responses of 105 early childhood teachers in the Djonko-Moore et al. (2018) correlational study showed that culturally responsive teaching is multifaceted with teacher efficacy having a direct effect on all dimensions of culturally responsive teaching and teacher satisfaction affecting two dimensions of culturally responsive teaching. Thomas et al. (2020) investigated how 122 preservice teachers' perceptions and beliefs about culturally responsive teaching were influenced during a 16-week teacher preparation program, with half in a traditional practicum course and half in a community-engaged teacher preparation program. Significant increases in culturally responsive teaching efficacy and outcome expectations were found for the cohorts in the community-engaged teacher preparation program and large differences in growth compared to the students in the traditional program.

Issues with the incorporation of multicultural education into teacher education have been explored in several other recent studies. Byker and Marquardt (2016) investigated how elementary teacher candidates identified and analyzed resources with multicultural and global competency themes for future teaching practices. The authors did not describe the directions that the candidates received to carry out the task and did not explain the artifacts and annotations that served as the data source. Based on artifact analysis, the authors found that approximately two-thirds of the candidates used children's literature, almost one-third used websites, and the remaining used magazines and videos. The authors identified two themes—investigating the world and communicating ideas. Ottley et al. (2020) explored the instruction of one teacher educator in integrating inclusive practice into project-based learning activities with 40 early childhood preservice teachers. Findings showed that the teachers had little prior experience with inclusive activities and were attentive and involved in the activities. Further, their participation informed new knowledge and perspectives, and they exited the experience with varied levels of cultural competence. Samuels (2018) examined the perspectives of 200 teachers who read current literature and engaged in discourse about what cultural responsiveness looks, sounds, and feels like in the classroom. Qualitative analysis revealed the teachers' perspectives on culturally responsive pedagogy, including the benefits of relationship building, teacher development of cross-cultural inclusiveness, and the influence of diverse worldviews to positively influence classroom culture.

### **Teacher Self-Efficacy Related to Multicultural Education**

Several research studies have involved the examination of teachers' self-efficacy when working with diverse populations. Much of this research has focused on self-efficacy for culturally responsive teaching and involved investigation of potential correlations between self-efficacy and teacher characteristics. Self-efficacy is defined as the competency to deliver behaviors specific to the task at hand.

Cruz et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between perceived self-efficacy for culturally responsive teaching and the sociodemographic and school characteristics of 245 preservice and inservice teachers. Based on responses on a survey questionnaire, it was found that the teachers felt more confident in building personal relationships with students but less confident in cultural knowledge and being able to teach students about their culture's contributions. The authors also found differences based on teaching experience, with preservice teachers reporting less confidence in supporting diverse students than those with more experience. However, findings also showed that credential preparation type, subject type, school type, and geographic location did not influence self-efficacy. Clark (2020) conducted a similar study to investigate the relationship between perceptions of self-efficacy to teach reading to diverse learners, teacher education program completion, inservice professional development experience, and mentor teacher experience. Participants were 127 teacher candidates who completed a survey questionnaire first when completing their preservice teacher education program and then when completing a full-time year of teaching. Significant differences in self-

efficacy for teaching reading to diverse learners were found between the two points in time and significant differences for the influence of professional development and mentoring experience.

In two studies, the authors took unique approaches to examining the relationships between teacher self-efficacy and multicultural education. DeSantis and Christopher (2021) explored how personal experiences as a K through Grade 12 (K–12) student affected teachers' current self-efficacy for teaching in diverse classrooms. Based on survey questionnaires completed by 73 teachers, findings showed statistically significant correlations between participants' experiences with diversity as a student and their confidence teaching in diverse classrooms. Additionally, there was no effect on their attitudes towards implementing culturally responsive pedagogies. In the Atilas et al. (2017) study, differences in teachers' sense of self-efficacy and multicultural attitudes when working with Latino and Marshallese immigrant children were examined. The participants were 90 early childhood teachers in one public school district in which the teachers were predominantly European American. Findings revealed a significant difference between teachers' sense of efficacy when working with Latinos versus when working with Marshallese students and was positively correlated with their multicultural attitudes.

### **Teacher Attitudes and Perceptions Related to Multicultural Education**

A substantial body of recent research has addressed the attitudes, perceptions, and understanding of teachers about multicultural education and the practices they use in

diverse classrooms. The studies were qualitative and involved exploration of teachers' perspectives of the meaning of multicultural education, role of global citizenship in the curriculum, and impact of diverse experiences among students and teachers.

Yilmaz (2016) explored the perceptions of 12 fourth-year preservice teachers regarding multiculturalism and multicultural education and found that they offered definitions of multiculturalism that aligned with definitions in the literature. However, Yilmaz did not provide information about the teacher education curriculum and included no analysis on whether their perceptions reflected what they had been taught. Andrews and Aydin (2020) explored the perceptions of 20 preservice teachers in a secondary social studies education course about the importance of including global citizenship into K–12 education and how to implement a global citizenship curriculum. They expressed the importance of students becoming global citizens, incorporating citizenship education into social studies, and providing students with resources that translate into critical-thinking skills to compete at the local, national, and global levels. Unlike the previous two studies, Keefer (2017) sought the perceptions of five social studies teachers about students from different social class backgrounds to explore their awareness of the impact of poverty on educational achievement. Keefer found that the teachers focused on the perceived deficits of lower-class students and that these deficits led to limited opportunities for educational achievement.

A few studies addressed the attitudes of teachers instructing students from diverse backgrounds. Titu et al. (2018) explored the attitudes of eight secondary science teachers

and how they felt about teaching culturally diverse students and how they addressed students of color. Results show that teachers were unprepared; mostly, connections with minority students were reliant on if the teacher shared the same background as the student. Magaldi et al. (2018) explored the attitudes of 108 minority teachers about their reliance on using their personal background to help them connect with minority students considering poor multicultural preparation. Findings indicated that minority teachers relied on their personal background to understand students' and their families' struggles and strengths. The teachers also reported sharing cultural perspectives with students and expressed being motivated by social justice and bridging cultural divides.

### **Teachers' Understanding of Multiculturalism**

Several researchers have examined teachers' understanding of multiculturalism and the influence of their understanding on instruction. Most of this literature focuses on multicultural pedagogy and curriculum. The recent research on this topic involved teachers' perspectives on using multicultural literature, beliefs about teaching race, understanding of multicultural practices, and the role of cultural diversity and social justice in instruction.

Several studies focused on incorporating race, cultural diversity, social justice, and multicultural literature in instruction. The 13 teachers in the Martell and Stevens (2017) study described their practices in teaching race to be influenced by their personal and professional experiences and were for the most part aligned with critical race theory. Holland and Mongillo (2016) explored the perspectives of 26 elementary school teachers

on the use of multicultural literature in the classroom and found that they were comfortable implementing multicultural literature when they perceived support from the administration in addressing multicultural topics but had limited understanding and feared saying something inappropriate. Barton et al. (2020) explored patterns of practice in enacting justice-oriented teaching among three middle school teachers and found that the teachers perceived that they learned from the students' lived experiences, were intentional in altering classroom interactions to influence classroom discourse and participation, and recognized students' backgrounds in classroom activities.

Teachers' perceptions, knowledge, and understanding of MCIP were explored in several studies. The 45 teachers in the Aragona-Young and Sawyer (2018) study described culture as being a way of life or your personal background, were unable to recognize specific cultural identities, and showed low endorsement of multicultural practices because of incomplete understanding of multicultural practices, reluctance to implement these practices, and time constraints and pressures. Raisinghani (2018) found quite different perspectives among the 10 elementary and secondary science and math teachers in their study. Their participants identified cultural diversity as both a strength and a challenge but acknowledged that cultural diversity helped them promote students' learning in their science and mathematics classrooms.

Two studies involved examination of teachers' understanding of multiculturalism in science classrooms and the practical knowledge and understanding of science teachers as related to perceptions of multicultural curriculum. In Kye's (2020) study with three



beginning science elementary teachers, the participants spoke positively about teaching for social justice but overlooked the students' perspectives in instruction and failed to incorporate issues of race and culture in lessons. Mensah et al. (2018) explored the perceptions of 32 preservice and inservice elementary and secondary science teachers about their views of multicultural curriculum reform and culturally relevant science teaching. Findings indicated that the participants' comprehended that multicultural science education was connected to students' experiences and evaluating mainstream cultures; however, they rarely correlated it with social improvement.

### **Equity Mindset and Multicultural Education**

Several researchers have recently explored teaching for equity and having an equity mindset. An equity mindset can be defined as the mode of thinking modeled by practitioners who give attention to personal responsibility, providing a quality education for all, and creating an inclusive environment where every student feels welcomed (Nadelson et al., 2019). Equitable practices can be distinguished from an equity mindset by its focus on relationship building.

Two qualitative case studies have been conducted on teachers' growth and experiences with creating equitable spaces. Riordan et al. (2019) explored the methods that support teachers in creating equitable spaces for students. Based on classroom observations and interviews with school leaders and teachers, it was found that the teachers included content centered around race, class, and gender; modeled and promoted a variety of student abilities and backgrounds; and created a culture that promoted and

supported inclusivity. Rubel (2017) focused on the inclusion of four equity-directed practices in a study with 12 secondary teachers who participated in an 8-day professional development training. Based on analysis of observations and interviews, findings were quite different from Riordan et al., in that the teachers had difficulties in adopting the equity-directed practices of connecting mathematics instruction to students' experiences and lacked knowledge about the students' experiences because of fear of visiting the places where students live.

An explanation of the findings of the Riordan et al. (2019) and Rubel (2017) studies may be found in the Nadelson et al. (2019) study. These researchers conducted a mixed methods study to examine the equity mindset of 452 teachers. Based on the teachers' responses to survey questions, results showed that equity mindset was based on the teachers' commitment to support all students to attain their highest level of achievement, experience, grade level, and school location. The researchers also found that teachers' work with diverse students was based on their personal feelings about diverse students and how much they wanted to make a difference in their lives.

