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CULTURAL CHALLENGES IN CLASSROOMS: AN INVESTIGATION OF HIGH SCHOOL
TEACHERS' INTERACTIONS WITH MIDDLE EASTERN STUDENTS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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Abstract

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This research performed a quantitative study on the relationship between teachers' perceived cultural awareness and knowledge and multicultural teaching challenges working with Middle Eastern students in high school. In addition, this study examined the correlation between teachers' characteristics and students' learning environment and the multicultural challenges working with Middle Eastern students. Prior research investigated several cultural constructs individually. This study has further examined the relationship of these constructs and their effects on each other. The Middle Eastern school-age population has grown significantly over the past years compared to other ethnic populations. Therefore, it is necessary for educators to understand and recognize the cultural challenges related to Middle Eastern students. By identifying the different variables that affect multicultural challenges, school districts and policy makers should be better able to develop innovative instructional tools to improve the academic learning environment for Middle Eastern students as well as for other ethnic gro

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

A growing number of students in California public schools come from different cultures, ethnic backgrounds and origins. This demographic diversity presents numerous difficulties for students, their families, and educators. Middle Eastern students are among this population that faces many challenges as they adapt to their new educational environment in the United States. These challenges include the inability of these students to acclimate to life in the U.S., lack of individual support, different student requirements and instructional strategies, as well as ineffective communication practices among students and teachers, administrators, and community members (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Ultimately, teachers are responsible for developing instructional strategies that will provide Middle Eastern students with the skills and knowledge necessary to survive in society and to be successful in the American school system (Kereluik, Fahnoe, & Terry, 2013). Therefore, it is essential that teachers have the necessary training to provide academic and intellectual support to these students while also recognizing the cultural challenges faced by these students (Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005).

Global political and social dynamics as well as potential economic opportunities are at the drive of immigration to the United States. Middle Easterners are one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in America, accounting for 70 % of the entire immigrant population (Camarota, 2002; Zong & Batalova, 2015). While the size of the overall immigrant population (legal and illegal) has tripled since 1970, the number of immigrants from the Middle East has grown more than sevenfold; for example, the Arab Middle Eastern population has grown from less than 200,000 in 1970 to nearly 2.2 million in 2010 (Awad, 2010).

In 2010, California reportedly had the largest population of immigrants from the Arabic Middle East totaling 400,355 individuals (Camarota, 2002), which means that teachers and administrators working in K-12 schools will likely have students who fit this demographic. According to the U.S. Census, there were approximately 1.9 million (more specifically 1,969,901) Middle Eastern immigrants out of the total immigrant count of 303,965,272 individuals who lived in the U.S. from 2006 to 2010 (Asi & Beaulieu, 2013). The Middle Eastern American population totals at least 10 million which includes 3.7 million Arab-Americans and 6.5 million Jewish-Americans – more than 3.1% of the 318 million immigrant people in the U.S. as of 2014. Of this Middle Eastern American population, 82% are U.S. citizens and 63% were born in the U.S. (Camarota, 2002).

The Middle Eastern countries include the geographical region around the western side of Asia and North Africa. During the middle of the twentieth century, the map of the Middle Eastern region was redesigned to include the countries of Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Iran, Israel, Armenia and the states of Arabia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria (Cunningham, 2014). The Middle Eastern populations living in these countries speak different languages, such as, Arabic, Aramaic, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Georgian, Greek, Hebrew, Kurdish, Persian, and Turkish. Lastly, Middle Easterners practice many religions: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Druze, Zoroastrianism, Atheism, Agnosticism, and Deism (Auclair & Batalova, 2013). The diversity of countries, languages, and religions magnifies the challenges encountered by families relocating from the Middle East. Often these individuals are identified globally as Middle Eastern but not specifically by country, language, or religion. Therefore, this study will

investigate the cultural challenges faced by Middle Eastern students from the regions and religious affiliations identified above.

When Middle Eastern families relocate to the United States, the change in cultures has many effects on these immigrant students and their ability to learn or succeed (McCartney, Harris & Farrow, 2012). Immigrant students may need extra support to be able to adapt to the new education system in the United States compared to their country of origin (Expósito & Favela, 2003). Therefore, teachers should be aware and sympathetic to immigrant students' difficulties as they are experiencing different circumstances involving a new language, beliefs, and behaviors of teachers and other students at their schools (Expósito & Favela, 2003).

It is difficult for some students to adjust to the Western system because of differences related to family obligations, social interaction structures, and cultural constraints (Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012). For example, the Middle Eastern mother may struggle helping her children with their schoolwork because of language barriers or because of her lack of familiarity with the method of instruction used in the American school system. Parents are not always able to allow their children to participate in school-related events because of mobility constraints and/or because of traditional or cultural differences related to the actual event. For example, gender ideology plays a role in planning different activities for a Middle Eastern family (Metcalf, 2006). Cultural attitudes in Middle Eastern communities towards women, as an example, may restrict their participation in certain activities. Although these attitudes regarding women have evolved over the years, the complexity of those views sometimes makes it difficult to determine what is appropriate for them to do. It is hard to decide the roles they can assume or the activities they may participate in while also taking into consideration the gender and religious values involving these women (Metcalf, 2006).

