

THE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITHIN
DIFFERENT SOCIOECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTS

by
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Abstract

Education is an important context of socialization in children and a place in which they are first exposed to peers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In the United States, cultural diversity has been steadily increasing with the arrival of immigrants and their cultural backgrounds, while entrenching them within today's existing society. This has led students in primary schools to rapidly become exposed towards diversity in multiple ways. Many schools have begun to teach students about multiculturalism in an effort to normalize diversity. The present mixed-methods study sought to assess how multicultural education differs amongst different socioeconomic school districts. The goal was to determine how education could be improved as a result of these efforts. The results of the study point to multicultural education being highly beneficial for students across all ages and grades.

Keywords: multicultural education, education, socialization, and effective educational techniques.

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Preface

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank The Johns Hopkins University for the privilege and honor of allowing me to accomplish a graduate program under their prestigious name. A special thanks to the Admissions Department for giving “a guy a chance whose odds have always been stacked against him.”

To Dr. Cabello and Dr. DeSisto, for their guidance and mentorship in helping me complete my thesis.

To my loving wife who has always supported me throughout our years together. Her patience and understanding helped me tremendously in completing my masters. She is my soul mate and greatest supporter.

And to my loving mother Dr. Fey Chung, an amazing and inspiring lady who exemplified overwhelming compassion and strength; she was always my true role model.

Dedication

To my son and daughter who possess the power and potential to conquer the universe.

Nothing in this world is impossible; don't let anyone ever tell you what can't be done.

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Introduction

“As leaders, what is needed is a faster and more streamlined decision cycle, judgment and money, and recognition that doing more of the same is unlikely to achieve better results. What is needed most of all are leaders who are prepared to challenge conventional thinking, break crockery, stop doing what doesn't work well or at all, and set a new course.”

– Robert Gates

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of multicultural education, on the academic success achieved by students, and the potential that students can attain as a result of the integration of multicultural factors into the aspect of education. The primary education setting becomes the main and first mode of socialization for young children. It is also considered the initial environment in which children encounter and learn about fellow peers and classmates, those that come from other cultural and ethnic backgrounds different from their own. As such, children gain an important opportunity to become influenced by the plethora of diverse experiences that their peers have had. This creates a place in which culture and education can meet and intersect; a place where they can begin to interact with one another and influence one another in meaningful ways. This interaction and influence can then lead to becoming a shaping force onto the psyche of children being educated in both a direct and indirect manner. Additionally, this type of personal knowledge, in reference to diverse contexts, also shapes them as they mature and become adults. Particularly, this study aims to discover the effect of multicultural education within different socioeconomic context. The researcher wants to uncover the degree of effect in this integration, in relation to student achievement in wealthy and poor

educational districts and areas. The resulting data obtained, as part of the study, will be used to determine what changes can be integrated into primary education in order to help improve the aspect of multicultural education within socioeconomic environments.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study is to provide evidence and allow educators to determine the optimal changes that can be integrated into educational programs. The goal and intent is to make positive and tangible changes within the field of education. It is to also provide students with the best possible academic environment in which they can excel while fulfilling their educational and academic potential. Presently, there is not a uniform standard of multicultural education in primary schools across the country, which means that children can benefit unequally from the various multicultural education efforts currently in place within a schools' curricula. As such, the results generated by this study can be useful in instilling a degree of uniformity in the curricula that is currently applied by teachers in public schools. The results may also ensure that children are receiving the same or similar quality of education regardless of the school that they are attending, particularly if any differences in the quality of education may be associated to the socioeconomic status surrounding the environment.

Summary

This study aims to assess how multicultural education can benefit students across academic environments in different socioeconomic contexts. Children in different socioeconomic contexts are presumed to have different degrees of exposure and experiences with diversity while interacting with individuals whom they may have few, if any, cultural similarities. Existing

research shows that multicultural education is not executed to the same degree in all academic environments, particularly in schools that are located in neighborhoods that vary in their socioeconomic levels. This leaves students in some educational environments at a disadvantage, as the lack of multicultural exposure can limit a students' potential to accept a diverse range of individuals from different ethnic cultures. This factor also limits a student's opportunity to broaden their intellectual minds. As such, the goal of the study is to determine if students in academia, in general, are able to derive benefits from multicultural-instructional methods that are aimed at increasing their familiarity with diversity.

Literature Review

Culture in Educational Environment

It is important to define culture, within the overall context of society, before this concept is explored in a closer manner within an academic environment. The aspect of culture can be defined as a group of interconnected values that are learned through the process of socialization, which imparts specific behaviors and expectations on their populations (Becirovic & Brdarevic-Celijo, 2018). Culture is, at its core, an artificial construct made by human beings. It is not a static construct and has the ability to not only change over time, but also change between different geographic and social contexts. In the past, there was a lesser degree of diversity, as a result of more cultures being isolated from one another, due to geographic constraints and a less degree of intermixing between the various cultures that existed in the world. Due to an increased degree of economic globalization, individuals are increasingly encountering more peers from various cultural backgrounds in today's society (Becirovic & Brdarevic-Celijo, 2018). Furthermore, due to this increase of diversity, individuals are now bound to become more

exposed to one another who are quite dissimilar in their background, personal characteristics, and traits.

In past socioeconomic settings, it was more common for individuals to interact with similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds within confined areas and neighborhoods, particularly in an academic environment and within schools of different districts. Now, with the increase of immigrant population, as well as examples of obtaining employment in ethnic organizations in different communities, children are more likely to be sent to schools in different communities that also have students from various ethnic backgrounds attending schools in any given area. Beyond this, the academic environment serves as the one of the initial places of socialization for students, where children learn how to function within their community, and within a broader society which helps to adequately prepare them for adulthood.

Due to this increased degree of diversity, it becomes necessary to expose students in academic settings, to the multitude of cultures that they may encounter through the use of intercultural education (Blue, Mupinga, Clark, DeLuca, & Kelly, 2018). Without this type of education, children are not sufficiently prepared for interpersonal interactions or relationships with peers that may be of different ethnicity or of different cultures than they are. Additionally, if multicultural education is absent from an academic environment, children are more likely to shy away from those that are “different” or of not the same ethnicity or country; instead, gravitate towards peers that come from the same or similar ethnic and cultural background. As a result, intercultural education should be implemented in multiple schools and academic environments.

Multiculturalism can lead to inherent inequalities in society, which can also manifest themselves in the classroom environment (Ghosh, 2018). Inequalities result from the unequal distribution of, and access to, resources between different socioeconomic and cultural groups

within the same community. Inequalities then have the potential of becoming quite apparent, when children compare themselves to their peers, who may come from better or worse socioeconomic backgrounds. This can lead to multiple adverse consequences, such as discrimination of those that fall into minority categories or those that are considered to be in a disadvantage on the basis of how they are defined by society (Ghosh, 2018). This concept is considered to have originated in the early 1940s as a response to nationalism, which was a movement that inherently did not accept or integrate cultural and ethnic differences into society (Ghosh, 2018). This, again, can be tied back to society becoming increasingly diverse as a result of the influx of immigrants from other nations coming into the United States; an intent to become a part of the present social fabric.

In contrast to the aforementioned, multiculturalism increases the degree of equality of different groups that make up the fabric of society; as human beings are exposed to mutual differences and begin to learn about one another (Ghosh, 2018). Despite this, social attitudes can still be difficult to alter due to their deep entrenchment in social values and resulting social attitudes, which is where education begins to play a critical role in the social change that is needed in order to embrace multiculturalism. These efforts have found significant traction in countries that have traditionally been open to new ethnicities, such as in the form of refugees from nations that tend to be more discriminatory (Davis, 2017). In such countries, multiculturalism has allowed the changing of social attitudes to become interwoven into the very fabric that makes up that same society. In many ways, this has resulted from social attitudes being influenced by continually new and changing ideas, ideas that are introduced into communities, allowing old values to be altered over time in order to accommodate any new changes that are incorporated by newcomers (Davis, 2017).

Multicultural education is based on the idea that students can obtain knowledge and associated values from being exposed to different cultural messages, ideals, attitudes, and values; as evidenced and communicated by participation in interpersonal relationships (Goo, 2018). The aim of these educational programs has been to be more inclusive towards students coming from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Hadjisoteriou et al., 2015). An additional degree of inclusivity allows teachers to be more successful in their efforts within a classroom, while increasing the chances of students to retain information and material presented to them as part of standard routine lessons. In educational settings, multicultural education has been effective in resolving barriers stemming from the environment such as poverty and crime (Ingraham et al., 2016).