Several studies have incorporated examinations of professional development on teachers' understanding and application of instructional practices in diverse settings. As these studies have been exploratory and interventions have not been investigated, no evidence has yet been presented on the impact of professional development on enhancing teachers' understanding of multicultural practices and improving their ability to incorporate these practices in their instruction. Brown et al. (2019) explored nine urban

elementary teachers' understandings of how teachers can connect culture to instruction and their instructional practices after a professional development on cultural pedagogy. Findings showed that few of the teachers understood the pedagogical implications of cultural relevancy and when they designed lessons and assessments, they focused on race. Mckoy et al. (2017) found that 20 music teachers, who participated in professional development on culturally responsive teaching, were more familiar with the importance of creating learning environments in which students' background and cultures were valued. However, they were not more comfortable with culturally responsive teaching after the professional development experience. These results are consonant with Rubel's (2017) findings that professional development did not appear to influence the teachers' perspectives on equity-directed practices.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Several key themes emerged from my review of the research literature. Among the studies that focused on the importance of culturally relevant practices for teachers, it was found that teachers' understanding of MCIP and multiculturalism were limited and that implementation of practices required professional development. Another theme included teachers' belief about how to approach teaching culturally diverse students and knowing about what makes a multicultural practice. Teachers reported believing in respect, celebrating, and encouraging culturally diverse students within a familial-style classroom. Some teachers believed in their own personal backgrounds and experiences to understand diverse students' and families' struggles and strengths. A third theme

involved teachers' self-efficacy for implementing MCIP. Teachers' self-efficacy was based on building trust and personal relationships with students, while experiences of teachers with diversity in their K–12 schooling led to greater self-efficacy when teaching in diverse classrooms.

I found a lack of extant research that has involved exploring the perception of practicing teachers' experiences and attitudes toward the incorporation of MCIP in diverse classrooms. This study filled a gap in teachers' perceptions about incorporating MCIP, the challenges in implementing them, and the supports and resources they perceive needing to implement MCIP. This study identified approaches for assisting teachers in incorporating MCIP that promote the academic achievement of diverse students.

The gap in the literature led to using a basic qualitative design because interviews with individual teachers provided data pertinent to exploring their perceptions about incorporating MCIP. In Chapter 3, I explained how I implemented the basic qualitative design by obtaining Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and school district permission to carry out the study, recruited participants and conducted semistructured interviews. I also described the interview protocol based on the RQs and conceptual framework of Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education. I then described the steps I followed in analyzing the interview data and assuring the trustworthiness of data analysis and interpretation of findings. I also discussed the ethical procedures that were followed.



## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions about incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms. In Chapter 3, I describe the research design and rationale and my role as the researcher. In the Methodology section, I describe the participant selection logic; instrumentation; procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection; and the data analysis plan. I then discuss issues of trustworthiness and the ethical procedures for the study. I conclude with a summary of the method of inquiry.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

Multicultural education provides students with knowledge about their histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups, including respect for gender, race, and socioeconomic background (Aragona-Young & Sawyer, 2018). I sought to answer the following RQs to address the central phenomenon of MCIP in diverse classrooms:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of middle school teachers about incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of middle school teachers about the challenges in implementing MCIP in diverse classrooms?

RQ3: What supports and resources do middle school teachers perceive needing to implement MCIP in diverse classrooms?

The research tradition that informed this study was a basic qualitative design. Researchers use this design to better understand the ways that people view, approach, and experience the world and make meaning of their experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). A basic qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because I used one data source to explore the perceptions of middle school teachers regarding their incorporation of MCIP. I considered other methodological designs but rejected them as they are not aligned with the purpose and RQs.

Case study research involves an intensive and detailed analysis of a specific event, situation, organization, or social unit and includes more than one data source (Burkholder et al., 2016). This design was not appropriate for my study because my data source was interviews with one group of teachers. Ethnography is the study of people in natural settings which portray their ordinary activities; it involves the researcher directly participating in the setting to collect data (Hammersley, 2018). This design was not appropriate for my study because I was not studying a culture or able to immerse myself in one. A phenomenological research design is used to examine participants' subjective experiences (Burkholder et al., 2016). This design was not appropriate for my study because I was not seeking to study a subjective experience. In a grounded theory study, a researcher inductively develops theory (Burkholder et al., 2016). This design was not appropriate for my study because I was not seeking to develop a theory. Finally, quantitative methods refer to the collection and statistical analysis of data typically from large sample sizes (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Quantitative research designs were not

appropriate for my study because I sought to understand participants' experiences through analysis of their perceptions.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My primary role as the researcher for this dissertation was to design the study, obtain IRB approval to carry it out, recruit participants, collect and analyze data, and interpret findings. After receiving IRB approval, I recruited potential participants and gathered data through semistructured interviews. During the interview process, I was aware of biases that may influence my results and used approaches, such as member checking, to ensure that the data were accurate (Burkholder et al., 2016). Member checking is when participants receive the results from the study to verify the accuracy of information (Burkholder et al., 2016). I analyzed the data, drew conclusions, identified the limitations and potential implications of the study.

I am an employee of the site where I conducted my research; I currently hold a leadership position and have personal relationships with some of the teachers. As the eighth-grade level chair, my responsibilities include supervising a team of teachers of core subjects and creating plans for the grade level to follow. I recruited participants from other grade levels who were not under my direct leadership, had never been supervised by me, and did not have a personal relationship with me.

To help ensure that my potential biases did not influence my behavior as the researcher, I maintained a reflective journal to assist in recognizing my biases and identifying the steps that I took to avoid letting them influence my decisions during data



collection and analysis. Some potential biases included having strong opinions about the research topic. I encourage and support the use of multicultural strategies inside the classroom. I ensured that my bias on my research topic did not influence my questioning during the interview process by adhering to my interview protocol. As the researcher, I avoided omitting data not favoring my expectation of findings, ensured that all data were analyzed and reported, and drew conclusions that emerged from the results.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

The participants were teachers with at least 3 years of teaching experience in Grade 6-7 in one middle school in the Southeastern part of the United States. My sampling strategy was purposeful sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Suri, 2011). I used maximum variation as I included a variety of demographics in the sample including race, ethnicity, gender, and years of experience.

Participants were recruited participants who met the following criteria: (a) minimum of 3 years of full-time teaching experience and (b) currently teaching a middle school core subject in Grades 6 or 7. I recruited participants by sending an email that contained details about the study and a request that they provide their permission to engage in it. The email included the purpose of the study and information on the interview process, including the length of the interview.

The number of participants for this study was 8. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the number of participants depends on the questions being asked, the data being gathered, and the analysis progress. I choose 6-10 participants because this number has been recommended as typically sufficient for reaching data saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used data saturation during data analysis to determine if the sample size is sufficient for answering the RQs as saturation is reached when no new information is found with additional participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I sought out IRB approval from Walden University and the selected school district and school to carry out the study. Once approvals were obtained, I identified participants by reaching out to at least five teachers in each of the core subject areas (science, social studies, math, and English Language Arts [ELA]). I retrieved participants email addresses from the school's website. I reached out to only teachers in core subjects from 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade, they received email invitations with the participant criteria included. The recruitment email stated only teachers that fit the participant criteria was able to participate. I instructed interested teachers in the recruitment email to contact the researcher if they were willing to participate in the study. The email included information about the study including the voluntary nature, confidentiality/anonymity, eligibility requirements, and how to contact me. I asked participants to respond within 7 days.

When they notified me of their interest, I sent participants the consent form once they responded back to the recruitment email that they would participate in the study. Participants were then sent a consent form through email, and responded back to the

email with, “I consent”, if they agreed to participate in the study. A physical copy was available for those that requested one. I conducted confidential; audio recorded interviews that lasted anywhere from 30 to 45 min. I gave participants, after the interview, a typed transcript to review to make corrections if needed.

Participants were given a number to replace their name in all records. All data from participants will be destroyed 5 years after completion of study. I conducted interviews in person at a date, time, and location convenient for the participant. The location was at a neutral location. I selected an area in which we could not be overheard by others.

### **Instrumentation**

I based the questions in the interview protocol (see Appendix) on Banks’s (1995) five dimensions of multicultural education and the RQs. As I conducted semistructured interviews, the interview protocol included prompts to encourage the participants to extend on their responses (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I used an audio recorder to ensure that I can make a full transcript of each interview with permission from the participants.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation and Data Collection**

I obtained IRB approval from Walden University and approval from the selected school district and school. Once approvals were obtained, I identified participants by reaching out to at least five teachers in each of the core subject areas (science, social studies, math, and ELA). I retrieved participants email addresses from the school’s website. I reached out to only teachers in core subjects from Grades 6 and 7, they

received email invitations with the participant criteria included. The recruitment email stated only teachers that fit the participant criteria was able to participate. I instructed interested teachers in the recruitment email to contact the researcher if they were willing to participate in the study. The email included information about the study including the voluntary nature, confidentiality/anonymity, eligibility requirements, and how to contact me. I asked participants to respond within 7 days.

When they notified me of their interest, I sent participants the consent form once they responded back to the recruitment email that they would participate in the study. Participants were then sent a consent form through email, and responded back to the email with, "I consent" if they agreed to participate in the study. A physical copy was available for those that requested one. I conducted confidential; audio recorded interviews that lasted anywhere from 30 to 45 min. I gave participants, after the interview, a typed transcript to review to make corrections if needed.

Participants were given a number to replace their name in all records. All data from participants will be destroyed 5 years after completion of study. I conducted interviews in person at a date, time, and location convenient for the participant. The location was neutral where others could not overhear the discussion.

The email included information about the study including the voluntary nature, confidentiality/anonymity, eligibility requirements, and how to contact me. I obtained email addresses from the schools' website. I gave potential participants 7 days to respond to the email and then I followed-up with an email. I sent a consent form to those who

agreed to participate and wanted a physical copy once the interview was scheduled and asked that they return it prior to the interview or bring it to the interview. Eight of 20 potential participants qualified and agreed to participate in the study.

Each interview was set up at a date, time, and location convenient for the participant. The location was at a neutral location. At the beginning of the interviews, I reiterated the components in the consent form and reminded participants of the voluntary nature of the study. I reread the privacy and confidentiality clause and reassured participants they can decline answering any questions for which they do not feel comfortable answering. I also reminded them that they can withdraw from the study without any repercussions. Each interview was scheduled for 45–60 min, although most took about 30 to 45 min. I requested verbal permission to audio record each interview so that I would be able to maintain eye contact and later make a complete and accurate transcript. I used my iPhone recording feature to record the interviews. No participant declined to be audio recorded for their interview.