It is important that teachers are aware of the different cultural constraints and values of their students to plan meaningful instruction and school events that are accessible to everyone. On the other hand, instructional tools and methods used in the Middle East are different from those used in American classrooms. For example, in the Middle East, teachers expect students to memorize all classroom instruction. A student's success is measured by his/her individual achievement on exams, homework, and participation rather than on the group effort demonstrated in American classrooms (Metcalf, 2006). In addition, instruction in the Middle East does not require that the student be responsible for demonstrating their understanding of the subject. Instead, the student is expected to keep a record of the subject content taught by the teacher. School curriculum in the Middle East is designed to accommodate the efforts of teachers explaining different study materials rather than the students researching a variety of topics. The changing student demographics in U.S. classrooms are affecting the school system as a whole, in part because of the diverse student population in classrooms today. Thus, teachers should be prepared to differentiate their instruction to accommodate the variation in students' abilities, interests, and readiness to digest new knowledge and develop their learning skills (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Therefore, school systems, teachers and parents play a pivotal role in helping immigrant students thrive in an environment where both challenges and opportunities exist. Because teachers work with students from diverse ethnicities, parents should collaborate with teachers to help their children transition to their new classroom settings, acclimate to the change in culture, and adapt to a new community (Suárez-Orozco & Lardemelle, 2010). Due to the current political climate in the Middle East, a large number of students arriving in the U.S. as refugee children are suffering from traumatic experiences that can hinder their learning. Parents have to be more involved with their children's schools to help these students make psychological

adjustments and overcome academic and social cultural struggles. It is suggested that teachers and parents work together to consider the needs and obstacles to education, and interventions for success (McBrien, 2005).

In some cases, teachers' knowledge of their students' cultural background, behavior, and learning habits does not seem to keep pace with the increasingly diverse student population in school districts and classrooms (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005). Cultural awareness and knowledge gained through professional development programs and teacher training is important. Researchers strongly recommend that teachers continue to educate themselves regarding the students' needs to make adjustments to their instructional resources so that students feel more welcomed and learn better in a context of cultural diversity (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005).

Problem Statement

This study investigated how teachers' cultural awareness and knowledge affect their ability to work with the cultural challenges of Middle Eastern high school level students.

The problem of this study was to examine how teachers' lack of cultural awareness and cultural knowledge may impact their ability to teach effectively in a multicultural classroom setting (Barry & Lechner, 1995).

Despite the continuous reinforcement of the notion that educators should increase teachers' awareness, knowledge, and preparation related to Middle Eastern and other minority students, teachers may still feel uncomfortable interacting with these students due to the cultural challenges in teaching students from various backgrounds. A challenge that some teachers encounter is lack of knowledge associated with specific cultures that affects the learning environment (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005). Proper home/school communication should make parents more involved in their children's education and should include effective language

and planned strategies to enable both parties to interact and collaborate (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005).

With the K-12 student population continuing to grow in diversity, it is imperative for classroom teachers to be culturally sensitive to be effective in providing instruction and interacting with these students. Research has emphasized the importance of teachers' cultural awareness and knowledge in working with minority (Latino, African American, Asian) and with international students in general (Keaton, 2012); however, there is limited research addressing teachers' cultural awareness, knowledge, and teaching strategies when working with Middle Eastern students, despite the growth of this student population.

Adding to the cultural challenges facing Middle Eastern students is the continuing political instability of the region, which has forced families to relocate thousands of miles from their homelands to survive. These disasters have occurred in many regions of the Middle East, such as the continuing conflict between Israel and Palestine, Israel and Lebanon, Iraq and Iran, Iraq and Kuwait, and Syria and Egypt. These students emigrating from the Middle East have survived the consequences of conflicts, wars, and revolutions. They have witnessed first-hand the atrocities of war. All of these situations have resulted in volatile surroundings for these students and their families, resulting in students and their families dealing with psychological stress, permanent disabilities, the death of family members, fewer educational opportunities, abuse, and increased drug use.