Experts have determined that in this type of educational setting, children will undergo five steps of developing an identity, allowing them to relate to others that are coming from diverse backgrounds. These steps include imitation, victimization, immersion, internalization, and dedication; all of which allow children to better understand their own culture and ethnic identity (Blue et al., 2018). By having a better understanding of their own cultural and ethnic backgrounds, children become much more receptive and open to learning about the cultural backgrounds of others, as well as the various similarities and differences that can be found between them. Due to this process, multicultural education has been viewed as being particularly important when children are younger, as this helps to generate a greater trajectory of influence in the long-term (Bennett, Gunn, Gayle-Evans, Barrera IV, & Leung, 2018).

By definition, culture is defined as a framework that helps to establish specific expectations, as well as the values that will then provide a basis for future behavior. Culture is something that is commonly shared amongst specific individuals within a group, a means that a

specific culture can not only define a particular group, but also help to establish a common and shared identity between them. In many respects, the educational environment of today is much more multicultural than it had been in the past, due to specific factors that have changed the academic landscape, such as increased globalization and the spread of technology (Becirovic & Brdarevic-Celijo, 2018). This has been found to be particularly true in early childhood education environment, where children come into contact with peers from diverse ethnic and cultural environments at an early age (Bennett, Gunn, Gayle-Evans, Barrera IV, & Leung, 2018). Both instructors, as well as students, have an increased degree of expectation to be engaged, utilizing efforts to increase their own multicultural knowledge while being able to readily respond towards others coming from differing backgrounds (Blue, Mupinga, Clark, DeLuca, & Kelly, 2018). Furthermore, they are expected to become familiar with differences and nuances that may be found between different cultures and ethnicities, as this can improve interpersonal relations and reduce the risk of potential interpersonal conflicts (Blue et al., 2018).

Effect of Multicultural Education

Cross cultural efforts in academic environments have been found to have significant effect on students, particularly students within a primary academic school context. One such impact would be an increased knowledge of multiculturalism and the differences that make others unique (Blue et al., 2018). This allows students to become more openminded to other cultures and to be more readily accepting of intercultural differences. By engaging in such multicultural dialogue, students are able to effectively communicate with peers from diverse backgrounds and achieve improved results due to a better understanding. This also establishes a skill to communicate with peers coming from diverse backgrounds (Blue et al., 2018).

Within a classroom environment, multiculturalism serves as the crossroads between roles pertaining to gender, social status, economic status, and one's ethnicity (LaCour & Tissington, 2011). As previously mentioned, the concept of culture encompasses multiple facets and is rather fluid. Many of these facets are those that define interpersonal differences, such as the degree of financial resources that a family may have, the gender which a child may be, and in comparison to the gender majority of a school or academic class that a child is part of. Multiculturalism then, has the potential and the ability to bridge these differences and lead to an increased degree of cohesiveness within each class as well as within a school's campus.

Multicultural education has been found to have a significant and positive impact on society as a whole. When these types of models are integrated into academics, there is a greater degree of national unification, as different social groups are more willing to come together and work in unity (Akar & Ulu, 2016). This motivates members of the community to work towards a common goal that they all happen to share. Additionally, multicultural education helps to foster a sense of democracy as well as help to create a critical foundation for social peace. Educators integrating these types of models into their academic structure create a basis for students to better understand not only themselves, but also others without employing a purely ethnocentric approach that would otherwise work to skew their worldview (Akar & Ulu, 2016).

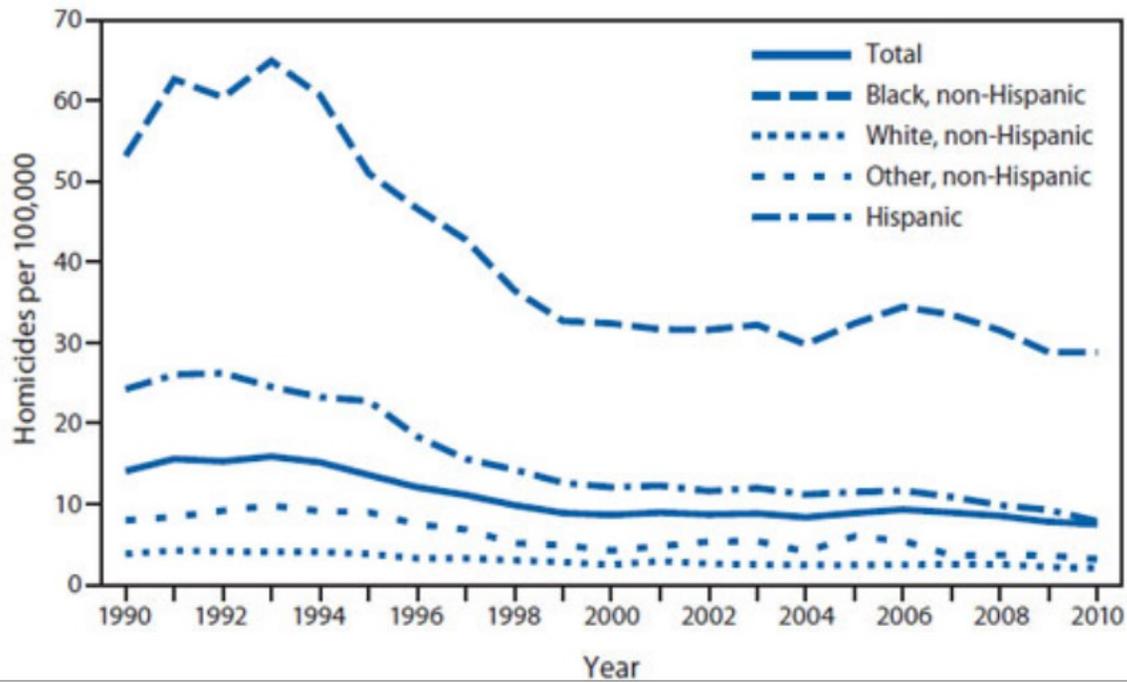
Past Multicultural Efforts

In past multicultural efforts, educators have been able to serve as role models and champions of multicultural dialogue by not only transmitting multicultural information to students, but by also showing them how to engage in this type of discourse (Blue et al., 2018). One challenge; however, that instructors have experienced when participating in multicultural

education is how to integrate this type of education in their everyday instructional lesson plan (Galczynski, Tsagkaraki, & Ghosh, 2012). The reality of multicultural education is the potential difficulty in showing students how to apply this knowledge to their interpersonal efforts and how to properly unpack and simplify it (Galczynski et al., 2012).

Past multicultural efforts have largely centered on the adherence of schools and educational institutions to any stated laws pertaining to this general topic (Galczynski et al., 2012). Beyond this, multicultural efforts in the past have also stemmed from necessity, as increasingly more schools have experienced violence rooted in the cultural differences between students (LaCour & Tissington, 2011). A factor that instructors have had to consider are children and adolescents coming from minority backgrounds, residing in low income areas, with a high rate of crime. Students typically tend to experience a higher rate of violence outside of school which then translates to a higher risk of encountering violence within a classroom setting (LaCour & Tissington, 2011). Additionally, instructors have also noted that this tendency towards violence among minority children and teenagers was also positively correlated to an increased risk of poverty among the same populations (LaCour & Tissington, 2011). The below chart illustrates the breakdown of violent crime, and particularly the rates of homicide in the United States, between the years of 1990 and 2010 (in relation to individuals coming from a minority background) (Wihbey, 2013).

Figure 1: Rate of homicide



between 1990 and 2010 in the United States

Figure 1 shows that African American individuals are much more likely to be victims as well as possible perpetrators of homicide. Conversely, Caucasian individuals are the least likely to be victims and perpetrators of homicide and other violent crimes. As such, there is a clear correlation between violent crime, its rates, and individuals being ethnic minorities or coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In the U.S., the earliest multicultural academic efforts occurred within the context of ensuring that the educational experience of African American students would be equivalent to that received by their Caucasian peers (Akar & Ulu, 2016). As such, these efforts heavily focused on reducing any impact of racial and social discrimination on a group of individuals experiencing otherwise disparate treatment (Akar & Ulu, 2016). Initially, these efforts were also aimed at reducing the degree of social unrest, that was generated by social outrage, over such

disparate treatment. For example, in 1954, the *Brown vs. Topeka* court case highlighted the fact that education could no longer be segregated and that a higher quality of education could not be restricted to only a certain ethnic group (James, 2016). Rather, education needed to become much more equitable and educators needed to ingrate students from different cultures and backgrounds together in a single physical space (James, 2016). Over time, these efforts expanded to encompass any group of individuals or social group being discriminated against for any reason. As these efforts have evolved, the main aim and objective has been to improve the overall quality of education that would be more inclusive and tailored in nature (Akar & Ulu, 2016). Overall, much of this effort was pushed forward by students themselves, as they organized groups that were primarily constructed towards initiating this specific agenda and progressive goals (James, 2016).