I transcribed the interviews within 5 business days. I saved the transcriptions on my password-protected personal computer, and I will keep the files for 5 years per Walden’s guidelines. I masked the identity of the school district by referring to it as “the local setting” and “school district located in a suburban area in the Southeast region of the United States. I replaced names with numbers and did not use the name of the school district to protect confidentiality. I sent each participant a copy of their transcript and asked them if the transcript resonates with their perspective, how it might differ to better

reflect their perspective, whether there is anything that the transcript did not capture, and if there were anything they would like to clarify. Each participant received a summary of results and were asked if the findings made sense, felt appropriate and accurate, resonated with them, and if they would suggest adding anything (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I sent each participant a \$10 gift card and let them know that their obligation in the study is complete. No other follow-up procedures were included.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

After gathering data for this study, I followed the steps outlined in my data analysis plan that followed Clark et al.'s (2008) approach. The plan included transcribing the recorded interview audio files into written text followed by preparing and organizing the data into meaningful units of analysis. The following step was to review the data and delete any data that appear to be irrelevant or unusable, such as introductions and polite conversation at the beginning of each interview session.

The coding portion of the analysis plan included four coding stages: a priori coding, using terms from the conceptual framework; open coding, exploring the data by reading through the data at least 4 times, followed by color coding for text with similar meanings and recurring words, phrases, and terms; axial coding, reducing the open coded data into categories; and finally, selective coding, combining similar categories into themes. All data were segregated, organized, and coded using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that included notes on any discrepant data or cases that did not fit into a

category. These organization and coding steps were key to planning an appropriate data analysis for the interview data in this study.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

To ensure credibility, I did member checks by sending each participant a copy of their interview transcript and asked them if it accurately reflected their responses (Thomas, 2017). I also asked for an external audit, also known as peer debriefing. I sought an individual familiar with the topic but unconnected to the study who could provide their expertise on data analysis, whether the findings were grounded in the data, and if the interpretations were reasonable (Thomas, 2017).

To ensure dependability, I kept an audit trail. I carefully tracked every step in the collection and analysis of data. Carcary (2009) explains that audit trails provide a documented account of decisions made in the research study, it explains how elements develop as they relate to the theoretical, methodological, and analytic matters.

To ensure confirmability, I kept a reflective journal throughout data collection and analysis. Qualitative research entails that the research process is explained in detail enough so that the researcher's subjectivity is not brought into question (Goldblatt & Band-Winterstein, 2016). I recorded my thoughts, insights, and questions about the research process and documented any assumptions, beliefs, or biases that could influence my analysis, findings, and interpretations.

To ensure transferability, I thoroughly explained each step in carrying out the study. Though the descriptions cannot ensure transferability, they can enable readers to determine if the findings are pertinent to their settings.

### **Ethical Procedures**

I gained Walden University IRB approval (approval no. 02-07-24-1000759) as well as permission from the selected study site prior to collecting any data. I recruited participants through their school email addresses. After participants agreed to participate, in my invitation I sent the consent form and they responded back with, "I consent" prior to setting up each interview. The consent form included the expectations, voluntary nature of the study, information about the interview, and that they can withdraw from the study at any time.

The consent form also included a description of foreseeable risks or discomforts including minimal risks encountered in daily life, participating in a study done by a colleague, and protecting participants privacy and identity. The consent form did not stipulate the language of legal rights or any rights given up by the participants. The consent form included details on contacting the researcher for questions, the university's Research Participant Advocate, and their rights as participants. The participant was also informed that they should keep a copy of the consent form for their records and stated that the study is experimental (i.e., unproven), and that the conclusions drawn from the data were based on a specific sample size. I only conducted interviews with participants who had signed the consent form. I gave a \$10 gift card to all that participated.



Potential relationship risks were minimized by not including the names of participants and the school district and only using teachers' years of teaching and core subject taught in the study. In the consent form it stated that participation is voluntary and that participants will be identified by number and not by name. The name and location of the district was not included in reports of findings. To minimize coerced research participation, I recruited participants from grades that I did not teach and supervise in. The research risks and burdens were reasonable in consideration of the new knowledge that the research study offered by identifying approaches for assisting teachers in incorporating multicultural practices that promote the academic achievement of diverse students. I am currently working in the school in which I recruited participants. I had no supervisory relationships with any of the participants as I recruited from the grades I do not teach or supervise. I reminded participants before beginning each interview that they could withdraw from the study at any time. I assured confidentiality by scrubbing names from the data and using numbers to identify each participant, all electronic data were kept on my password-protected computer, and any hard copies kept in a locked cabinet in my home office. All data will be destroyed 5 years after completion of the study per Walden's IRB requirements.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 3, I described the research design as basic qualitative and the rationale for selecting this design and my role as the researcher. I explained all aspects of the methodology including how participants will be selected, the procedure for recruitment of

participants, and how the data were collected through the interview protocol. In addition, the interview protocol, and the data analysis plan. Finally, the steps involved in data analysis, approaches that was used to address potential issues of trustworthiness of data analysis, and ethical procedures were addressed. In Chapter 4, I present the results of the study.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' perceptions on incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms. I interviewed eight middle school teachers in the Southeastern part of the United States and asked them about their perceptions about incorporating MCIP and the challenges, supports, and resources they perceive needing to implement MCIP in a diverse classroom. In this chapter, I explain the study setting, participants, and the procedures. I then describe the data collection method and the data collection process. Finally, I provide evidence of trustworthiness and present the results of the data analysis, before concluding with a summary and transition to Chapter 5.

### **Setting**

I conducted all interviews in person at a neutral location designated by the participant. I encouraged participants to choose a location they were comfortable in that would have the least number of distractions as possible. Before I began the interviews, I informed participants of their rights to privacy and the confidential nature of the study. To my knowledge, there were no personal conditions that affected the participants at the time of the study; no participant disclosed any negative work or life experiences (i.e., personal trauma, death in the family, and/or other issues) that may have affected their perceptions of their work or the interpretation of the study results.

### Demographics

The participants were all middle school teachers who either taught in Grade 6 or 7 in various subjects. The participants were all located in one middle school in the Southeastern part of the United States. Of the eight participants, four identified as male, and four identified as female; five described themselves as African American, and the other three described themselves as European American. All eight of the teachers were teaching a core subject at the time of the interviews. They had from 3 to 13 years of classroom teaching experience ( $M = 7.25$ ). I coded each participant in chronological order, based the interview completion (i.e., Participant 1, Participant 2, etc). To ensure confidentiality, not all demographic data are included in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of Participants*

Participant	Gender	No. of years of teaching experience	Ethnicity
1	Male	5	African American
2	Male	13	African American
3	Male	6	European American
4	Female	11	African American
5	Male	3	European American
6	Female	5	European American
7	Female	9	African American
8	Female	6	African American

### Data Collection

After gaining IRB approval from Walden University, I identified participants by reaching out to at least five teachers in each of the core subject areas (science, social studies, math, and ELA). I retrieved participants' email addresses from the target school's

website. I reached out to only teachers in core subjects from Grades 6 and 7, sending them email invitations with the participant criteria included. Out of the 20 emails sent, 10 individuals responded expressing interest in participating in the study, but two did not match the participant criteria. The recruitment email stated that only teachers who fit the participant criteria would be able to participate. I instructed interested teachers in the recruitment email to contact me if they were willing to participate in the study. The email included information about the study such as the voluntary nature, confidentiality, eligibility requirements, and ways to contact me. I asked participants to respond within 7 days. Within 2 days, eight of the 20 prospective participants qualified for the study and agreed to participate. I sent a follow-up email to the 12 potential participants who did not respond. Out of the 12 participants, five did not respond, five responded with they were not interested, and two were not eligible based on the eligibility criteria.

After prospective participants emailed me their interest, I sent them the informed consent document and asked them to reply with “I consent” and a preferred time, day, and location for the interview. All the participants emailed me a consenting email and I scheduled the interviews. I scheduled interviews based on the order that participants responded to my emails with their time, date, and location. Based on their preference, we met at a location of their choosing and each interview lasted between 30 and 45 min. All interviews were audio recorded using the recording feature on my iPhone and transcribed using a transcription service, rev.com. There were no rescheduled interviews or any interruptions. The process of recruiting and interviewing took a total of 3 weeks from

start to finish. Before beginning each interview, I read the introduction to my interview protocol, asked for permission to audio record them, as well as read the privacy and confidentiality clauses. After starting the recording, I reread the introduction, privacy and confidentiality, and purpose of the study. I then confirmed their years of teaching experience and subjects taught and asked for any clarifying questions. I asked two probing questions before I began with the interview questions, as well as more probing questions if participants were short with their original response.

### **Data Analysis**

To analyze the interview data, I gathered in this study, I followed the analysis plan outlined in the data analysis plan in Chapter 3. These steps included preparing the data for analysis; applying a priori codes from the conceptual framework, followed by open and axial coding; developing categories that informed aligned themes; and managing discrepant cases. In this section, I describe each of these processes.

#### **Preparation of the Data for Analysis**

To prepare the data for analysis, I transcribed the data into written text from the audio files generated from the recorded interviews. I then prepared and organized the data into meaningful units of analysis from the interview transcripts. I reviewed the data and deleted any data that appeared to be irrelevant or unusable, such as introductions and polite conversation at the beginning of the interview session. Furthermore, I removed filler words applying the following rule: if it did not align with the RQs and any background questions, the non-research related conversation was removed.

I transcribed the audio recordings from individual interviews. I labeled and separated each individual interview and then hand coded them using Microsoft Excel and big sheets of bulky post-it paper. After reading and listening through each interview four times, I created columns in Microsoft Excel for participant demographics. I additionally created columns for interview responses, a priori codes, open codes, axial codes, and emerging themes. As I am a visual learner, I made each type of coding column a different color.