It is critical that school districts take a proactive stance and assist teachers with the knowledge and training necessary to meet the needs of today's diverse classrooms. (Mahdi, 2003). The high cost of professional development and training requires that school districts as

well as community members work together to improve the quality and competence of teachers working in diverse classrooms (Little, 1993).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher perceptions of those cultural challenges faced by Middle Eastern students that may inhibit the teachers' interactions and success in the classroom. Specifically, this study will investigate the teachers' cultural awareness and knowledge and how it affects the teachers' ability to deal with various cultural challenges while working with this specific group of students. Students who come from different backgrounds have their own culture and behavior that direct their interactions at schools (Keaton, 2012). There are distinctions to be made between American and Middle Eastern cultures, such as specific concepts related to these cultural differences, like behaviors, family connections, religions, food and other characteristics. For example, in the American English language or culture being a teen is associated with restlessness and rebelliousness, while in the Middle East being a teen implies imperfection and immaturity (Mahdi, 2003). Therefore, teens from the Middle East believe that it is in their best interest and important to seek guidance from their older family members (Mahdi, 2003).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), Middle Eastern ethnicity is considered to be White. The White/Caucasian population needs to be defined more specifically as it relates to individuals from Europe and North Africa, including those from the Middle East. Although the three groups in the census fall into the category classification of being White, they do not share the same cultural characteristics. They have strong distinctive cultural backgrounds that determine their behaviors, traditions, and beliefs (Fearon, 2003). This race/ethnic categorical classification is a strong factor affecting existing disparities that result in inequalities accessing different social

resources that are fundamental for the development of the community (Hitlin, Brown, & Elder, 2007).

Another focus of this study was to explore the teachers' perceptions of the students' learning environment dealing with cultural challenges, such as parental involvement. Parental involvement is necessary in education. However, when parents cannot interact in a meaningful way with their children's teachers, due to cultural differences and the teachers' lack of understanding, it results in a significant divide in the home/school partnership. Effective interactions between the school and parents is important in assisting Middle Eastern students to adjust to the new school system. Furthermore, these cultural challenges may also include obstacles in the classroom, such as language barriers, different instructional practices, and questionable social interactions. These cultural challenges could negatively affect the students' ability to learn and do well in their academic performance (Topor, Keane, Shelton, & Calkins, 2010).

Finally, the study examined whether there is a relationship between the teachers' demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and their influence in dealing with the cultural challenges of Middle Eastern students. An effective teaching strategy is for teachers to build their instruction based on what the students already know and what they need to learn (Quinton, 2013). Teachers' backgrounds and demographic characteristics could determine what strategy to use when interacting with immigrant students from different races, ethnicities, and cultures. Many teachers develop a variety of instructional methods in their classrooms to help students realize the similarities between themselves and their classmates despite their different cultural backgrounds (Panebianco, 2014).

Significance

This study was an opportunity to explore the interactions and instructional practices of teachers who work with Middle Eastern students. In looking at the theoretical contribution, prior research has investigated awareness, knowledge, and multicultural teaching separately regarding minority students. Research studies have not examined the relationship between the three factors (awareness, knowledge, and multicultural teaching) together in one framework affecting one another and their significant effect on the population of Middle Eastern students.

This research explored the effect of a teacher's cultural awareness and knowledge as well as other factors that influence a teacher's cultural sensitivity to the challenges faced by Middle Eastern students. The practical contributions of this study are to introduce additional cultural competency ideas for administrators to prepare their teaching staff and improve the collaboration between parents and teachers to be more inclusive so that parents can be more actively involved in encouraging their child's academic success. The cultural competency training contributes to changing the attitudes and behaviors of teachers towards immigrant students from diverse backgrounds. These training options are not always available due to financial constraints. In addition, the training is not always effective because the content is not specific to each ethnic group with whom classroom teachers interact with or teach. Therefore, some teachers still find it challenging to interact with certain ethnic groups despite their involvement in ongoing professional development (McAllister & Irvine, 2000).

Research Questions

The current study aimed to answer the following three research questions:

1. What is the correlation between teachers' level of cultural awareness and their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern high school students?

2. Does a relationship exist between teachers' cultural knowledge and their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students?
3. How and to what degree do students' learning environments in school and at home affect teachers' perceptions of multicultural teaching in dealing with cultural challenges in classrooms?

Hypotheses

The research tested the following hypotheses: H1: Teachers' cultural awareness is positively correlated with their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students, holding others constant. H2: Teachers' cultural knowledge is positively correlated with their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students, holding others constant. H3: Students' learning environment is correlated with teachers' perceptions of multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges in teaching and working with Middle Eastern students, holding other factors constant.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks and models for cultural sensitivity have evolved, changed, and improved over time. The researcher has selected two theoretical frameworks for this study, which complement each other, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is the first theoretical framework of this study and deals with the factors of cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and multicultural teaching. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy emphasizes instruction or pedagogy implemented by teachers demonstrating cultural competence skills. These skills allow teachers to understand culture and use practices that

engage students' knowledge in the class context where teachers can provide equity and justice for all students (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Critical Race Theory, the second theoretical framework of this study, represents those factors that include teachers' demographics and the learning environment. In accordance with Critical Race Theory, culture and society are examined in relation to law, race, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Human interactions and behaviors are analyzed through a racial lens. A person's culture or ethnicity may affect his/her perspective on other races. For instance, if a person of color conducts an action, it is possible for a white person to describe it differently from a Latino depending on his/her previous mindset and attitudes towards people of color. From a broader perspective, race and culture seeks to further examine context, economics, history, and self-interest (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Critical Race Theory is applicable to education as it explores race and cultural factors that may be barriers that affect a teacher's approach and interactions with Middle Eastern students. On the other hand, stereotypical ideas about certain cultures may affect the relationship between teachers and students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Sue, et al., 1998).