In order to introduce the aspect of multiculturalism to students, and particularly within an early educational setting, a tool utilized by instructors and teachers has been the art of storytelling. This tool was used to teach students the various values held in importance by individuals from different backgrounds. It was also a means of teaching how to relate to others by modeling certain behaviors presented in the stories. The goal here was to establish an academic culture that would be harmonious and unified in nature, as opposed to one that is fractured which thrives on the lines of cultural divisions (Goo, 2018).

In the last few decades, educational institutions have placed an increased attention and focus on multicultural education. The intent by teachers has been to implement a means of improving and enhancing the quality of education provided to the students, as well as their individual experience in the classroom. This has led to an increased sense of satisfaction, with education, on the part of students and particularly on the part of minority students (Leyerzapf &

Abma, 2017). In many cases, this has been achieved through the use of immersion, essentially forcing students to learn about other cultures and interact with peers coming from different backgrounds. Immersion was found to have positive effects, as students' attitudes were measured to be much more receptive to other cultures, following this type of an intervention within the academic sphere (Naumenko & Naumenko, 2016). As such, the aspect of immersion was found to increase the degree of tolerance that students would feel and exhibit towards diverse peers (Korol, Goncalves, & Cabral, 2016).

Models of Multiculturalism

Currently, restorative practices within the realm of multicultural education have shown quite a bit of promise. These efforts have largely been concentrated in elementary schools, high schools, and for the most part, have typically been implemented on a district-wide scale (Ingraham et al., 2016).

Another type of a model that has been implemented in the past is the Participatory Culture-Specific Intervention Model, or PCSIM (Ingraham et al., 2016). This particular model is rooted in an ethnographic approach, as it tailors interventions to specific cultural background of participants. PCSIM is unique in that it integrates both participatory action research as well as methods of inquiry that is naturalistic. It also allows instructors to tailor education and implement cultural aspects of academics in a manner that has been already tested in research with provided evidence (Ingraham et al., 2016).

Past multicultural efforts in the classroom setting have shown that this typically increase the students' degree of reception towards multiculturalism (Magen-Nagar & Shonfeld, 2018). In many cases, this has been achieved through a focus on greater cultural competency of among

classroom instructors (Niculescu & Bazgan, 2017). The aspect of multiculturalism within the classroom does not only affect students (as students encounter peers from diverse background) but rather, it also affects instructors (as teachers encounter students from various cultural backgrounds as well). Due to this factor, it becomes necessary for instructors to be able to handle the issue of diversity so they are able to approach the topic properly and effectively when teaching their students (Niculescu & Bazgan, 2017).

Systematic change has been identified as one of the factors that is necessary for any type of transition to a multicultural educational environment. This systematic change also assists students in being more receptive to cultural differences (Ingraham et al., 2016). Additionally, these types of changes are more likely to create an academic environment that is conducive to the function of learning. Beyond this, systematic changes focusing on cultural awareness, have shown positive results in the following:

- potential to reduce the incidence of bullying among students
- decrease the degree of individual student aggression
- increase the degree of student self-efficacy and personal resilience
- improve student personal achievements
- improve the mental health of students as a whole (Ingraham et al., 2016).

Overall, multicultural education is necessary for the fostering of cohesiveness amongst students who are ethnically and multiculturally diverse (Korol et al., 2016). By extension, this increases the intensity and productivity towards cooperation of both teachers and students. It also helps ease any friction stemming from cultural differences that would otherwise exist in the classroom which would work towards the prevention of disruptive of learning. Essentially, by

learning about cultural differences, students are more likely to accept the personal differences of their peers, as opposed to viewing them as potential barriers, due to a background that is different than their own (Korol et al., 2016).

Differences Between Educational Attainment in Relation to Socioeconomic Background

Generally, across the United States, multicultural education is implemented less frequently, as a standard curriculum in classroom instructions, as many teachers view multiculturalism as a lesson to teach only on a situational basis (James, 2016). Although it is often stressed, multicultural education has not yet become a standardized topic or methodology among educators. In many schools, courses focusing on multicultural education are often treated as electives, not necessarily mandatory courses (Liao, 2018). This leads many students to simply avoid multicultural education in favor of courses that fulfill their personal needs, interests, and hobbies. As such, they are most often selected and taken by minority students, as opposed to the members of the general student body, as they are viewed as being similar to foreign language courses. This type of approach has not been established in today's current curriculum in Los Angeles Unified School Districts. This factor has created tangible differences in the quality of education between districts, particularly between areas that are more diverse and those that have a lesser degree of diversity (Liao, 2018).

In communities where little diversity is present, educators may seem to ignore or avoid the full scope of value in teaching their students about multiculturalism (Liou, 2018). Although these school districts may employ instructors who are more open minded to multicultural efforts, these teachers may still be rather skeptical about the success of multicultural education and the potential positive effects that it may have on students. Instructors may claim that they wish to

implement these initiatives, but they do not have enough knowledge or experience to be able to fully implement them in a successful manner (Liou, 2018). Still other instructors may feel that their curricula are already at a capacity in integrating other important topics and they simply do not have the available time and resources to include multicultural topics in their classroom agendas. Based on some of these reasons, along with budget cuts, funding, and limited resources, multicultural initiatives often fall by the wayside and end up being partially or even completely ignored in some schools (Liou, 2018).

These views on multicultural educational efforts have created tangible differences between education in different communities. In school districts with little educational multiculturalism, the negative impact can be seen in violence between students on the basis of individual and cultural differences. In these areas, there seems to be a clear intersection between class and race, which is reflected in the manner of which students form relationships and interact with one another (Davis, 2017). This results from the use and integration of academic pedagogies that lack sufficient congruency with society and the values that it holds (Liao, 2018). The lack of intercultural awareness also creates and perpetuates incorrect and incomplete cultural stereotypes that impair social relations (Davis, 2017). In this setting, educators often lack a cohesive understanding of how students behave and how they learn which leads to students unable to meet their educational goals. It also results in an ever-widening cultural and educational gap between cultural groups and socioeconomic classes. This occurs because instructors discount the cultural factors that make their students unique (Liao, 2018).

Conversely, in areas that stress multicultural education, students begin to idealize a democracy that is rooted in cultural differences. In these communities, there appears to be a greater degree of resulting equality which translates to multiple social areas outside of

academics, such as the workplace and in gender relations. Here, students tend to uphold the notion of democracy as a cornerstone of the foundations on which the United States was constructed (Davis, 2017). This respect, regardless of one's cultural differences, is extended to all members of society on a mutual basis and without discrimination.

Potential Impact of Multicultural Education in Different Socioeconomic Settings

Research shows that the potential impact of multicultural education is positive, regardless of the socioeconomic setting in which the type of an effort takes place in. Multicultural interventions allow students to learn how to coexist with one another, both within the academic setting as well as outside of the traditional setting, without needing to justify any part of their identity to their peers (Galczynski et al., 2012). Some examples of this would include candidates running for political or public office with different backgrounds and ethnicities than the majority of their constituents (Galczynski et al., 2012). As students began to learn about the differences that define their peers, they are also able to gain the advantage of creating a shared identity with their fellow classmates.

The overall student body in the United States will become increasingly diverse in terms of racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of individual students, rather than becoming less diverse. Continuous flow of immigration into the United States will only bring additional multiculturally diversified students into American academic institutions, especially into public schools (Goo, 2018). Although schools have already begun to manage this critical aspect of their operations, they will need to allocate additional resources to ensure that both instructors and students are sufficiently prepared to handle this type of change in the future (Blue et al., 2018). This will likely continue to emphasize the integral conflict between plurality and diversity in the

classroom, while prompting educators to focus more on ensuring that students and teachers are unified, and that differences do not cause critical cleavages that could impair the quality of resulting education (Blue et al., 2018).

Another aspect to consider, when looking at the impact of immigration and of multiculturalism in schools, are the current and future waves of immigrants entering the United States. The continuous arrival of immigrants will continue to be fundamentally different from previous influxes of immigration, regardless of their origins (Chang, Hsu, Johnson, Rosen, & Syed, 2018). Immigrants face different issues that they did in the past. The current presidential administration, for example, has created a crucial reason for immigrants to worry about their security and stability in the United States, which in turn, can have a negative impact on their academic attendance, performance, and experiences (Chang et al., 2018). Other factors that differ from the past include an increased degree of racism and hostility, as they feel misunderstood by society on the basis of cultural differences. Additionally, immigrants may feel that they are viewed or perceived as presenting threats to others, thereby affecting their personal performance and concentration in academic environments (Chang et al., 2018).