Once these data were saved and filed, I read the documents to establish alignment and consistency amongst interview transcripts. I organized/reorganized the data using my Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. For example, I separated the data from all eight interviews based on interview-item alignment to the RQs. By doing so, I was able to review all participants' responses to the same items individually and collectively. In this way, the digital spreadsheet was appropriate for my data organization as it allowed me to visually manipulate text, add additional pages as needed during the coding and reflective processes, and zoom in and out to compare participant details or aggregate themes. This flexibility allowed me to adapt my coding processes as I learned from the data during the analysis process.

### **Coding Procedures and Processes**

I analyzed the interview data using the approach suggested by Clark et al. (2008). I applied a priori, open, axial, and selective coding to develop the resulting themes from the findings. As my Microsoft Excel workbook had separate worksheets for each of my

three RQs, I was able to analyze each participant's response to interview items within the context of addressed the RQ. I also took notes in columns for each type of code.

### *A Priori Coding*

I began the coding process using a priori coding based on this study's framework, Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education. I applied the following five terms: knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, empowerment of school culture, and content integration. A priori coding is coding that is developed before any initial coding has taken place (Saldana, 2016). In the a priori coding stage, I coded participant responses with each of Banks's dimensions of multicultural education, noting when participants talked about the dimension—either positively or negatively—or indicated a challenge in this area. Overall, I applied, reviewed, assessed, and reapplied a priori codes three different times. In this discussion, I explain Banks's definition of each dimension and how I applied it to the participant interview data during coding.

**Content Integration.** Content integration is about teacher use of examples and content from multiple cultures to demonstrate key concepts, principles, and generalizations. (Banks, 1995). In this analysis, participant comments that indicated awareness of the priority for content integration, the intentional selection or creation of integrated content/resources, or the challenge in integrating content were all coded with this term. Additionally, participant comments that indicated needed resources to further content integration were identified with this code.



I specifically explored participant interview data for descriptions or examples of instructing with resources that included a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, and generalizations in their content areas. Four of the eight participants said that they implemented content from diverse cultures and indicated use of different pictures and texts for their diverse students. Two of the eight participants said they needed more resources, and Participant 8 said that it was a challenge to implement content from a variety of cultures. Only Participant 2 and 3 indicated a need for resources in this area.

**Knowledge Construction.** According to Banks (1995), knowledge construction involves activities that help students to understand and investigate how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and biases of social influencers impact how knowledge is constructed. In this analysis, participant comments that indicated awareness of the priority for knowledge construction, the intentional selection of instructional methods or strategies, or the challenge in teaching knowledge construction to students were all coded with this term. Additionally, participant comments that indicated needed resources to further knowledge construction were identified with this code.

As the participants in my study were teachers and did not include students, in this study I explored teachers' knowledge construction by examining the procedures by which they created knowledge and their remarks on how implicit cultural assumptions and biases influence the ways that knowledge is constructed. If a teacher commented on the

students' experiences with knowledge construction, I also coded that excerpt in this a priori code. Of the eight participants, four said that they were aware of their own biases and that their perspectives could affect their diverse learners. Three of the 4 participants who were aware said that it would be helpful to have more appropriate resources to develop unbiased knowledge construction in their students. Participant 8 said that it was a challenge constructing knowledge for diverse learners in such a large class; and only Participant 3 said that they were successful with constructing knowledge using diverse texts. Only Participant 1, 2, and 8 indicated a need for resources in this area.

**Prejudice Reduction.** Prejudice reduction involves instruction that is designed to help students develop positive and democratic racial attitudes (Banks, 1995). In this analysis, participant comments that indicated awareness of the priority for prejudice reduction; the intentional selection of resources or developing instructional activities to understand, identify, and/or reduce prejudice; or the challenge in fostering prejudice reduction through instruction were all coded with this term. Additionally, participant comments that indicated needed resources to further prejudice reduction were identified with this code.

I explored teachers' perceptions on prejudice reduction by asking about teachers' lessons used to help students develop positive attitudes. Seven of the eight participants said that they provided lessons or activities to intentionally develop positive attitudes towards other races and cultures. Of these seven participants, five were aware of racial and cultural nuances in their instruction, but none of their examples were directly about

student outcomes that were reducing prejudice. Three said they were comfortable speaking about race, while 2 of the 7 were not. No participants specifically mentioned a need for resources or support in this area.

**Equity Pedagogy.** Equity pedagogy is the modification of instruction that ensures that academic achievement of diverse students is addressed (Banks, 1995). In this analysis, participant comments that indicated awareness of the priority for equity pedagogy, the intentional selection of diverse instructional methods or approaches, or the challenge in developing or delivering equity pedagogy were all coded with this term. Additionally, participant comments that indicated needed resources to further equitable pedagogy were identified with this code.

To determine equity pedagogy, I examined teachers' instructional methods that facilitated academic achievement of diverse students. Six of the eight participants said that they intentionally choose inclusive strategies to connect with diverse learners in the classroom. However, their responses did not always include pedagogical examples to support that their awareness transferred to instructional behaviors. Four of the eight participants specifically indicated awareness that pedagogy should be equitable to students from different racial, ethnic, and social groups; but their remarks did not always provide actionable examples of executing equitable pedagogy. Three participants indicated a need for additional support or more resources to develop more equitable pedagogy.

**Empowerment of School Culture.** Empowerment of school culture entails reforming the culture of the school so that students from various cultures and language groups can experience fairness in the school building (Banks, 1995). In this analysis, participant comments that indicated awareness of the priority for empowerment of school culture, decision-making that exhibited priority to offering diverse and empowering activities or structure, or the challenge in creating empowerment of school culture were all coded with this term. Additionally, participant comments that indicated needed resources to further empower the school culture were identified with this code.

To identify their perceptions of empowerment of school culture and social structure, the data were examined for evidence of structuring the culture and organization of the school so that diverse students experience educational equality. Five of the eight participants said that the school organized and provided a culture where diverse student would feel comfortable. Four of the eight participants said that they would like to see more inclusion but did not think it was a challenge for the school. The participants responses gave examples of cultural awareness and support from administrators but did not always provide “evidence” to support their conclusions.

**Summary.** The a priori coding indicated that the participants collectively addressed or had awareness of all five dimensions of Banks’s multicultural framework. However, their remarks did not always indicate successfulness in executing or implementing all five dimensions. For this reason, I categorized the a priori codes as either Level 1, to indicate the participant was aware of this framework element and/or

thought it valuable, or Level 2, to indicate that the participant specifically referenced implementing or attempting to execute this framework element.

During the coding process, I logged the code, source, participant identifier, and excerpts from the data source. If an a priori code had no corresponding data, I noted this fact in my data results narrative and in the table that I created to provide an overview of the a priori coding and analysis. The data results section of this study included any value or findings that I concluded from a missing a priori code. Table 2 includes examples of a priori codes that I used for analyzing data from each participant. Each participant remark was coded as Level 1 or 2 to indicate if it indicated teacher awareness only or teacher integration of the Banks dimension.

**Table 2***Participant Interview Excerpts for A Priori Codes from Banks's Framework*

A priori code	Level	Participant	Excerpt
Content integration	1	1	So even in word problems, instead of saying Sally, John, Tommy, you may have Hanan or Ahmed or Jesus, different names that it may seem simple ...but for kids, they can relate to that because they see a name that they may think of as with[in] their culture.
	2	8	The literature, I like to, if we are doing a poetic unit, I like to incorporate poets of different diversities and different ethnicities just to get them exposed to something they can connect to.
Knowledge construction	1	3	So, I did have to make a point. I was like, I know quite a few students that I have are Catholic, so I just want to let you all know that I'm teaching this because at this time this is what was happening.
	2	N/A	N/A
Prejudice reduction	1	6	They say have those tough conversations and be your brother's keeper about hallway transitions and things like that, but we need to have tough conversations about reaching some of our kids and addressing those things that we really don't want to talk about or are uncomfortable talking about.
	2	6	N/A
Equity pedagogy	1	7	Yes. So being that we are in a population that is culturally diverse in that we have students from different geographical areas, specifically ELL students, I implement a lot of hand strategies.
	2	6	So when we were talking about the nomadic people and then coming to settle down and building those structures and bringing in different examples of what they might have looked like back then from different areas of the world, different countries, different things, and using different examples when we got to the Greek gods and talking about different religions and how different religions have gods that are similar, and they might mean the same thing, but they have different names or things like that.
	1	1	As a teacher, as a part of the school, and admin does a good job as far as I think as trying to incorporate, highlight Hispanic heritage, Black history, Asian history, and try to show students different positive examples of what they can become, try to include everybody.
Empowerment of school culture and social structure	1	1	As a teacher, as a part of the school, and admin does a good job as far as I think as trying to incorporate, highlight Hispanic heritage, Black history, Asian history, and try to show students different positive examples of what they can become, try to include everybody.
	2	N/A	N/A

*Note.* Level 1 = teacher awareness only; Level 2 = teacher integration.

### *Open Coding*

Open coding is the process that the researcher takes to allow emerging patterns and concepts to form without predetermined categories (Saldana, 2016). With open coding, I read and re-read the data line by line to identify concepts, themes, and relationships among the data at least four times. Through the a priori coding process, I determined evidence of the framework dimensions which I then enhanced by applying open codes to the a priori codes. I returned to the raw data from the data source to ensure I analyzed each repetition.

Once I started the open coding process, I used a different color for each code, going through all interviews using the same color for codes, comparing the frequency by participant. These steps were helpful because I was able to discover codes that were similar across all interviews or those that appeared in only one or two interviews. I ensured the accuracy of the transcripts by cross-referencing my codes with my RQs and theoretical framework to see if they were in alignment and if the RQs were being answered.

Additionally, I searched the data for similarities and labeled groups of words with a term that provides meaning to a word group. In my data results, I provided examples of labels that I applied and the process of combining, reducing, or adding new labels in the open coding stage. I recorded a total number of 82 open codes that I generated in this process. The data were segregated, organized, and coded using a spreadsheet in Microsoft

Excel, as well as large sheets of post-it paper. Table 3 is an example of the open codes and participant excerpts from the data source.