Critical Race Theory and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy are both theories that are consistent in emphasizing various issues related to cultural diversity such as inequity, race, discrimination, curriculum, and instruction. The researcher has used Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as an in-depth lens, clarifying academic concerns regarding the three variables of teachers' cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and multicultural teaching working with Middle Eastern students.

In addition, the researcher uses Critical Race Theory, the second theoretical lens, to focus on the remaining two variables, teachers' characteristics and the learning environment, which

includes the school setting and parental involvement. Peoples’ perceptions on self-awareness and knowledge gained in diverse cultural settings have been conceptualized and examined (Sue & Torino, 2005). Cultural awareness includes an individual’s sensitivity to cultural values and bias, whereas cultural knowledge is the knowledge of culture, worldview, and expectations for interpersonal relationships in diverse cultural settings (Sue, et al., 1998). Multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges has also been conceptualized and formulated, including various dimensions, such as content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure (Banks 2001).

This study aimed to connect the two paradigms by hypothesizing that the ability to deal with various cultural challenges by promoting multicultural teaching depends on the teachers’ cultural awareness and knowledge gained. Other contributing factors were examined and are shown in the following framework:

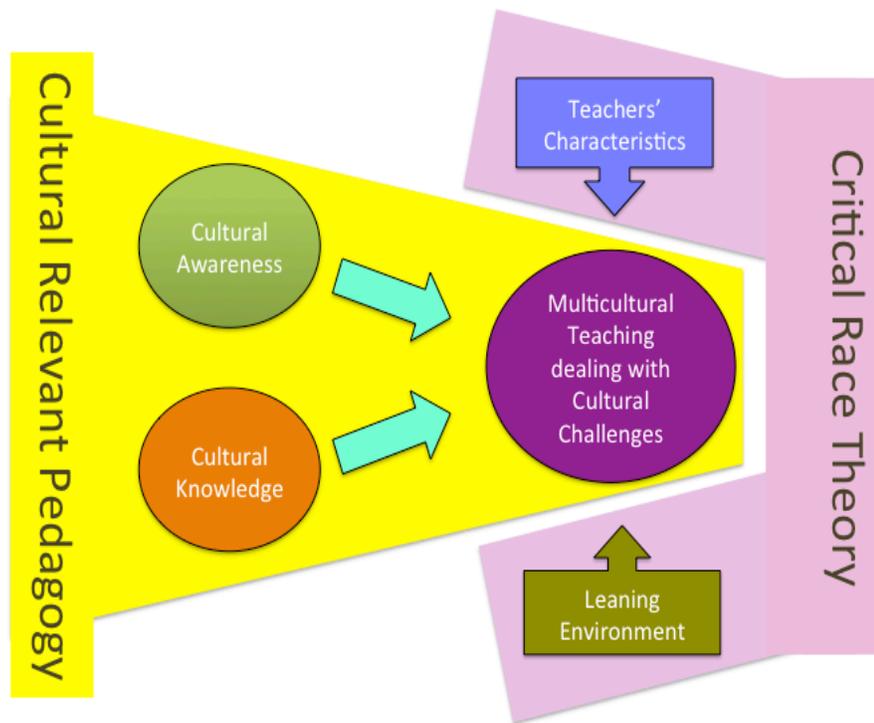


Figure 1. Framework of Factors Affecting Multicultural Teaching Dealing with Cultural Challenges

Overview of Methodology

A cross-sectional survey was used for the current study. A purposive sampling was used: three large public high schools in the west Los Seif area were selected as the main research settings because of their large Middle Eastern student populations. All teachers in the three school settings were invited to participate in this study. For this study, the researcher sought responses from 100 teachers.

In this study, a multiple regression model was used to determine whether teachers' cultural awareness and knowledge are predictors of their instruction and the cultural challenges present when working with Middle Eastern students. This study explored whether the teachers' demographic characteristics and students' learning environment predict the teachers' multicultural teaching in dealing with the cultural challenges of Middle Eastern students.

The data was collected through a questionnaire that included detailed inquiries related to the research questions, hypotheses, and the theoretical framework of this study. While the sampling method limits the generalizability of the current study, it has explored important research questions among the population that is largely missing in prior research.

Definition of Terms

Culture: In this study, the term, Culture, relates to beliefs, customs, arts, and behaviors of a particular society, group, place, or time (Hacker, 2011).