A century ago, W. E. B. Du Bois speculated that a prevalent social issue in American society was racial conflict and the resulting unrest and controversy that followed. Du Bois further stated that although there is quite a bit of interaction between different ethnicities on a daily basis, the intellectual realm would suffer due to the lack of an individual's ability to empathize with those coming from different racial backgrounds (Liou, 2018). Not much has changed significantly, in terms of cultural and racial relations over the last century, and experts still agree that despite close interpersonal relationships, many Americans simply are not able to adopt a worldview that accounts for cultural differences. During this time, legal provisions have

been enacted to reduce the degree of disparity in education and now multicultural communities are able to achieve a greater sense of coexistence (Liou, 2018). However, a sense of genuineness is still missing from these relationships. This is clearly seen in impaired and incomplete academic curriculums that still fail to consistently include educational materials on multiculturalism. By omitting information about various cultures and ethnicities and their history from textbook curriculums, academic institutions are continuing to perpetuate these intercultural relationships as being contrived (Liou, 2018).

A long-term impact of multicultural education is a successful preparation of students for civic life and their full participation in all aspects of society. American society is highly pluralistic and multicultural education can have the benefit of engaging students due to their increased multicultural awareness and knowledge. This awareness will also sufficiently prepare students for a keen understanding on how cultural differences influence the social fabric of this country and how these differences relate to their own lives (Liou, 2018).

In terms of the differences in the impact of multicultural education, they tend to reflect the social conditions that permeate these communities (Davis, 2017). In many communities, there is a clear distaste for diversity of any aspect within their social area. This becomes reflected in the attitudes that are integrated into academics and which are reflected onto the topics that are taught to students (Alexander, 2013). For example, recent political developments have created a clear sentiment against individuals coming from an Islamic background and culture. In fact, in many areas, Muslim individuals are openly discriminated against while other cultures attempt to discriminate them from the community and social arena. These racist attitudes are not confined to solely one aspect of society; rather, they extend and apply to every conceivable social facet,

including education (Alexander, 2013).

Hypothesis / Research Gap

The research question is as follows: How effective is multicultural education in public schools? The identified gap in existing literature is the lack of comparison that the role of multicultural education has on the level of educational attainment in different socioeconomic environments. This thesis will make a contribution to existing evidence by highlighting specific ways in which educational programs can be improved; so as to help students improve their academic performance.

Design and Methods

Subjectivity

The concept of culture is rather subjective, as the umbrella of culture can encompass different facets and aspects of personal and collective traits, including the different characteristics of individuals. As such, culture is very subjective to the researcher in this particular case as the factors of socioeconomic, ethnic diversity, and multiculturalism were explored as part of this overall study. Although there are many definitions of culture, the researcher believes that the concept of culture is inclusive of language, religious beliefs, collective attitudes, and habits that originate from specific groups of class and race. These characteristics can vary drastically between specific groups, which are tied to the manner in which these groups have developed and come together as a cohesive social unit that defines its individual members. Over time, divisions between different cultures have led human beings to distinctively categorize themselves into specific groups which fosters a feeling of belonging.

There is also quite a high number of interactions between members of different groups, which leads to a diffusion of cultural characteristics between these groups, causing an interaction and creation of new subcultures.

Culture is an important component of a child's development, as it essentially directs the attitudes and beliefs that a child primarily assumes throughout his or her childhood into adulthood. Concurrently, individuals have the tendency to become ethnocentric as they mature and develop within a specific culture. They also develop a tendency to evaluate other cultural groups by using a measure or comparison that may apply only to their own cultural group. This may lead to multiple misconceptions as well as intercultural and intergroup conflicts that work to break down multicultural relations.

Over the last few decades, the United States has become increasingly diverse and multicultural. As opposed to being of just one racial background, more individuals are increasingly identifying themselves with one or more ethnic race, leading to personal overlaps in culture and creating questions about the details of one's personal identity. However, at the same time, these same individuals struggle with being able to gain a full comprehension of their combined racial identity, as they struggle to understand where and how they fit in within the overall scope of their cultural background. This makes culture on the basis of ethnicity and race a social construct that is highly complex and which is based on the interplay of multiple variables and components.

A greater degree of cultural diversity has also led people to discover that their cultural group may also have multiple inter-group differences, as there is more heterogeneity versus homogeneity in the past. This particularly takes place in cultural groups that may be in a more constant state of flux due to the process of new members coming into the group from the outside.

Such a phenomenon can be seen in cultural groups in the United States that see the entrance of new immigrants from their original cultural background. Many immigrant groups struggle to retain their cultural roots even after being uprooted through the process of migration. Although there are specific reasons for the desire to leave their cultural homes, their strong beliefs and cultural upbringing is strongly embedded and their association with a familiar and well-known culture is deeply ingrained in their way of life. When immigrants enter this new established cultural group in the United States, they find that it is no longer an extension of the original group; rather, it has morphed and shifted into something different with existing original elements, an element that gives it a new feel and a new way of approach towards society.

This research study is designed to assess how multicultural elements of education can help children gain a deeper knowledge of culture and understand how this knowledge can lead to improved intercultural relations with their peers, regardless of the cultural, racial, or ethnic similarities/differences that may exist between them. It approaches this concept from a viewpoint of socioeconomic differences, how these socioeconomic differences are inherently associated with cultural backgrounds, and the inter-cultural differences between the groups that coexist together in the same geographic and social environment. As such, culture here is viewed through the lens of the various socioeconomic constructs that lead human beings to live in specific neighborhoods, which in turn, determines who they associate with and what types of cultural knowledge they become exposed to.

Research Design and Context Setting

A mixed methods-methodology was utilized in this study in order to obtain as much data as possible. The results were based from interviews of which to elicit the possible themes

encapsulated in the testimony of selected participants as well as to fulfill the aspect of the study generating some quantitative results. In this case, aside from the interviews that were conducted as part of the study, the researcher obtained standardized test scores for the academic year, from both school districts at two different points during the year. One set of scores was obtained before multicultural efforts were initiated and the other set was obtained after these efforts were implemented within a classroom setting.

The interviews were conducted in a classroom environment, at the teacher's place of work, at a school campus. Each participant set up a time slot for his or her interview. The interviews were conducted at a time that was convenient for the participants and following the conclusion of the class that they had been teaching during that specific period of time. Prior to the interview, each participant was given an introduction interview sheet with questions, an overview of the study, as well as the goals that the researcher desired to accomplish. Additionally, each participant was provided an informed consent form to sign and was given an opportunity to opt out of participating in the interview and/or in the study. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour and was recorded with permission under the agreement that the recording would be deleted upon completion of the study.

Research Context: Participants

The research methods of this study included both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources were utilized to determine existing research on this topic. Secondary sources were drawn from peer reviewed journals from within the field of education, sociology, and psychology. These sources were evaluated on the basis of their connection to the topic being studied as well as their recency and the validity of their content. Secondary data was utilized to

explore this topic in-depth and to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how multicultural education affects the educational system as a whole. Additionally, secondary data was used to determine how multicultural education has been used in the past in different academic contexts, so as to determine what research gaps may still exist and what can be pursued regarding further exploration towards this particular topic.

Primary sources utilized interviews with ten elementary school teachers, with five teaching in affluent areas, and with five teaching in impoverished areas based on Los Angeles Unified School District geographic areas. The following inclusion criteria were utilized to select teachers for participation: individuals who have been teaching in the given school district for a duration of at least five years; individuals who have been teachers for a duration of at least seven years; and individuals who possess at least a master's degree in the field of education. The participation exclusion criteria for this study included: individuals with less than five years of teaching experience in the given district; individuals with less than seven years of total teaching experience; and individuals with only a bachelor's degree who may still be attaining their higher educational degrees. Teachers fitting these criteria were identified in both districts based on information that was available through limited Los Angeles Unified School District statistical data records, peer-to-peer networking, data from selected schools, and mutual agreeance between teachers and researcher.

Once a pool of viable candidates for participation was created, participants were randomly selected from this pool until five teachers were selected from each area. Additionally, email addresses were obtained for each teacher from the district's records and the teachers were emailed with a description of the study along with an invitation to participate. In the event of potential participants not responding or declining to participate, the process of random and

personal selected participants were then based on sending out study invitations. This process was repeated until the required number of teachers from each district was obtained. Once a pool of participants was obtained, interviews were conducted in the researcher's school office.