**Table 3**

*Open Codes and Illustrative Participant Interview Excerpts*

Open code	Participant	Example quote
Awareness of different cultures	1	It seems to be very beneficial for the students that I teach because if it doesn't consider their culture, their ancestry, their background, it's hard to really relate to the content.
Relate to cultural names	1	So even in word problems, instead of saying Sally, John, Tommy, you may have Hanan or Ahmed or Jesus, different names that it may seem simple, but for kids, they can relate to that because they see a name that they may think of as with their culture.
Achievement	3	And honestly we can't afford to be at this school, but I've never felt anybody has been labeled or misjudged because of their race or their religion here.

***Axial Coding***

During the last coding stage—axial coding, I searched the open codes and corresponding excerpts from interviews to identify the relationships among the open codes. With axial coding, the researcher reads over the codes to identify how they can be grouped and put into categories; these categories can be abstracted by using an existing code or creating categories from several codes (Saldana, 2016). I grouped similar open codes and assigned a code to each category. I included examples of how I formed categories from the open codes, I recorded the process in my research journal.



After I maximized the categories with axial coding, I shared the entire coding process in my data results narrative. I selected excerpts from the data as examples of each category and identified any codes that were discrepant because they did not fit into any category. To help with organization, I again used large, over-sized post-it notes to sort the data into meaningful categories. By aligning open codes with others that were similar, I reduced the 82 open codes to a total of eight axial codes. Table 4 shows the relationship between the axial and open codes; illustrative participant responses are included.

**Table 4**

*Number of Open Codes That Informed Each Axial Code With Illustrative Participant*

*Excerpt*

No. of open codes	Axial code	Participant	Example quote
11	Reducing prejudice by intentionally addressing diversity	1	As a teacher, as a part of the school, and admin does a good job as far as I think as trying to incorporate, highlight Hispanic heritage, Black history, Asian history, and try to show students different positive examples of what they can become, try to include everybody.
9	Limitations with multicultural practices when integrating content	8	But, like I said, it just doesn't feel like there's a lot of freedom to move around with topics like that.
	Integrating diverse content	2	I would say just activities or resources with people of color.
9	Cultural awareness in equitable pedagogical practices	3	I think I've been in this environment long enough where I am pretty familiar with most of the cultures that I've seen come through my door every day.
12	Empowerment of school culture through community involvement	4	So something to get the parents involved, and I know they're working and this and that, and I just wish we could get parents to come in here to just see what's going on.
24	Equitable pedagogy using learning strategies	6	And that while it is specific to ancient civilizations, some of the vocabulary can be used cross-culturally to help bridge that background knowledge or to bring out that background knowledge.
11	Self-awareness through equitable pedagogical practice	3	I can think of some of the ones that I had to handle with a little bit more care than others.
7	Integrating content through multicultural training	8	Yeah. I have experienced some PDs [professional development trainings] that have addressed diversity and, specifically, the critical race theory, but also just teaching different students of different backgrounds.

### ***Thematic Analysis***

The goal of the coding process was to generate themes that became revealed through the data from the interviews. To create themes, I searched among the categories and raw data for additional patterns. These patterns were the key concepts I used to explain the analyzed data. I shared the emerging themes in the data results narrative of this study by creating “fact statements” that accurately represent the participants and the beliefs relative to the phenomenon. In this study, I specifically sought themes to address exploring middle school teachers’ perceptions on incorporating multicultural practices in diverse classrooms. I created theme statements that accurately bridged the categories of the coding process. After I identified the themes that emerged from the study, I aligned the themes with the actual RQs in this study and shared the findings in the final study.

### **Discrepant Cases**

I designated data that were discrepant and that did not fit any theme as outliers. I compared the data to findings from prior studies. The data that differed from others’ findings were noted as discrepant cases that can be used by researchers of future studies.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

#### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is a critical factor to ensure that a research study is ethical in its reporting of the data. To increase the credibility of the data collected for this basic qualitative study, I interviewed eight participants that were currently teaching a core subject in Grades 6 or 7 and taught at least 3 years. To further increase trustworthiness, I

shared the completed transcription with each participant for member checking. I probed for the participants' meaning by restating what I heard or asking for confirmation instead of making assumptions about their meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To build trustworthiness in my research, I focused on ways to increase credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### **Credibility**

Credibility is a measure of the confidence of the data and determines whether the study's findings are correct and accurate. Member checking is essential for establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). After completing each interview, I sent each participant a copy of their completed transcript and asked them if there were any changes, they would like for me to make. Participants responded within 2 to 3 days or declined revisions to their transcript. All participants responded that no changes needed to be made and the transcript reflected their thoughts and perceptions. To further credibility, I consistently referred to three methods of data analysis: transcripts, a reflective journal that contained my notes about the process of collecting data as well analyzing the data, my own personal thoughts and feeling about the process, and the audio files. This allowed me to triangulate the data and limit researcher bias or misinterpretation by being aware of each part of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2007). To address researcher bias, I kept an audit trail describing my thoughts and feelings as I completed the interviews. I also asked for an external audit, also known as peer debriefing. I sought an individual familiar with the topic but unconnected to the study who could provide their

expertise on data analysis, whether the findings were grounded in the data, and if the interpretations were reasonable (Thomas, 2017).

### **Transferability**

For my study to be trustworthy, I also need to ensure that the study is transferable, to ensure transferability, I thoroughly explained each step in carrying out the study. Though the descriptions cannot ensure transferability, they can enable readers to determine if the findings are pertinent to their settings. I ensured a thick description of the setting, recruiting procedures, and included the interview guide with the questions and prompts I used. I described in my data analysis how I moved from code to category to theme to enable future researchers to determine the replicability of my study.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is the measurement for communicating the reliability of a research study and the extent to which a study could be replicated with similar findings. To ensure dependability, I kept an audit trail. I carefully tracked every step in the collection and analysis of data. Carcary (2009) explained that audit trails provide a documented account of decisions made in the research study, it explains how elements develop as they relate to the theoretical, methodological, and analytic matters. To maintain alignment, I focused my data analysis on the RQs, conceptual framework, and purpose of the study. I eliminated irrelevant codes that need not align with the RQs, conceptual framework, and purpose of the study.

## **Confirmability**

Confirmability is the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. To ensure confirmability, I kept a reflective journal throughout data collection and analysis. Qualitative research entails that the research process is explained in detail enough so that the researcher's subjectivity is not brought into question (Goldblatt & Band-Winterstein, 2016). I recorded my thoughts, insights, and questions about the research process and documented any assumptions, beliefs, or biases that could influence my analysis, findings, and interpretations. To reduce bias, I used the interview guide, including the prompts, to make sure that I asked questions and focused on responses that were representative of their experiences, and not my own. I also asked the participants to review their responses to avoid any missteps on my part. I stayed in constant communication with my committee to avoid any issues related to biases or data analysis.

## **Results**

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore middle school teachers' perceptions on incorporating multicultural practices in diverse classrooms. The three themes from the data analysis inform the RQs in this study. This section includes an overview of the thematic analysis, the application to address the RQs, and a description of participant narrative that informed these results. As each theme aligned with a single RQ, I provide a parallel discussion of each theme and its corresponding RQ.

### **Thematic Alignment With Research Questions**

As I analyzed the findings from the data, three themes emerged that addressed the RQs:

- Theme 1: Participants believed that the administration intentionally provided culturally focused events.
- Theme 2: Participants believed that self-awareness was key to addressing MCIP challenges.
- Theme 3: Participants believed that materials/resources/expert guidance would help develop a more inclusive, self-aware classroom environment.

Table 5 details the alignment of the RQs to the themes from the data analysis.

**Table 5***Alignment of Research Questions to Themes*

Item	Theme related to participants' belief about what developing MCIP requires	RQ: Construct		
		1: Classroom implementation	2: Challenges	3: Needed supports and resources
1	Administration intentionality in providing culturally focused events	X		
2	Cultural self-awareness to addressing MCIP challenges		X	
3	MCIP materials, resources, and expert guidance to support more inclusive, self-aware classroom environments			X

*Note.* MCIP = multicultural instructional practices.

Understanding the development of the themes from the interview data source and how they inform the RQs is key to addressing the purpose and problem in this study. In the following discussion, I explain the development of each theme from the data source, its relevance to the problem through the lens of the conceptual framework. Finally, I detail how the theme statements for the findings inform each RQ in this study.

### **Research Question 1 Informed by Theme 1**

The first RQ was, What are middle school teacher perceptions about implementing MCIP in diverse classrooms? Based upon the data analysis, RQ1 was addressed and aligned with Theme 1: Middle school teachers believed that the administration providing culturally focused events helped them become more aware of incorporating multicultural practices in their diverse classrooms. The interview data



informed this RQ as only participant discourse could provide perceptions of middle school teachers about incorporating multicultural practices in diverse classrooms.

All eight participants made comments in their interview about how the administration was intentional about addressing diverse students. Participant responses indicated that the focus and intentionality of incorporating diverse aspects of culture made them recognize how diverse the school is and how they needed to implement instruction geared towards these students. Four axial codes informed this theme: cultural awareness of equitable pedagogical practice, empowerment of school culture through community involvement, reduction of prejudice by intentionally addressing diversity, and equitable pedagogy using learning strategies. Table 6 includes participant interview excerpts associated with Theme 1 axial codes.

**Table 6***Participant Interview Excerpts Associated With Theme 1 Axial Codes*

Theme 1 axial code	No. of participants	Example quote
Empowerment of school culture through community involvement	7	To dive a little deeper into the diversity, beta club, I think beta has a good foundation for the students who are higher achieving.
Reducing prejudice by intentionally addressing diversity	7	And I would say the other part is based upon, my intentions are to let my students see our humanity (intentionality) as a whole and not the things that separate us.
Equitable pedagogy using learning strategies	3	And with everything with religion, there's a certain level of care you have to give to those, because some of the standards that we teach are sort of, speak poorly about religions and cultures that a lot of these kids come from.
Cultural awareness in equitable pedagogical practice	1	We have to actually understand how different cultures think, operate, function.
Theme 1 totals	4	4

***Cultural Awareness of Equitable Pedagogical Practice***

Participants said that to implement MCIP, they need to function within a culturally aware environment that intentionally addresses diversity with learning strategies. This category was defined using the following definition: participant or school's ability to include a variety of cultures; teachers needed to understand different languages, cultures in the room; and know how to navigate them so they can provide appropriate instruction. Participant 5 expressed a recognition of student culture and cultural values. They went on to say that it is important in a diverse school. Four

participants mentioned cultural understanding and planning for other cultures as a necessity for building an environment conducive for MCIP. Participants said that administration incorporates diversity, promote different viewpoints, hires a diverse staff, and addresses a variety of religious practices. The participants said that this helped create an environment inclusive for MCIP.