Cultural Awareness: In this study, the term, Cultural Awareness, refers to knowing and acknowledging the existence of cultural differences (attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and values) that may vary from personal values and beliefs (Haberman, 1991).

Cultural Challenges: In this study the term, Cultural Challenges, refers to struggles to understand the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, religion,

notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations (Hargreaves, 2011).

Cultural Knowledge: In this study the term, Cultural Knowledge, refers to teachers' abilities in dealing with cultural challenges as measured in accordance to teachers' capabilities to improve student achievement (Good, 1979).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: In this study, the term Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, means the modified way of instruction and pedagogy to connect students' cultures and to make it relevant to their class materials (Colvin & Tobler, 2013).

English Language Learner (ELL): In this study, the term, English Language Learner, refers to a person who is learning the English language in addition to his or her native language. These are the students who experience slow vocabulary development and are less able to comprehend text at grade level than their English-only peers (August, Carl, Dressler, & Snow, 2005).

Immigrant Student: In this study the term, Immigrant Student, categorizes an individual student who (a) is aged three through twenty-one; (b) was not born in any state (each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico); and (c) has not been attending any one or more schools in the United States for more than three full school years (California Department of Education CDE, 2016).

Middle Eastern Students: In this study, Middle Eastern students, refers to foreign students who originally came from the Middle East region and who share similar cultural backgrounds and beliefs (Davis, 1960).

Multicultural Teaching: In this study the term, Multicultural Teaching, refers to any form of education that incorporates communication styles among different racial and ethnic student in a classroom. (Spanierman, et al., 2010).

Parental Involvement: In this study the term, Parental Involvement, refers to parents' participation in their children's school and life from event attendance, volunteering opportunities, and decision making related to their children's education. (Georgiou, 1996).

Professional Development: In this study, the term Professional Development refers to learning to earn or maintain professional credentials. They can be academic degrees, formal coursework, conferences and/or informal learning opportunities situated in practice. It has been described as intensive and collaborative, ideally incorporating an evaluative stage (Mizell, 2010).

Parental Involvement: In this study the term, Parental Involvement, refers to parents' participation in their children's school and life from event attendance, volunteering opportunities, and decision making related to their children's education. (Georgiou, 1996).

Limitations

The current study was dependent upon a teacher self-reporting survey. The study relied on measurements associated with teachers' own reflections of their perceptions with regard to their cultural awareness and knowledge, as well as the level of their multicultural teaching experiences with the cultural challenges of Middle Eastern students. Therefore, this was a limitation of the study not including other sources of measurements (e.g., direct observation) that could have higher reliability addressing the relationship between the teachers' awareness and knowledge and multicultural teaching. In addition, the sample chosen was limited to three schools in the same city of Los Seif in Southern California. Lastly, a limitation was that the researcher did not look at a larger student population at a greater number of schools.

Delimitations

Delimiting factors include the choice of objectives, research questions, variables of interest, and theoretical perspectives that were adopted in this study. The focus of this study was

on high school teachers' perceptions about interacting with and teaching Middle Eastern students. Other related criteria such as the perceptions of administrators and students were not included in this study. The sample of teachers came only from grade levels 9-12. Teachers from other grade levels K-8 were not involved in this study.

The primary focus of this research was teachers' perceptions about their ability to deal with cultural challenges while teaching Middle Eastern students and about whether or not they were well prepared to interact with these students based on their cultural awareness and knowledge. This study did not involve other factors such as teachers' skills and motivation levels.

The study investigated multicultural teaching related to the preparation of teachers who deal with the cultural challenges of Middle Eastern students in their classrooms. The research did not cover aspects related to the ability of teachers who deal with cultural challenges of other immigrant populations in the classroom.

This study was about teachers in the Los Seif region and, thus, could not necessarily be applicable to other geographic regions or other professions. Therefore, the results of this study could be generalizable to educators who (a) teach students in schools in the Los Seif region, (b) teach Middle Eastern students, and (c) teach Middle Eastern students in the specific grade levels of 9-12.

Organization of the Study

The dissertation was divided into five chapters. Chapter One provides a brief introduction about teacher cultural awareness and knowledge when interacting with Middle Eastern students, followed by a statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, the theoretical/conceptual framework used, an overview of the methodology, and the study's limitations and delimitations.

Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of the literature addressing the main constructs of the framework regarding teachers' cultural awareness, knowledge, and students' learning environment focusing on parental involvement and the role of administration. An overview of teachers' multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges is also included.

Chapter Three situates the study in a specific methodological tradition, provides a rationale for this approach, and describes the research setting, research methods, data collection, and analysis.

Chapter Four organizes and reports on the study's main findings, including the presentation of relevant quantitative data.

Chapter Five interprets and analyzes the findings of this study, discusses the research questions and theoretical framework, and concludes with recommendations for policy changes and future research.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Introduction

The focus of this study was to examine the relationship between teachers' awareness and knowledge of the culture of Middle Eastern students and its impact on those cultural challenges that teachers experience in classrooms while interacting with these students.