Participants were asked for permission to record the interviews so that a transcript could be obtained for each interview. The participants were also informed that only the researcher would have access to the recordings and the transcripts, and that they would have the ability to review the transcripts following the interview in order to assess its accuracy. Upon completion of the study, the recordings were then deleted. Given this option, none of the participants in the study chose to review their interview transcripts.

The interviews were semi-structured in order to obtain as much qualitative data, as possible. The goal of the interviews was to obtain data in regards to the role of multicultural education in that particular educational setting. Participants were provided with a list of open-ended questions which facilitated their elaboration in relation to the provided answers. As part of the semi-structured interviews with teachers, the following questions were asked:

- What types of multicultural interventions, if any, have you implemented in your classroom?
- Please describe the level of diversity in your classroom.
- What methods of multicultural education have you found to be more successful in comparison to others?

Data Analysis Procedure

Data from the interviews were recorded and transcribed following the interviews. Each participant was provided with the chance to review the transcribed recordings in order to ensure that they were accurate, complete, and factual. Transcribed data from the interviews were then reviewed several times. First, broad and general themes between the interviews from the different participants were identified, highlighted, and analyzed. The interview data were analyzed several times more in order to elicit additional themes that were much narrower in scope. This process was placed in order to arrive at specific thematic similarities that could be found across all interviews, all participants, and which could be generalized to an overall broader population outside the sample size.

Aside from the interviews and transcripts that were put together in order to elicit connecting themes between the participants, the standardized scores of the students from these teachers were obtained for comparison against each other. Standardized scores were provided with only coded numbers, as opposed to being provided to the researcher with the student names. This allowed the research study to remain as objective as possible in assessing changes in the test scores over time. The mean measures of the scores for each teacher and class were obtained at two different points in time and compared against one another to determine what changes, if any, were evident in the data between the assessment points and times.

Analysis of Data

Data was analyzed for thematic similarities across the different interviews that were conducted as part of the study. Once the interviews were concluded and transcribed, the researcher analyzed each interview separately to derive any interesting or unique points that

stood out. All interviews were assessed once again, with broad themes connecting two or more interviews being isolated and color coded. These color-coded themes were analyzed several more times to determine what specific themes, or subthemes, connecting the participants and their testimonies could be derived.

Results

As a result of the qualitative interpretation based on presented data, several key themes emerged on the basis of the interviews. All of these themes appear to connect the interviews provided by the participants in some manner. Additionally, there appears to be quite a bit of interplay and interconnection between the assessed and identified themes.

One theme that emerged from the interviews was the high degree of diversity within the classroom, which tended to be higher among the classes taught by teachers in the lower income school districts. Participant 1 stated that the “majority of my classroom is made up of minority students and particularly African American and Latino students.” This participant also stated that there is only a handful of Caucasian students in the class. Similarly, participants 2 and 4 stated that at least half of the students in their respective classes are ethnically diverse, which sometimes leads to some issues within the classroom. Participant 4 further elaborated that the specific issues that are caused by diversity in the classroom stem from student interpersonal conflicts fueled by racial differences. Participant 5 reported that there is a “good” degree of diversity within the classroom and that there are students from a variety of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

There appeared to be a smaller degree of diversity within the classrooms taught in the higher income, wealthier areas of Los Angeles. According to participant 7, the classroom is

predominantly Caucasian and that any minorities present in the classroom are “well-integrated into the fabric of the classroom.” Participant 8 stated that there are only a few culturally diverse students in the classroom and that most of the students fit the “stereotypical Californian profile.” Participant 9 reported that some parents in the school district have chosen the specific school on the basis of it being more racially uniform and aligned with their family’s background and culture than other schools outside of the district.

Instructional Methods

There appears to be a variety of instructional methods that are being integrated into the classroom in order to foster diversity and help students become more acclimated to multiculturalism. One such strategy involves lectures of different cultures that center around the major holidays celebrated by various ethnic groups. For example, participant 3 stated that a class schedule agenda may revolve around Mexican history and the country’s independence during the week of the Cinco de Mayo holiday. Similarly, participant 5 reported that textbook readings on Cesar Chavez would take place during the week of Cesar Chavez’s holiday. Students have a chance to not only learn about the holiday and the associated customs, but to also compare and contrast the holiday to an American holiday such as Martin Luther King Jr’s birthday. According to participant 8, the classroom learns about the Jewish Passover through a lecture and a video. Following the lecture and the viewing of the associated material, students compare and contrast the holiday of Pesach with the American celebration of Easter, and they identify the historical origins of each holiday. Participant 10 engages in a similar lecture that teaches students about Chanukah and its American equivalent, Christmas.

Another instructional method that is used by teachers to help students become familiar with other cultures is role-playing, which allows students to assess what cultural biases they may be internalizing and exhibiting towards their peers and others coming from different personal backgrounds. Participant 3 stated that the classroom first learns about a specific culture through the use of a lecture or a video, and the group is then divided into small groups of four to six students. Each group is then asked to role play and pretend that half of the group is of different ethnicity while the other half proceeds to ask questions to learn a culture or ethnic group that the class has just learned about. Each group is then asked to stand in front of the classroom and role play specific scenarios, which are provided by the instructor, and which allow the group members to determine what the appropriate responses to the students coming from other cultures and backgrounds should be in that particular situation (based on what was taught during that class period). Participant 9 stated that the classroom uses current events, pertaining to ethnic or cultural conflicts within the community, to role play how a different outcome could have been achieved through conflict resolution methods and a deeper knowledge of the affected cultures.

A third instructional method that is commonly employed within the classroom is the use of foreign languages. Participant 6 stated that Spanish is taught within the school as a second language and all students are required to take several semesters of this foreign language. As part of the foreign language instruction, students also learn about the Hispanic culture and the specific customs that can be found among populations living in Mexico (as well as other Spanish-speaking countries). Participant 10 stated that students at the school are also required to participate in foreign language courses which expose them to knowledge about other countries, where the language is spoken. Participant 2 stated that the school offers after-school activities that students can participate in which exposes them to an optional foreign language instruction.

Private institutions will apply a small fee for the course, which means a good percentage of students will not participate. However, those that do participate are also immersed in videos and guest speakers about the cultures relating to the countries where the given language is spoken.

A fourth instructional technique that is utilized to enhance multicultural knowledge among students is the use of a guest speaker. This is often tied into a specific material that is being taught at the given time of the year in the classroom. For example, participant 4 brings in a Muslim speaker to engage with the students on Ramadan and the Muslim culture. This allows students to not only learn the information presented by a member, but also provides students with an opportunity to interact with the speaker and pose any questions regarding culture and customs that are unaware to the student. Participant 9 similarly brings in people of different ethnicities who carry various occupations ranging from law enforcement, attorneys, medical doctors, professional painters, and construction workers (to name a few), to speak to students when they are learning about the different work occupations within the surrounding city and neighborhoods. These speakers typically also interact with one another in front of the students, which helps to highlight the cultural similarities and differences between them.

Based on the interviews, there were some instructional methods that have been implemented in the past which the instructors decided not to pursue, as these methods did not appear to be generating the intended results. One such method was having students present to the classroom on their own cultural backgrounds. Participant 8 stated that, due to the lack of significant diversity within the classroom, students coming from multicultural backgrounds that differed from the mainstream culture of the classroom were hesitant to present due to the fear of being bullied both in and out of the classroom. Over time, the only students that would participate in these presentations comprised of the “most popular students in the classroom, who

reinforced the overall culture that was acceptable” in the classroom environment. Similarly, participant 9 found that conducting sessions that would help students to educate their peers on their own cultural and ethnic backgrounds was not a popular activity. Students did not want to take part in these initiatives based on shyness or reluctance from sharing their culture.

Another method that did not prove to be successful was asking students to write about multicultural experiences that they may have had in the past. Many of the instructors in wealthier educational districts found that students were somewhat too isolated in order to have the opportunity to be exposed to diverse individuals. Participant 6 found that students, when asked about a specific instance that allowed them to learn about a different culture, tended to write about the multicultural lectures that they were given in which they participated in while at an academic school environment. According to participant 7, many students “don’t have personal examples of such interactions,” which prevented them from being able to effectively complete the assignment and the task that they were being asked to participate in. In turn, this negatively impacted their overall grade and prompted the teacher to take this activity out of the classroom curriculum for the following academic years.