### ***Empowerment of School Culture Through Community Involvement***

Participants also said that by administration providing school events and community functions, it helped created an atmosphere that was inclusive of diverse students. During the interviews, participants discussed the multitude of factors they felt created an empowering school culture. Participants said that they either do things consciously to create a safe environment or the school implements activities that are diverse in nature. Six participants said that various cultural events are held at the school to celebrate different cultures. Administration celebrates Women's History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, and they have a multicultural fest to get the community involved. While the participants said that administration were intentional about creating an inclusive environment, they expressed that they would also like to see more cultural nights, international nights, and more community events that honors other cultures. This category was defined using the following definition: opportunities when school and/or local community players were involved in instructional activities to intentionally highlight, include, or expose participants to cultural or structural diversity.

### ***Reduction of Prejudice Through the Intentional Addressing of Diversity***

Five participants said that it is of the important to intentionally address diversity through their instructional practices, such as translating text into another language and using names that are familiar to their culture. Participants intentionally included various methods, strategies, and ways to make sure that all students felt welcomed in their classroom. Participant 6 said she is passionate about recognizing that some students feel more alienated than others, and that it is her responsibility to create an inclusive environment. Six participants said administration were intentional about having cultural events designated for the purposes of exposing many different cultures to the entire school building. This category was defined using the following definition: dedicated opportunities to provide multicultural content and practices as they do not happen without intentionality.

### ***Equitable Pedagogy Through the Use of Learning Strategies***

Participants said that the intentionality shown throughout the school building should also be reflected in their classroom instruction. Some of the experiences addressed by teachers were that MCIP are beneficial and necessary for students, that students learning styles and cultural styles must be intended to, and that MCIP should be considered best practice. Participant 1 said that differentiation was important to his diverse students. While Participant 4 said addressing students different learning styles was key. Participant 8 said that the differences between genders is important to consider when addressing diversity. Participants said that their use of scaffolding, using movement

with their students, cooperative learning, peer collaboration, using visual and guided notes were key. Five participants said that they used cultural names, sentence stems in different languages, subtitled Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, hand strategies, center work and project-based learning, as well as using geography and cross-cultural vocabulary. Participants 2, 7, and 8 needed to embrace real-world topics, use collaborative brain breaks, and use slang and vernacular to connect with their diverse learners. This category was defined using the following definition: teachers used learning strategies based on learning styles, culture as well as gender differences, and used these to address specific needs of diverse learners.

### ***Thematic Summary for Research Question 1***

Participants needed an environment conducive for MCIP to feel comfortable implementing them in their diverse classroom. Participants also said that the administration did an effective job at highlighting different cultures throughout the building, including the hiring practices of the staff. Participants said that administration highlighted various cultures in the building was a key aspect in building relationships and an inclusive environment. Intentionally addressing diversity and planning for diversity helped with diverse student performance in the classroom. Participants also said that intentionally hiring diverse staff and having tough conversations with faculty about diversity would help create cultural connections.

Participants perceptions about incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms were expressed through recognizing culture, cultural values, and cultural understanding.

Several of the teachers said that administration promoted different viewpoints and religious practices as well as representing the cultures in the building. Participants gave examples of those events, including Women's History Month, Hispanic Heritage, Culture Fest. Participants said that they would like to see more cultural nights, international nights, more community events, where everyone has a voice.

### **Research Question 2 Informed by Theme 2**

The second RQ addressed middle school teachers' perceptions of the challenges they face when implementing MCIP. Based upon the data analysis, RQ2 was addressed and aligned with Theme 2: Middle school teachers believed that being self-aware was the key to addressing and overcoming the challenges related to incorporating MCIP. The interview data analysis informed this RQ to provide perceptions of middle school teachers about the challenges in implementing multicultural practices.

Most of the participants said that their level of awareness was high and that they were cautious about speaking on certain topics. When asked questions about how teacher participants felt about implementing MCIP, participants were very forthcoming about what they tried in the classroom. Many of the participants were open and honest about what they felt worked and did not work when trying said practices. Participants discussed struggles being related to a lack of training or education, focus on standards, learning gaps, time limits, reluctance to address certain topics, and even language barriers. Two categories—limitation with multicultural practices when integrating content and self-

awareness through equitable pedagogical practice—make up this theme. Table 7 includes participant interview excerpts associated with Theme 2 axial codes.

**Table 7**

*Participant Interview Excerpts Associated With Theme 2 Axial Codes*

Theme 2 axial code	No. of participants	Example quote
Limitations with multicultural practices when integrating content	8	In terms of comfort level, I think yes and no, because there is a lot of pressure to stay focused on (alignment with curriculum) what they line up for us with the curriculum.
Self-awareness through equitable pedagogical practice	7	So, trying to explain, it's been more difficult, I think, to explain it to White students than to a diverse population (conversations about race) from my standpoint.
Theme 2 totals	2	2

***Limitations With Multicultural Practices When Integrating Content***

Several of the participants intimated that the students they taught struggled in their class because English was not their first language. Six participants said that the language barrier was a huge impediment to their language learners attaining and retaining information in the classroom, regardless of using multicultural instructional strategies. A couple of the participants reported their struggles with students being behind grade level. The participants felt especially strong about students whose first language was not English. Participant 2 said that learning gaps impeded their efforts to get students to retain information. Six participants said the curriculum lack diversity as it relates to implementing MCIP. They said that they would like to hone in more on addressing their diverse students but the resources in use holds them back from doing more.

### ***Self-Awareness Through Equitable Pedagogical Practice***

Most of the participants said that they were cognizant of their instructional materials as well as conversations had in their classrooms. Participants understood the impact of their authoritative position and how damaging it could be to say the wrong thing. Participant 4 said that they did not feel comfortable addressing certain issues or topics within their classroom setting. Participant 1 talked very candidly about his experiences and how he did not want his potential bias to come out in the classroom. Four participants were very aware of how their own personal feelings could potentially affect the diverse array of students in their classroom.

### ***Thematic Summary for Research Question 2***

Participants needed to be self-aware of their own bias and prejudice to be effective in implementing MCIP. Participants said that time limitations, language barriers, lack of fundamentals, pressures to stay aligned with curriculum, and subject limitations were key contributors to the challenges with implementing MCIP.

Participants were optimistic and forthright about expressing their desire to make sure their diverse learners received instruction that would ensure learning. But participants were concerned about the pressures to stay aligned with curriculum, being that there were set text in ELA and the text was dense, the language barrier that came with student's migrating from other countries and the time it would take to implement MCIP. Participants said other challenges were limitations implementing multicultural practices with math, with certain lessons, and students lack fundamentals. They also said



their lack of cultural connection with students, how difficult it was to provide real-world relevance, and the difficulty to relate the content to their lives caused frustration.

Participants said their perceptions about the challenges of implementing MCIP included being self-aware of their diverse students in the classroom. It was important for many of the teachers to stick to facts when discussing information about other cultures, being aware of their own personal beliefs and prejudice, and in their estimation, being what one teacher claimed to be, “politically correct.” Most of the participants felt comfortable talking about race with same-race but uncomfortable having these discussions with students of other races; they said handling racial conversations, and privilege can be difficult. Religion was a straightforward topic, yet participants said they still treaded lightly.

### **Research Question 3 Informed by Theme 3**

The third RQ addressed middle school teacher perceptions about the support and resources needed to implement MCIP. Based upon the data analysis, RQ3 was addressed and aligned with Theme 3: Middle school teachers identified that they need more support, guidance, and materials to implement MCIP effectively. The interview data analysis informed this RQ to provide perceptions of middle school teachers about the supports and resources needed to implement multicultural practices.

While participants said that they were addressing their diverse students, they also said that they could use more help with addressing their diverse learners. Of the eight participants, all made remarks in the interviews that focused on bringing in experts on the

topic of multicultural education and materials specifically designed for diverse learners. All participant responses indicated that they felt that if they received the necessary support and materials needed, they would feel more comfortable when implementing MCIP. Two categories—integrating content through multicultural training and integrating diverse content—were used to support Theme 3. Table 8 includes participant interview excerpts associated with Theme 3 axial codes.

**Table 8**

*Participant Interview Excerpts Associated With Theme 3 Axial Codes*

Axial code	No. of participants	Example quote
Integrating diverse content	6	So I think the teacher's relationship with the students and them knowing me and seeing them, at least specifically in my room, seeing different things represented of whether it is a color theme I use to represent support of LGBTQ students or if it's books on civil rights or minorities that can do big things or women in science or things like that, I think that has to be present before instructional practices are even addressed.
Integrating content through multicultural training	4	I don't think I've ever seen any that's multicultural professional development to assist here.
Theme 3 totals	2	2

***Integrating Content Through Multicultural Training***

While many of the responses addressed receiving more diverse texts, adding more multicultural resources, and bringing in experts who have experience with multicultural education, some of the participants said things should be addressed at a district level as

well. Participants were candid about their need for more training and guidance as it relates to MCIP. Six participants when addressing the interview question about professional development said they would like to be involved in more trainings that address MCIP. They expressed the need for more professional development on MCIP to feel more comfortable on implementing them in their diverse classrooms.

### ***Integrating Diverse Content***

Several of the participants reported needing more diverse materials to use in their classroom. While four participants expressed broad items that could help them, Participants 3 and 8 said that they needed training that addressed connecting cultures and specific strategies to use for diverse learners as they felt this could help them reach their diverse learners in an impactful way. Five participants said that those materials could help make students be more engaged, more involved, more seen, and more heard. Those five participants also said that having resources on how to implement MCIP, especially with ELA and social studies, could be beneficial. Even though there is a curriculum with set texts and topics, participants expressed the desire to have a list of other pieces of literature that is more diverse that participants can easily access. Three participants said that they needed resources that addressed issues about race, people of color, and breaking down historical time periods.