In this chapter, the researcher provided a review of the literature addressing the cultural awareness and knowledge of teachers and its impact on the interactions that take place in a school classroom between the teacher and Middle Eastern students. This study described the background of Middle Eastern students in detail, reflecting on their learning environment in the United States, specifically, on how their teachers interact with them and help them achieve academically. In addition, this chapter reviewed the literature pertaining to Critical Race Theory related to multicultural teaching strategies (remove was reviewed where) and explored how effective these strategies are in overcoming the cultural challenges of different student populations.

The literature addressed different factors and their significance relative to the relationship between the teachers' prior awareness and knowledge regarding cultures and their interactions with Middle Eastern students in classrooms. Therefore, this study answered the following research questions:

1. What is the correlation between teachers' level of cultural awareness and their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern high school students?
2. Does a relation exist between teachers' cultural knowledge and their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students?

3. How and to what degree do students' learning environments in school and at home affect teachers' perceptions of multicultural teaching in dealing with cultural challenges in classrooms?

Students have immigrated to the United States bringing their customs, ideas, and cultures. These characteristics are the basis for associated behaviors and attitudes that are deeply ingrained. It is essential for educators to treat all students equitably and to become familiar with their cultures to make classroom interactions more efficient. Policy makers and educators often synthesize the importance of practicing equal treatment in classrooms when interacting with minority and immigrant students. Unfortunately, teachers still seem to intentionally or unintentionally practice some type of racism following their biases and stereotypical ideas about a specific culture or ethnicity (Smith, Moallem, & Sherrill, 1997).

This study's hypotheses are built around the principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory (CRT) to test the following hypotheses: H1: Teachers' cultural awareness is positively correlated with their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students, holding others constant. H2: Teachers' cultural knowledge is positively correlated with their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students, holding others constant. H3: Students' learning environments are correlated with teachers' perception of multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges in teaching and working with Middle Eastern students, holding other factors constant.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy was introduced in 1994 as a framework for teaching to support teachers in understanding the diversity of their students through using their different experiences and knowledge to connect with classroom context (Ladson-Billings, 2014). This theory was used by teachers to help African American students utilize their critical thinking skills

and personal information to relate to the topics they are learning. According to (Ladson-Billings, 2014) culturally relevant practices promote cultural integrity and competence. Cultural competence allows teachers to address and recognize students' values, beliefs, and knowledge. In this study, the focus was on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy connected to teachers cultural awareness and cultural knowledge while working with Middle Eastern students to establish an understanding of its principles as they relate to different challenging factors in classrooms with regards to minority immigrant students (Allen, Jackson, & Knight, 2012).

The two variables – students learning environment and teachers' characteristics – focused on the principles of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which was developed in the late 1980s as a legal discourse after the civil rights movement. Educators use CRT as a valuable tool to address different forms of inequities in today's United States (U.S.) public school system. Although many might agree that racism is ordinary and normal in American society, educational justice might consider the necessity for equality in providing the same opportunities to all students of different races and ethnicities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, & Tate, 1995). In other words, according to (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, & Tate, 1995) all students should be provided with equal learning experiences despite their diverse backgrounds or cultures. On the other hand, advocates for equality might have more hope that change and innovation, such as the theory of 'implicit bias' can successfully reform the different antidiscrimination laws and regulations that protect against racism (Harris, 2012).

Many conflicts may occur in schools with regard to immigrant students, specifically toward those from the Middle East: discrimination, stereotyping, cultural differences, unsuccessful communication, and minority status are some examples that may negatively affect these students and thus may hinder their ability to express their thoughts and share their ideas.

These difficulties may be compounded by overburdened or untrained teachers who may not welcome the contribution of these students because of discriminatory factors like race and ethnicity – an example of one of the elements of systemic inequities that result in students being discriminated against (Johnson & La Salle, 2010). In the Federal law, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, discrimination is prohibited based on race, color, or national origin. In *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974 (Sugarman & Widess, 1974).

Diverse Student Populations

Students come from different backgrounds in today's classrooms (Sleeter, 2001). Researchers have indicated a significant growth in diversity in the student body in today's school system (Sleeter, 2001). This diversity includes a set of beliefs and elements representing each specific ethnic group. Nowadays, educators are dealing with different cultural issues related to this diverse student population. These cultural issues reflect on multicultural teaching and interaction with such students. Multicultural and culturally relevant teaching incorporate differences in instruction, curriculum, and learning environment (Sleeter, 2001). These aspects create pressure to efficiently educate a new student body that consists of different races and ethnicities and to provide a fair and equal learning environment for every student (Riehl, 2000).