According to participant 2, multicultural instructional methods were altered in order to reflect the changing ethnic and cultural composition of the surrounding community. For example, the participant noticed that there were increasing numbers of Hispanic American students in the classroom as compared to the previous years. This caused the instructor to adjust the classroom curriculum in order to include additional activities that would highlight the Hispanic culture, allow these students to feel more welcome in the classroom, and more involved in the activities that students were participating in. According to participant 7, the instructional methods were changed to reflect the fact that there was an insufficient degree of diversity within

the classroom. Similarly, participant 6 reported that changes to the classroom curriculum were enacted because students tended to receive exposure of various cultural and ethnic background only within the classroom setting and associated environment, as opposed to outside of a classroom.

Behavioral & Academic Effects

Educators in both educational districts and environments noticed multiple behavioral changes, resulting from the integration of multicultural efforts engaged within the classroom. Participant 1 reported that the degree of interpersonal conflict between students coming from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds “eased up and dissipated” over the course of the academic year, as the same group of students was observed between the beginning and the end of that specific academic year. This participant also reported that the number of physical fights and altercations between the same groups of students also decreased in its rate between these two same points in time. Accordingly, the instructor observed students having an easier time getting along with their peers, even if there were vast cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences between the involved and affected students. Participant 3 stated that there was an improved degree of intercultural communication taking place in the classroom following any of the targeted diverse activities that students participated in.

According to participant 7, students were observed to be more altruistic in their behavior towards peers that came from different backgrounds than their own following these multicultural instructional methods. This particular classroom had two new immigrant students join the class at two different points during the academic year. The instructor was apprehensive regarding how these two children would be accepted by the other non-minority students, as previous efforts at

integrating new in-coming students in previous academic years led to those students being bullied and singled out by their peers. However, the teacher noted that in this particular instance, students tended to be much more receptive towards the new students and were much more willing to provide them with assistance when needed.

According to participant 8, it was noticed that after being presented with instructional materials about a specific culture or ethnicity, students within the classroom proactively pursued and sought out opportunities for interaction with peers from that particular background. Several students also reported that they welcomed opportunities for such interactions outside of the classroom and did not avoid interactions that would expose them to diverse peers and adults. These same students were also noted to support diverse peers within the classroom and “stick up for them” when they were being bullied. This helped to enhance the quality of relationships that students formed with their peers in the classroom and reduced the potential for any conflicts among students during class and break time.

Still another behavioral effect that was determined to have taken place, as a result of multicultural instructional methods, were improved communication skills that were exhibited in part by the students. Participant 3 noticed that following the presentation of instructional materials on diversity within the classroom, students were more respectful of other cultures, communicating more, and placing an effort to speak with those whose primary language was not English. This participant noticed that prior to teaching students about multiculturalism and about specific cultures, customs, and traditions, students readily talked about peers from those cultures in derogatory terms. For example, students used slang and colloquial terms when discussing these peers with others. Following the targeted instructional methods, the rate of the use of these slang terms drastically reduced in frequency. Participant 5 noticed a similar trend. According to

this participant, students tended to use more neutral language and less racially charged terms when talking to or about others from diverse backgrounds. According to participant 8, students began to use proper and politically correct terms for individuals from specific cultures and ethnicities, as opposed to using the more common terms or slang amongst their fellow peers and classmates.

Instructors also noticed key academic effects resulting from the integrated multicultural educational efforts employed within the classroom environment. Participant 2 noted that once students were exposed and interested to multicultural and interactive materials, their interest in certain topics such as U.S. history, world history, sociology, and art history grew exponentially. Test scores on exams and other assignments, including homework tasks, also improved. This participant noted that the average increase in classroom scores ranged between 10% and 15% over the course of the academic year. Participant 3 stated that students tended to be more enthusiastic, in regards to their academic work, and the number of complaints pertaining to assigned material decreased over the course of the academic year. This same participant also reported that students tended to achieve higher scores on examinations. By testing the multicultural material that was being presented to them, the participant noticed that there was a positive relationship of the material being interactively driven, correlating to the higher exam scores associated with testing the specific block of materials given during the school year.

Participant 8 noted that students participated more in classroom discussions after being engaged in multicultural activities. This participant also stated that students also actively tended to ask more questions in order to obtain additional information about the given culture or ethnicity that they were learning about. The participant also noted a positive relationship between the degree of interaction that students experienced, as a result of the material, and their level of

participation within the classroom; both which lead towards enhancing their overall test scores for that specific course. Ultimately, mean of scores rose to a better overall grade amongst students in the class, allowing these students to increase and improve their school rankings by an incremental amount.

Predictable Changes

Many of the participants reported that they would definitely implement changes to the multicultural aspects of their curricula in the future. Participant 5 stated that diversity in the classroom, and also within the school, had been continuously increasing, as there has been a steady influx of immigrant families into L.A. school districts and the surrounding communities. This is creating a trend of more children from various cultural background to become enrolled in academic institutions. As a result, the instructor foresees that the classroom of the future will be even more of a cultural melting pot than it is today with the student body being comprised of more various distinct cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, this participant believes that additional methods showcasing these different cultures and backgrounds will need to be introduced into a standard curriculum. The participant also believes that a higher degree of interactivity will be needed in order to integrate these instructional activities into a means of engaging students. Getting students to be more interested in learning certain materials that are being presented, while motivating them to interact with diverse peers, is the foreseeable goal along with establishing interpersonal relationships with them.

Participant 4 stated that, in the future, students will likely encounter new cultures and ethnic backgrounds that they did not previously have during their years in elementary school. This will necessitate ice-breaker activities in the classroom, allowing students to establish a solid

basis for a working academic and personal relationship with such peers. Additionally, this participant also reported that students are already suggesting new multicultural activities that can be presented within the classroom as a means of students learning about cultural diversity. This participant anticipates students continuing to make these types of suggestions, which will help to shape the overall curriculum present in the classroom within the coming academic years; a means of productively increasing multicultural diversity.

Quantitative Data

Descriptive statistics pertaining to the participants can be found in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Descriptive sample statistics, n=10

Male	3
Female	7
Caucasian	4
African American	3
Hispanic American	2
Other	1

Figure 3: Cultural and ethnic background of students in lower income district (classroom 1),

n = 30

Caucasian	10
African American	11
Hispanic American	5
Other	4

Figure 4: Cultural and ethnic background of students in lower income district (classroom 2),

n = 29

Caucasian	12
African American	9
Hispanic American	8
Other	0

Figure 5: Cultural and ethnic background of students in lower income district (classroom 3),

n = 35

Caucasian	9
African American	15
Hispanic American	8
Other	3

Figure 6: Cultural and ethnic background of students in lower income district (classroom 4),

n = 37

Caucasian	11
African American	17
Hispanic American	9
Other	0

Figure 7: Cultural and ethnic background of students in lower income district (classroom 5),

n = 40

Caucasian	15
African American	10
Hispanic American	12
Other	3

Figure 8: Cultural and ethnic background of students in higher income district (classroom 6),

n = 20

Caucasian	17
African American	0
Hispanic American	2
Other	1

Figure 9: Cultural and ethnic background of students in higher income district (classroom 7),

n = 23

Caucasian	15
African American	1
Hispanic American	4
Other	3

Figure 10: Cultural and ethnic background of students in higher income district (classroom 8),

n = 19

Caucasian	18
African American	0
Hispanic American	1
Other	0

Figure 11: Cultural and ethnic background of students in higher income district (classroom 9),

n = 28

Caucasian	16
African American	2
Hispanic American	0
Other	0

Figure 12: Cultural and ethnic background of students in higher income district (classroom 10),