### ***Thematic Summary for Research Question 3***

The findings from the interviews validated that participants needed more support, resources, and materials to feel more comfortable with implementing MCIP. Participants

struggles and barriers were more obvious if they did not have the type of support needed for individualized instruction. Participants recognized the need for additional support and said that they wanted presenters and experts to provide more information on multicultural education.

Participants said they need more diverse literature that students can relate to as well as a glossary of multicultural terms that they could reference when in doubt. They also said they needed research and evidence-based information that could help provide strategies and resources that support diversity. Overall, they said just seeing more representation of various cultures in text would be helpful. As participants addressed the need for more preparation when it comes to MCIP, they also said that they would be comfortable with MCIP, although many of them had little experience and were confused about what to include. Participants also said that social emotional learning and sensitivity training would help them implement MCIP more effectively.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I described this basic qualitative study using interviews to better understand teachers' perceptions of incorporating MCIP. I used purposeful sampling to identify eight participants in one middle school in the Southeastern region of the United States. I conducted semistructured interviews in person. I analyzed transcribed interview data using a priori, open, and axial coding in the development of themes. I share the conclusions and recommendations from the results in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions about incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms. I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. The participants were eight middle school teachers who had 3 to 13 years of teaching experience in K–12 education from one school district in the Southeast region of the United States. The data analysis yielded three major themes related to participating teachers' perceptions about incorporating MCIP:

- the belief that administration intentionally provided culturally focused events (Theme 1);
- the belief that self-awareness was key to addressing MCIP challenges (Theme 2); and
- the belief that teachers need diverse content, materials, resources, and expert guidance to develop more inclusive, self-aware classroom environments (Theme 3).

In this chapter, I interpret the findings as they relate to the conceptual framework and the literature review. I then discuss the limitations of the study, offer recommendations for future study, consider implications for positive social change, and provide a conclusion to the study.

## **Interpretations of the Findings**

In this section, I summarize each of the three themes that emerged from the data analysis and then interpret each one based on the conceptual framework and the current research on multicultural education, as it relates to MCIP in diverse classrooms.

### **Theme 1: Administration Provision of Culturally Focused Events**

The first theme reflects participating teachers' beliefs that administration provided culturally focused events in the school building. Participants stated that they needed an environment conducive for MCIP to feel comfortable implementing them in their diverse classroom. They said that the administration did an effective job at highlighting different cultures throughout the building, including hiring staff.

Participants said that administration highlighted the various cultures in the building helped build relationships and an inclusive environment. They also addressed how intentionally addressing diversity and planning for diversity will benefit diverse student performance in the classroom. Participants also said that intentionally hiring diverse staff and having tough conversations with faculty about diversity will create cultural connections.

Cultural recognition, values, and understanding were central to participants' perceptions about incorporating MCIP in diverse classrooms. Participants said that administration promoted different viewpoints and religious practices as well as representing the cultures in the building increased their awareness of diversity.

Participants gave examples of those events, including Women's History Month, Hispanic

Heritage, Culture Fest. Participants said that they would like to see more cultural nights, international nights, more community events, where everyone has a voice.

***Connection of Theme 1 to Banks's (1995) Conceptual Framework***

The first theme from the findings aligned with the five dimensions of Banks's (1995) multicultural education framework indicating that Banks's best practices were present when empowering school culture and providing equitable instruction. Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education include content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowerment of school culture. In Theme 1, two dimensions were connected to participating teachers' perceptions about incorporating MCIP.

Equity pedagogy is the modification of instruction that ensures that academic achievement of diverse students is addressed. Six participants said that using visuals, body and hand movement, along with more tangible activities, helped them to include different types of learners. Empowerment of school culture entails reforming the culture of the school so that students from various cultures and language groups can experience fairness in the school building (Banks, 1995). Cultural events were defined as opportunities when school and/or local community players were involved in instructional activities to intentionally highlight, include, or expose students to cultural or structural diversity. Participants said that administration empowered school culture by holding cultural events for the community, while the teachers posted cultural posters and bulletin boards in their classrooms and three participants said how the ELA curriculum was

inclusive of all groups of learners, including but not limited to racial, religious and language orientation.

### ***Connection of Theme 1 to the Literature***

Culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy involves studies on incorporating students' culture to make learning relevant and to support learning. Dixson and Ladson-Billings (2017) proposed that culturally relevant pedagogy must support students in accepting and affirming their cultural identities. Culturally relevant pedagogy is often used interchangeably with culturally responsive teaching, which Gay (2015) defined as using cultural knowledge, prior experience, frame of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse student to make learning encounters more relevant and effective.

Participants found that connecting learning through student's cultures, building relationships, and using cultural items to be beneficial when implementing MCIP. These findings supported the work done by Farinde-Wu et al. (2017) and Borrero et al. (2018), in their literature reviews, they found that teachers used familial-style classroom management to create a culture of success, stressed student-centered instruction, and identified the importance of recognizing students' backgrounds as assets. African American participants in this study said that they relied on their personal backgrounds to help connect with minority students as outlined in Magaldi et al. (2018) study. They also echoed sharing cultural perspectives with students and expressed being motivated by social justice and bridging cultural divides, as in the Magaldi et al. (2018) study. Three



participants found relationship building to be beneficial, while fostering cross-cultural understanding and inclusiveness, as mentioned in Samuels (2018) study.

## **Theme 2: Self-Awareness Key to Addressing Challenges Related to Multicultural Instructional Practices**

Participants described their beliefs about how their self-awareness was a key when addressing challenges related to MCIP. Participants expressed needing to be self-aware of their own bias and prejudice to be effective in implementing MCIP. Teachers also said that time limitations, language barriers, lack of fundamentals, pressures to stay aligned with curriculum, and subject limitations were key contributors to the challenges with implementing MCIP.

Participants were optimistic and forthright about expressing their desire to make sure their diverse learners received instruction that was equitable. Participants concerns centered around the pressures to stay aligned with curriculum. They said that the set text in ELA and the density of it, made the language barrier that much difficult. Participants also said that other challenges existed such as limitations implementing MCIP with math, certain lessons, and students lack of fundamentals. They also said that their lack of cultural connection with students, providing real-world relevance, and relating the content to students' lives was difficult.

Participants expressed their perceptions about the challenges of implementing MCIP as being self-aware of their diverse students in the classroom. Participants said that sticking to the facts when discussing information about other cultures, being aware of

their own personal beliefs and prejudice, and in their estimation, being what one teacher claimed to be, “politically correct” is important. Most of the participants felt comfortable talking about race with the same race of students but uncomfortable with other races; they said handling racial and privilege conversations were difficult. Religion was a straightforward topic, yet teachers said that they still treaded lightly.

Three participants who were ELA teachers, expressed that the curriculum was diverse but due to time constraints, it was difficult to add even more diversity. Two of the participants did not feel comfortable addressing issues related to race, privilege, or other controversial conversations. Six participants were not only comfortable addressing, race, privilege, and other controversial conversations, but felt comfortable using those topics for real-world conversations and connecting cultures.

### ***Connection of Theme 2 to Banks’s (1995) Conceptual Framework***

The second theme from the findings aligned with the five dimensions of Banks’s multicultural education framework indicating that Banks’s best practices were present when providing equitable instruction. Participants said that equity pedagogy in their instruction were facilitated through treading carefully with religion and using translation to allow for language learners to keep up with instructional content. Participants expressed how they or their school made sure that classroom practices as well as the school culture was equitable by participants implementing cultural displays of artifacts, they said that setting the tone for inclusion by making sure that all students felt

comfortable speaking and having their voice heard, while also being aware of the different religious practices of students in the building made a difference.

The second theme from the findings aligned with the five dimensions of Banks's multicultural education framework indicating that Banks's best practices were present when integrating content. Participants expressed integrating content which involved them using examples and content from a variety of cultures but felt it was important to stick to the facts of their subject area and not add material that was not verifiable. Participants said that when integrating content, there were pressures to stay aligned with the curriculum, and the language barrier prevented teachers from making sure their diverse student received valuable information. Participants also expressed that time constraints, lack of fundamentals, and difficulty relating to content, held back teachers' efforts of implementing MCIP effectively.

### ***Connection of Theme 2 to the Literature***

Several studies addressed the challenges of implementing MCIP based on race, socioeconomic status, and subject matter. Samuels (2018) findings revealed that participants considered culturally responsive teaching beneficial, but time restraints and lack of resources were a concern. This finding was consistent with the participants' perceptions about difficulties implementing multicultural practices. Adams and Glass (2018) found challenges in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy and believed that hands-on experience could foster students' engagement; this finding was consistent with participants perceptions about engaging students from a different socioeconomic

background and those who are English language learners. Keefer (2017) found that teachers believed that fewer opportunities for educational achievement existed when students had deficits.

Participants said that their students' perceived deficits as it relates to their lack of fundamentals and language barriers were deficits. Raisinghani (2018) found student diversity as both a strength and a challenge and acknowledged that diversity helped them in promoting all students' learning in their science and mathematics classrooms.

Although participants that were math teachers recognized diversity as a strength, and they expressed how difficult it was to incorporate MCIP in their math classroom. This was also consistent with Rubel's (2017) study that found teachers had difficulties in adopting equity-directed practices of connecting mathematics instruction to students' experiences and lacked knowledge about the students' experiences.

### **Theme 3: Materials, Resources, and Expert Guidance Are Key to Multicultural Instructional Practices**

In my analysis of the final theme, participants said they needed more materials, resources, and training on MCIP to develop a more inclusive classroom environment. Participants expressed that they were comfortable with being in a diverse environment yet would like to experience more professional development opportunities on diversity. Participant 3 said that training would help him introduce cultural aspects. He also said that an expert on MCIP would be beneficial to learn from. Participants also said how model teaching and training over the legalities of what can be taught in the classroom

would make them more comfortable. Participant 5 said that what helped him the most was when a lesson was planned and taught for him to witness and experience, while Participant 1 addressed a need for a course or training that would focus on what can we say, what can we not say as it relates to MCIP.