Minority and Immigrant Students

In today's society, immigrant students from around the globe are a growing population in schools everywhere. This growth necessitates the need for additional guidance and support so that immigrant students will be successful socially and academically. The process of adapting to new cultural and social patterns takes time. Therefore, teachers should be aware of and understand the students' difficulties in their interactions with different experiences that involve a new language and behaviors (Expósito & Favela, 2003).

Immigrant students are still facing many challenges in the American school system. Schools are unable to provide these immigrant students with adequate education to prepare them to become productive individuals in American society (Olsen, 2009). Immigrants experience a different type of educational experience in the United States, which is defined by past and current political struggles, language barriers, national safety, and opportunities for educational equity and access (Olsen, 2009).

Understanding the behaviors and personal interactions of immigrant students in their new cultural surroundings can be challenging. This could be due to potential discrimination that could arise depending on their background and ethnicity, such as race, culture, language, and religion. Thus, the behaviors of new immigrant populations may be different as compared to immigrants who have been in the United States for a longer period of time (Patel, Tabb, Strambler, & Eltareb, 2015).

The acculturation process of young ethnic minorities has always been a cause for their low education achievement. According to Makarova, & Birman (2015), “In the tradition of cross-cultural psychology, acculturation describes individual or ethno-cultural group changes in behavior and attitudes in the situation of intercultural contact. Such cultural changes are central to the experience of ethnic minority students including newly arriving immigrants, children of immigrants and members of marginalized ethnic and racial groups” (p. 305).

It is a stressful process for immigrant students to change cultures and to adapt to their new environment. The school setting is recognized as a crucial environment for acculturation of these young immigrant students. The academic achievement of minorities from diverse ethnic backgrounds depends on educators acknowledging this process of cultural change and developing psychological strategies to accommodate their adjustment to the new school system (Makarova &

Birman 2015).

It is evident that a part of the challenge is due to school systems' slow adaptation to the changing student demographics and their understanding of individual students' needs. For example, all students are graded with the same scale regardless of their abilities, whether they live in a low-income household with limited resources or a high-income household with many resources, and whether or not they are English proficient (Moloney & Saltmarsh, 2016). This one-size-fits-all approach is not always supportive of each student's needs. In addition, social life at school is a challenge for high school students. To be able to fit in a society, make friends and attend school without being teased or bullied is a concern for most high school students (Daniels, 2012). Therefore, the result is a higher student dropout rate in a bullying or negative climate (Daniels, 2012).

In addition, gender can play a role for immigrant students as they adapt to their new environment. In some cases, it is more likely that boys will experience a harsh school environment more often than girls. (Qin-Hilliard, 2003). In addition, females often receive more support from their teachers, friends, and parents with their ethnicity protection than male students (Qin-Hilliard, 2003). In other words, Middle Eastern female students are often recognized as more sensitive and require additional care, guidance and reinforcement (Qin-Hilliard, 2003).

Trueba (1988) states that, "The construction of learning environments guaranteeing academic success for all children requires theoretical and practical approaches that (1) recognize the significance of culture in specific instructional settings, (2) prevent stereotyping of minorities, (3) help resolve cultural conflicts in school, (4) integrate the home and the school cultures, and (5) stimulate the development of communicative skills that children need in order to participate meaningfully in the instructional process" (p.270).

Research has shown that there are universal challenges facing immigrant high school students regardless of their cultural background. For example, studies focusing on Latino immigrant high school students have found that they face issues similar to those of Middle Eastern students. One of these studies focused on four young Latino males and their experiences in an urban high school in which their counselors and teachers "cultivated capital" for these students who then used this capital to change the traditional depictions of Latino immigrant students. (Hopkins, Martinez-Wenzl, Aldana, & Gándara, 2013). This process means that teachers initiated innovative collaborative resources engaging immigrant students to make rational decisions for them to learn better.

Another study focused on 10 immigrant Latinos and their experiences in a social studies class, which enabled them to internalize their parents' high expectation as well as their teachers'. The classroom environment played a pivotal role in supporting the learning of these immigrant students. These young men felt empowered because of their teacher's encouragement and proper motivation (Callahan & Obenchain, 2012). This type of teaching style is what Middle Eastern as well as other immigrant students need to be successful academically throughout their high school years.

Middle Eastern Students Cultural Distractions

Discrimination and segregation of immigrant students at public schools can lead to many negative outcomes. These types of educational inequalities add to the stress level of students and lowers their performance in school. In addition, there are cultural distractions that may jeopardize their success, such as differences in cultural trends, lack of language proficiency, different pedagogic styles, social rejection, and disconnection from the community. These and other factors

may affect the Middle Eastern students' academic engagement in classrooms and lower their achievement (Ogbu, 2003).