n = 23

Caucasian	20
African American	0
Hispanic American	0
Other	3

Figure 13: Cultural and ethnic student breakdown: Classroom 1-5

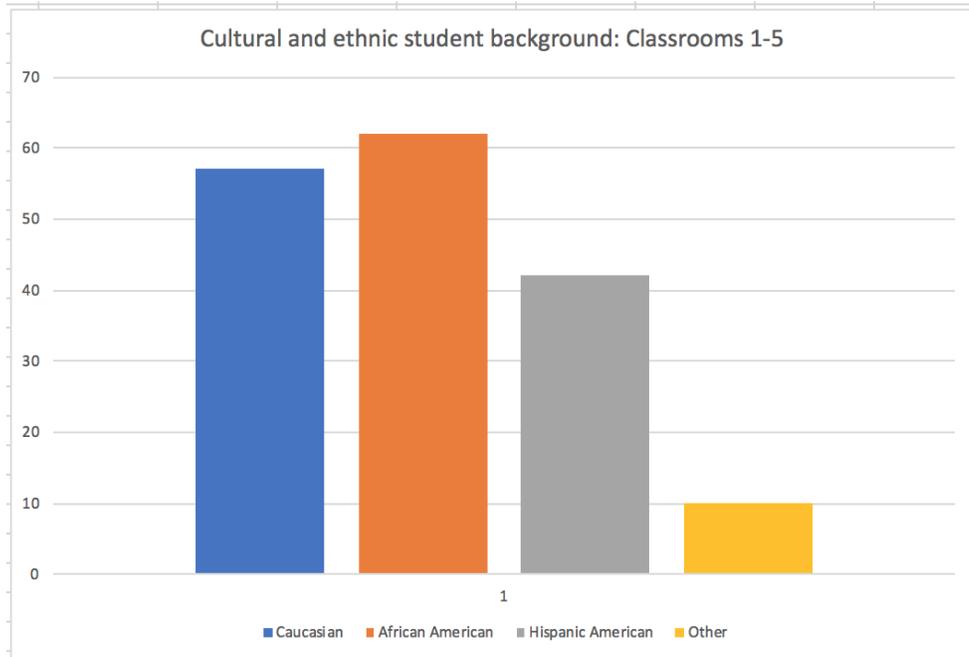
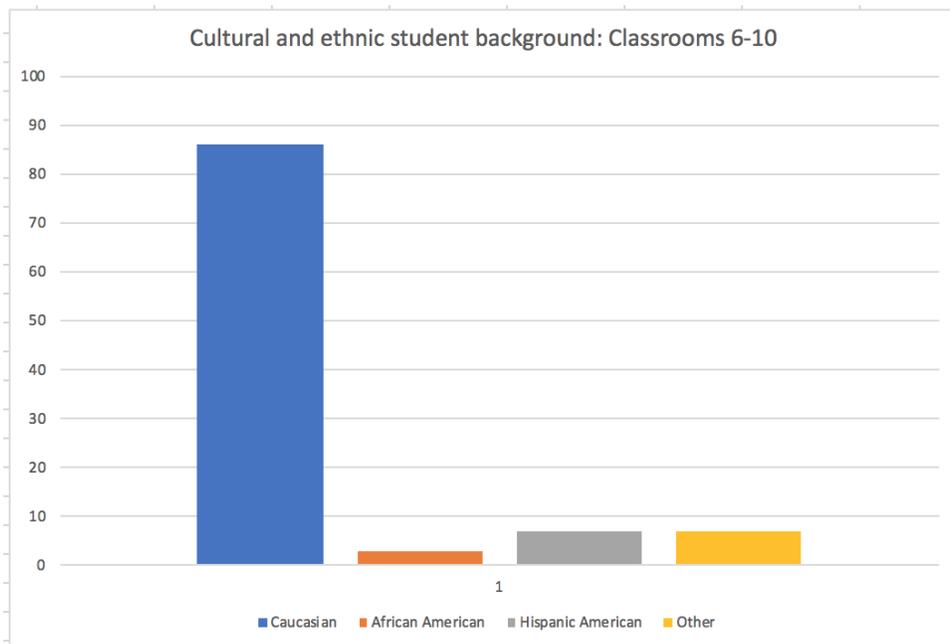


Figure 14: Cultural and ethnic student background: Classroom 6-10



The researcher also obtained student standardized test scores from two points during the academic year for both school districts. The first set of scores was obtained from the point in time before multicultural efforts were implemented and the second set was obtained once these efforts were already implemented. This was done so that the researcher could compare these standardized test scores to determine if any relationship exists between multicultural education, academic efforts, and student achievement within the classroom. Mean measures were obtained for all of the scores with the aggregate mean measure for each school district provided in Figures 15 and 16 below.

Figure 15: Standardized test scores for lower income school district

	Average score (percentile)
Beginning of academic year	61.3
End of academic year	79.2

Figure 16: Standardized test scores for higher income school district

	Average score (percentile)
Beginning of academic year	82.8
End of academic year	89.5

From the above two figures, it is clear that there was a tangible percentage of improvement in standardized testing scores for both academic districts over the course of the academic year. The mean scores for the impoverished school district increased by 17.9 percentile points, while the mean scores for the wealthy district increased by 6.7 percentile points.

Limitations in Research and Study

Proper research methods were appropriately implemented to reduce any pertinent limitations that arose as part of this study. However, due to the nature of the study and the methods that were undertaken to conduct the associated research and obtain studied data, there were some limitations that could not be avoided. One key limitation associated with this study is that the participations and population of this study were limited to the primary academic environment. This means that the results obtained from this study likely cannot be generated to other educational and academic settings, such as the secondary academic environment and the higher educational setting. A second limitation was that this study did not utilize a random sample. Rather, a sample of convenience was utilized in order to obtain a sufficient sample from two specific school districts in the city and state of Los Angeles, California. This prevented the researcher from being able to obtain data from other academic districts in other states, which could be more or less diverse than the two school districts selected for this particular study.

Another key limitation in the study was the fact that it utilized limited quantitative data. In this case, the only quantitative data that was collected was the average scores earned by students on their standardized tests before and after multicultural educational techniques were employed in the classroom setting. This prevented the researcher from being able to associate other factors, such as the students' overall academic grades and their associated grade point averages with improvements in the students' academic performance as well. This potentially would have allowed the researcher to gain a greater degree of insight into how students absorbed and utilized the information purely for academic purposes. As such, this presented a rather limited view of the relationship between multicultural education and student academic performance in relation to these particular instructional methods.

A final limitation of this study is that the study did not explore the quality of the overall education provided to students in each school district. This means that it is possible the differences in standardized test scores in each district, as well as the starting standardized test scores, were improved as a result of various factors such as teachers allocating more time in preparing students for these assessment, as opposed to being solely tied to the integration of additional multicultural educational efforts and techniques into the curricula. As such, it becomes impossible to state, with completely certainty, that these improvements were generated solely as a result of multiculturalism in the classroom in each and every single instance.

Implications for Future Research

Overall, the study revealed an interesting contrast between higher income and lower income educational districts, within the manner of which multicultural efforts were presented in those areas. A potential suggestion for future research lies in the extrapolation of this research and its application, as a means of reducing the educational attainment disparity between school districts primarily comprised of individuals belonging to vastly different socioeconomic levels. In the future, it is also recommended that research efforts focus on assessing different educational areas, locations, districts, and possibly private institutions as well. The degree of multicultural diversity in the United States is not uniform between the various individual states, as there are regions of the country that are more culturally heterogenous, as well as those that are more culturally homogenous. As such, it would be a recommended idea to determine how multicultural education differs throughout the country, as this would allow for a greater degree of standardization of and uniformity in the various educational and instructional methods that are employed in the United States. Finally, it is also recommended that future research also

encompasses secondary school curricula, as well as the curricula utilized in higher educational settings. Combined, all of these recommendations would allow these research efforts to become much more generalizable and applicable to education, all within the United States.

In order to account for these limitations, it is recommended that future studies replicate a study with a similar design and objectives in the secondary and even upper education setting, as this would allow them to obtain additional insight into how multiculturalism affects education at all levels, as opposed to solely the primary educational context. This would also allow researchers to study how the concept and viewpoint of multiculturalism can change in terms of personal perception, how students relate to this concept over time, and how it affects across the different educational environments that they become a part of. Future research efforts should also integrate more extensive quantitative data, which would allow for a better control of any confounding variables that otherwise generate questions as to what improvements in educational attainment and progress students can really be attributed to. Presently, this study did not control for any confounding variables, which only suggests that multicultural efforts are effective in improving the quality of education but does not answer this question with certainty.

Discussion

Overall, there appears to be a clear disadvantage, or penalty, associated with a reduction of multicultural efforts within the academic setting, as evidenced by the results that were generated by this study. The result of this study points to the fact that a reduction in these types of instructional efforts would lead to a higher degree of cultural isolation amongst students, particularly in geographic areas that tend to already be more uniform in terms of the cultural background of their residents. As evidenced, the students and teachers in the wealthier and more

culturally homogenic school district do not have many opportunities for interaction with diverse peers and adults outside of the classroom and within the broader community; presumably, outside of the typical classroom hours. This limits the types and depth of any multicultural experiences that these students can realistically have and engage in.