### ***Connection of Theme 3 to Banks's (1995) Conceptual Framework***

The third theme from the findings aligned with the five dimensions of Banks's multicultural education framework indicating that Banks's best practices were present when integrating content. Participants expressed how they need more materials and resources to integrate content that addresses several cultures, for instance, materials that help with English language learners. Participants said that receiving vetted materials and a glossary of multicultural terms would help them integrate more diversity in their classroom. Participants expressed how receiving training that is research based and addresses how to implement multicultural practices with diverse students would help them implement MCIP. While participants were aware of the multitude of cultures in their classroom and in the building, they wanted more help with how to utilize text to show representation and how to be sensitive to the topics that are addressed to maintain equity in their classroom.

### ***Connection of Theme 3 to the Literature***

Participants said that wanted additional training that was tailored to their needs and focused primarily on MCIP, and working with different cultures would be instrumental to their instructional efforts. Karacabey et al. (2019) found that teachers did

not understand students with different cultural backgrounds but had positive things to say about multicultural education. Participants in this study expressed the need for more diversity training. Findings also supported Cruz et al. (2020) study which found that the teachers are more confident in building relationships with students but less confident about teaching their culture's contributions. Also, credential preparation type, subject type, school type, and geographic location did not influence how comfortable and prepared teachers were when implementing MCIP. Four participants were from traditional teaching programs and the other 4 went through a job-embedded program. They all expressed the need for more training to help implement MCIP. Titu et al. (2018) research results showed that teachers felt unprepared, and they relied on their own background to connect with minority students. These findings were persistent with the participants perceptions about not receiving a lot of multicultural training, and their efforts coming out of a need in their classroom. Findings also supported the study of Holland and Mongillo (2016) which found that participants were comfortable implementing multicultural literature when they received support from the administration in addressing multicultural topics but had limited understanding and feared saying something inappropriate.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study had several limitations. This basic qualitative study focused on the perceptions of eight 6th and 7th grade teachers from one school in one school district in the Southeast part of the United States, which limits the transferability to other settings. I

only choose Grade 6 and 7 teachers although Grade 8 is included as part of the local middle school site. The reason for this limitation is that I hold a leadership position for Grade 8 and could not recruit participants from this grade level. A third limitation involved dependability, which refers to the likelihood that other researchers could repeat the study and would arrive at the same findings with the same data. To mitigate the limitation of transferability, I thoroughly explained each step in carrying out the study. Though these descriptions cannot ensure transferability, they will enable readers to determine if the findings are pertinent to their settings. To mitigate the limitation of dependability, I kept an audit trail. I carefully tracked every step in the collection and analysis of data. As Carcary (2009) explained, audit trails provide a documented account of decisions made in the research study and how elements develop in relation to the theoretical, methodological, and analytic matters.

I have pursued the topic of multicultural education because of my strong opinions about the importance of developing relationships and creating a caring educational environment for all students. I acknowledged my bias about the importance of multicultural education. To help ensure that my bias did not influence my behavior as the researcher, I maintained a reflective journal to assist in recognizing my bias and identifying steps to avoid letting my bias influence data collection and analysis.

### **Recommendations**

Based on my reflections of the findings of this study, I believe further research is needed to understand middle school teachers' perceptions as it relates to implementing

multicultural practices for diverse learners. A gap in research remains in understanding the specific types of resources teachers need in diverse classrooms, their attitudes and experiences working with MCIP, and the challenges they still perceive after implementing them. I recommend five areas for future exploration and study.

- Explore teachers inservice experiences after a semester, half a year or year of integrating MCIP from a variety of cultures.
- Explore teachers inservice experiences after completing a series of professional development opportunities designed to assist with implementing MCIP.
- Explore teachers experience of constructing knowledge using MCIP in a longitudinal study by examining the procedures by which they help students understand how cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives and biases influence the ways that knowledge is constructed.
- Explore the experiences of teachers' instructional methods on how they reduce prejudice in their classrooms by examining lessons that help develop positive attitudes.
- Explore stakeholders' perceptions of the implementation of equitable practices the school structure and the methods used to do so.

The findings of this study support the need for further research into MCIP and the impact they have on diverse learners in the classroom. Future researchers should continue to explore veteran teachers experience with training, professional development, courses,



traditional and non-traditional paths to becoming a teacher and their experiences with implementing MCIP in diverse classrooms.

### **Implications**

The implications of this study's findings, within the bounds of this study, may inform social change for teachers, school districts, students, and other stakeholders. Additionally, the findings may inform theoretical and methodological approaches to improving MCIP, as indicated by alignment of the themes with Banks's conceptual framework. Finally, the implications of this study may inform the professional practice by identifying key factors for educators to consider as they develop their collective and individual MCIP.

### **Social Change**

The findings from this basic qualitative study could have implications for positive social change for individual teachers, school districts, students, and stakeholders. This study focused on the importance of how middle school teachers perceived implementing MCIP in diverse classrooms. Based on the findings from this study, it was discovered that although challenges exist in implementing MCIP, and supports and diverse resources were needed, building engagement and a welcoming environment, while applying a variety of learning strategies were crucial for successful implementation.

## **Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to Multicultural Instructional Practices**

The implications from the findings of this study confirm the recommendations of Watters et al. (2020) that differentiating instruction for students academically, culturally, and socially is a key component of multicultural education and academic success of all learners. Participants shared that although their multicultural education was limited, they learned over the years that their diverse students needed scaffolding and differentiation. Participants went out of their way to provide for the needs of their students, especially as it related to their cultural needs.

### **Professional Practice Related to Multicultural Instruction**

Schools and districts can benefit from the findings of this study. As teachers shared their experiences with MCIP, positive social change can be achieved through the strategies teachers spoke on to improve teachers' capacity to implement MCIP, as well as glean information from the challenges teachers faced working with their diverse students. This, in turn, may enable teachers to be prepared to teach in any classroom environment regardless of the diversity of their students. Participants shared that providing consistent training, professional development, and diverse resources could strengthen MCIP while also ensuring that teachers become more comfortable implementing MCIP.

Other stakeholders can benefit from this study as the participants expressed challenges, they had implementing MCIP, working with the current curriculum, and

being trained effectively to work with diverse learners. Stakeholders and teacher education programs should address teacher concerns when implementing MCIP for diverse learners. Taking teachers' needs into account will strengthen collaboration amongst faculty and better tailor the learning to meet diverse student needs and improve teachers' instructional delivery.

### **Conclusion**

Multicultural education is defined as providing students with knowledge about their histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups, including respect for gender, race, and socioeconomic background (Aragona-Young & Sawyer, 2018). Teachers' perceptions of and attitude toward other cultures influence their instructional practices and they often rely on personal experiences to understand the struggles and strengths of diverse students (Magaldi et al., 2018). Differentiating instruction for students academically, culturally, and socially is a key component of multicultural education and academic success of all learners (Watters et al., 2020). While studies have been done on preparation for diverse classrooms, teacher attitudes and beliefs, self-efficacy, and equity mindset about multicultural education, I identified no research studies exploring middle school teachers' perceptions on incorporating multicultural practices in diverse classrooms.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' perceptions on incorporating multicultural practices in diverse classrooms. This study added to the research on the needs for teachers to be prepared to teach diverse students in

the classroom. The findings confirmed that teachers and school cultures that create an environment where diverse learners feel comfortable and safe and provide a context for learning are implementing MCIP for their diverse learners. However, participants expressed the need for more training and diverse resources to be able to feel more comfortable when implementing MCIP.

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## Appendix: Interview Protocol

**Dissertation Topic: Middle School Teacher Perceptions of Incorporating  
Multicultural Instructional Practices**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee \_\_\_\_\_

**Introduction**

I would like to audio tape our conversations today. When the study is completed, I will delete the recording. Do you give your permission for me to use the audio recorder?

I have received your permission to participate in the study. Please know that you can withdraw at any time. Thank you for agreeing to participate.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than 60 min. I have a set of questions but there will be plenty of time to follow up on any question with your thoughts.

I know that you have a great deal to share about teaching. This study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, I am investigating the instructional practices that teachers use in diverse classrooms.

**Notes to Interviewee**

Once again, thank you for your participation. I believe your input will be valuable to this research and in helping grow our professional practice. Your responses will be



kept confidential and only used for the purposes of this research. Neither you nor your school will be identified.

### **Approximate Length of Interview**

45–60 min

### **Purpose of Research:**

In this research study, my goal is to explore what perceptions teachers may have when it comes to incorporating multicultural practices in a diverse setting.

### **Interview Questions**

#### ***Background Questions***

I have a few background questions.

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What core subject do you teach?

#### ***Other Questions***

3. Tell me about your feelings about implementing multicultural instructional strategies?

**Prompt:** Do you feel comfortable implementing these types of strategies?

(RQ1: What are the perceptions of middle school teachers about incorporating multicultural practices in diverse classrooms?)

4. Could you give me an example of a strategy you have used to address the needs of your culturally diverse students?

**Prompt:** Tell me about other strategies you use and how you think they went.

**Prompt:** Do you believe that your culturally diverse students need to be planned for?

(RQ2: What are the perceptions of middle school teachers about the challenges in implementing multicultural practices?)

5. Tell me about a time where you incorporated examples and content from more than one culture?

**Prompt:** Do you believe your students noticed a difference when using these examples?

(RQ2: What are the perceptions of middle school teachers about the challenges in implementing multicultural practices?) (Content integration)

6. Can you think of any lessons or activities that were challenging but focused on real- world strategies to help your culturally diverse students?

(RQ2: What are the perceptions of middle school teachers about the challenges in implementing multicultural practices?) (Knowledge construction)

7. Do you find it challenging to teach about topics from a racial point of view without getting into controversial territory?

**Prompt:** Can you give me an example of a challenging topic?

(RQ1: What are the perceptions of middle school teachers about incorporating multicultural practices in diverse classrooms?) (Prejudice reduction)

8. Can you talk to me about the intentional practices you believe the school administration implements to maintain a culture that is inclusive for all?

**Prompt:** What do you believe can be implemented to improve the school culture?

(RQ3: What supports, and resources do middle school teachers perceive needing to implement multicultural practices?) (Empowerment of school culture)

9. Are there any specific supports or resources that would make you feel more comfortable implementing multicultural practices?

**Prompt:** What kind of professional development would you like to be involved in?

(RQ3: What supports, and resources do middle school teachers perceive needing to implement multicultural practices?)