The testimony provided by these instructors shows that much of the cultural and ethnic diversity exposure that students experience takes place specifically within the classroom, in this particular academic district, underscoring the idea that the school setting is a primary socializing environment that helps children to become acquainted with the high degree of social diversity. It becomes unfair to the affected students to deprive them from these cultural experiences as for many of them, they simply do not have the chance to learn about diversity outside of the school environment, due to the specific cultural makeup of the community that they live within. As such, introducing students to knowledge about diverse cultures that they may come in contact with, at some point in their lives, allows them to build more familiarity with these cultures and be better prepared to respond to peers from these cultures.

Overall, there were multiple insights that were derived from the results of the study. As expected, the schools in the impoverished district had a greater degree of diversity, while the school in the higher income academic district had a greater degree of cultural and racial homogeneity. This could be tied to the wealthier academic district being much more insulated in its cultural makeup, as a result of a higher degree of socioeconomic stratification, that may be more commonplace here. As evidenced by the results, many students in the latter district had limited opportunities outside of school, for interaction and the establishment of interpersonal relationships with diverse peers and adults. As such, the main environment that allows for this type of exposure and interaction is typically constrained to the educational environment. This

also insulated students from being familiar with other cultures, until this type of information is actually taught to them as part of coursework.

Conversely, in lower income school districts, students were more likely to be familiar with diversity due to the cultural makeup of the surrounding communities; plus the fact that there is a higher likelihood of students to see multicultural families in their neighborhood and the interaction with diverse peers outside of the school atmosphere. It would appear that these particular school districts have more resident fluctuations with individuals and particularly immigrants moving in and out of these areas. Furthermore, the classrooms in these lower income areas tended to have a higher degree of conflict rooted in cultural and racial backgrounds, likely stemming from the present rate of racial exposure and of increased diversity. In contrast to this, the severity of conflict in higher income areas and their schools appeared to be lower, due to these communities being far more close-knit, while having fewer cultural differences that would potentially contribute to any type of racially or ethnically rooted conflict.

A key to teachers successfully using multicultural efforts in the classroom appear to be those that expose students to multicultural knowledge and allow for interaction, without forcing students to expose any personal vulnerabilities related to their racial or cultural backgrounds. As evidenced by data obtained from the participant interviews, teachers will likely not have much success, if they choose activities that prompt students to discuss their own backgrounds and their own cultural experiences. Past efforts of this type put students in a position that increased their risk of being bullied by their peers, for the differences that were shown to exist between them and others. As such, the students that were already less accepted in the classroom were more hesitant to participate, allowing their more popular peers to do so and perpetuate the perception that other, more minority cultures, were more inferior within the classroom. Additionally, these

types of methods were not particularly successful in classrooms that tended to be racially and culturally homogenous, and where teachers saw that there were no students coming from a particular background that happened to be discussed or taught at a given point in time. This meant that teachers intending to use these instructional methods had very little material to work with.

Successful instructional methods appeared to be those that teach multiculturalism in a neutral manner, that does not intimidate students, and which does not reinforce the idea of cultural superiority or inferiority. Lectures, presentations by guest speakers, role-playing, and foreign language courses all showed success in the classroom that led students to become familiar with cultural differences. The success of these methods likely rests in the non-threatening manner in which the information is presented to students. Additionally, some of these methods, such as role-playing and presentations by guest speakers, created opportunities for students to interact with the speakers, as well as with their peers, and to see how this information can be applied in real-life situations and interpersonal relationships.

Finally, it would appear that it is beneficial for students to engage in activities that help to 'break the ice' of interactions with diverse peers. This not only helps them to rapidly become familiarized with diversity, but also serves as a positive point of establishing an initial emotional and interpersonal connection with them. This also helps to facilitate the reduction of any potential conflict that could otherwise stem from a lack of familiarity, along with the presence of inherent personal biases and prejudices.

Conclusion

Multicultural instructional methods clearly have a beneficial effect in a classroom, without exception. Regardless of the academic context and the specific school district, students in all districts can derive specific benefits resulting from this type of instruction. The obvious advantage of using these instructional methods is that students learn some basic information about diverse cultures and how groups of individuals differ from one another on the basis of culture, race, or both. This aspect benefits children living in wealthier areas, in which students may be isolated from learning about and/or accepting these differences. This type of knowledge will expose them to a crucial fact that they may encounter at some point in the future.

By engaging in multicultural education, students also begin to accept their own cultures, which helps to enhance self-knowledge and self-development. In order to understand oneself better, one needs to understand others as well as the cultural environment in which one lives. By equipping children with cultural knowledge, teachers are able to establish a solid foundation for the process of self-discovery and self-development. Learning about others and the ways in which their backgrounds are different forces children to look within, in order to also assess their unique cultural traits and characteristics. Self-exploration has the benefits of assisting human beings in the comprehension of their role in one's personal reality and environment. This, in turn, facilitates the process of self-acceptance, as children are able to grasp their racial, cultural, and ethnic identities, and fully embrace their cultural background.

Overall, a greater degree of multicultural education has long-reaching consequences and implications due to students retaining this knowledge and using it as the basis for changing their conduct in the future; eventually into adulthood. In the future, multicultural educational efforts should be further assessed, in order to determine the best possible method of harnessing a

student's potential at maximizing the educational benefits at the primary school level. This particular level serves as the foundation of education that a child goes through and as such, influences how that child will perceive the academic world. It is important to assess how these efforts can also create more uniformity in a curriculum so that students can leave primary schools with a similar level and quality of knowledge.

Appendix A

Interview Introduction and Questions with Teachers

Hello, my name is Edward Chung and I am a graduate student at The Johns Hopkins University. My research pertains to how effective multicultural education is in public schools within the Los Angeles Unified School District. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of teachers and their implication of multicultural education along with the effectiveness of educational attainment on students within socioeconomic environments.

The data collected during this interview will remain confidential.

Your answers will be recorded on Word doc for the purpose of data collection and will be permanently deleted upon completion of my research project. Your identity will remain anonymous.

There are no right or wrong answers to my questions today as I would like you to comfortably share your thoughts, opinions, and answers without fear of judgment or expectation. I am interested in hearing about your methods and approach towards multicultural education within the socioeconomic areas that you teach in.

Before we begin, do you have any questions?

The following questions are as follows:

- What types of multicultural interventions, if any, have you implemented in your classroom?
- Please describe the level of diversity in your classroom.
- What methods of multicultural education have you found to be more successful in comparison to others?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and answers with me today. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call or email me. Thank you.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. In what ways do you feel that your classroom is multicultural?
2. What specific multicultural aspects have you integrated into your instruction methods within the classroom?
3. What previous multicultural methods have you integrated into your classroom in the past that you have changed or altered?
4. What were some of the reasons why you changed multicultural instruction methods?
5. Would you change any of these methods in the future?
6. Which multicultural methods do you feel were more successful than others?
7. What multicultural methods do you feel were the least successful?
8. What behavioral effects have you observed in your students as a result of the integration of multicultural educational techniques?
9. What academic effects have you observed in your students as a result of the integration of multicultural educational techniques?

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Curriculum Vitae

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Field Training
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EXPERIENCE

Police Officer - Corporal
Long Beach VA Police Dept.
08/2014 - Present

Operations Officer / Company Commander
United States Army Reserves
05/2001 - Present

Entrepreneur/Restaurant Owner
Japan West Teriyaki
1997-1998

EDUCATION

Master of Liberal Arts
The Johns Hopkins University
01/2018 – 12/2018

BA - Psychology
CA State University Los Angeles
01/2010 – 06/2011

Associate of Arts
Santa Monica College
06/2002 – 06/2007

LEADERSHIP

Long Beach VA Police Dept. - FTO
07/2018 – Present

Supervise, mentor, and train junior probationary police officers (trainees) regarding the policies of the department, correctly applying concepts learned in the classroom to field training operations and evaluating the trainee on his or her progress within the program. Responsible for making sure shift duties are performed properly and completely while maintaining officer safety and discretion.

U.S. Army (Active & Reserves) – OPS Officer
05/2011 –Present

Tasked with planning, implementing, and managing combat operations and field exercises for a Battalion sized unit. Served as Company Commander of a logistics unit comprised of over 215 Soldiers. Previous assignments with US Joint Special Operations Command-South and US Joint Special Operations Command-Korea in the Area of Operation (AOR) of S. America and the Pacific. Served AOR combat tours in Iraq and Middle East.

Japan West Teriyaki - Entrepreneur/Restaurant
Owner
1997-1998

Responsible for daily operations, strategic planning, and overall business direction including profits and marketability. Supervise employee, direct daily operations, adapt to customer and client needs while adjusting to industry and consumer trends in relation to food and public consumption.

SKILLS/CERTIFICATIONS

California Substitute Teacher Certification
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