Students from the Middle East tend to be more emotional (Khalaf, 2001). Their emotions may negatively reflect on their academic performance, especially if they are linked to unhealthy social coping strategies. Thus, it will be challenging for these students to adapt to different methods of instructional teamwork and assessment while also struggling with social difficulties. The inability to cope with their new environment is a challenge that affects their ability to concentrate in the classroom. Furthermore, in some cases, parents are in denial of the youngsters' suffering and elect to push their children forward without seeking the necessary help of professionals who can address the students' specific discomforts and lack of interest (Khalaf, 2001). Some studies suggest mentoring as a means of providing cross-cultural similarities to enhance the students' positive emotional experiences (Mortenson, 2006).

People from different cultures can interact differently in similar circumstances. These diverse individuals may share the same concepts, but may tend to view them from different perspectives. Lewis emphasizes (2010), "cultural diversity is not something that is going to go tomorrow, enabling us to plan out strategies on the assumption of mutual understanding. It is in itself a phenomenon with its own riches, the exploration of which could yield incalculable benefits for us, both in terms of wider and more profitable policy and activity" (p.16).

Undocumented Students

Immigrant students in some cases are recognized as illegal aliens or unrecognized. An estimated 5.5 million children are unauthorized or are growing up under the shadows of their illegal immigrant parents, some with siblings who were born in the United States. The United States alone has 20% of all of the unauthorized population in the world (Suárez-Orozco,

Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). American citizens and the media impose pressure on these illegal immigrants asking them to become legal or leave. The pressure of being undocumented has a negative psychological effect on children of immigrants leaving them insecure and threatened. This insecurity reduces their motivation at school and lowers their achievement levels, especially if their teachers lack the awareness and knowledge of such issues to support their education (Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2011).

Cultural Issues in Teaching Diverse Students

There are many cultural aspects that contribute to the differences among students in classrooms. These cultural aspects include cultural challenges, language, social beliefs, and religious issues. Teachers and students may face differences due to diversity in culturally related characteristics that could affect their teaching and learning environments (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000). Cultural challenges and diversity of backgrounds affect education in many ways. For example, interaction between teachers and students could positively or negatively be affected by their different languages and beliefs (Lamb, 2013).

Cultural Challenges

The student population in our schools is becoming more diverse, while the teachers' population remains somewhat the same, being primarily White and middle-class. The cultural mismatch of teachers and students is increasing the gap in the ability to practice proper interaction approaches that avoid disturbance and confusion (Causey, et al., 2000). Equalizing education for all students is a strong justification to focus on the different cultural challenges associated with immigrant students enrolled in American public schools (Nieto, 1992). Students face mental, behavioral, and psychological difficulties trying to understand instruction in classrooms (Nieto, 1992). While students who were born and raised in America understand the required tasks and

associated instructions required to perform them, immigrant students need more time and explanation to fully understand the tasks, homework, or classroom activities. In addition, immigrant parents lack the knowledge to support their children to explain the teachers' instructions for homework (Barker, Child, Gallois, Jones, & Callan, 1991). Middle Eastern students are culturally challenged with many factors associated with their social and academic experience in America. These challenges affect teachers as they interact with immigrant students in classrooms on a daily basis. These challenges include: language barriers, culturally social and sensitive matters, undocumented immigration status, religious beliefs, different instructional practices and curriculum, and school climate. These challenges will be explained below in detail.

Language Barriers

Language barriers for students and parents can play an integral part in their education. Language difficulties can prevent parents from properly assisting their children with their homework as well as being able to understand the instructional strategies used in the U.S., which may be different from Middle Eastern methods (Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012). A study of two families of Middle Easterners showed that there have been many difficulties participating and communicating within the community due to language barriers. Middle Eastern families find it difficult to interact with their children's teachers, which could be a result of differences in interactional patterns, language, beliefs, and forms of collaboration (Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012).

With regards to racial discrimination, immigrant students are more likely to experience some language difficulties. Therefore, they could encounter discrimination due to their race or ethnicity when the lack of language proficiency is the problem. For example, English Language Learners (ELL) may fall behind academically, demonstrate low achievement levels, and drop out

of school because their limited language skills hinder their school success. Unfortunately, in some circumstances their lack of English proficiency is used as a reason for enrollment in special classes for language support and special education classes, which precludes them from participating in gifted and talented programs. This is considered one of the elements of systemic inequities that illustrate how students are discriminated against (Johnson & Avelar, 2010).

Social, Family, and Religious Issues

Politics and media play a major role in forming stereotypical ideas concerning specific racial groups. Preparing teachers to deal with culturally diverse students requires a multicultural pre-service teacher education program to support them in overcoming any biases against students of color or other students from different backgrounds (Gay & Howard, 2000). A study has shown that Israeli students, who learned the Arabic language at school, had better attitudes towards the language, culture, and people who spoke that language. Learning a different language is an opportunity to become familiar with cultures and countries that speak that specific language. The more that people are introduced to a specific culture the more likely they will be motivated to interact better with that specific culture (Donitsa-Schmidt, Inbar, & Shohamy, 2004).

Political instability has forced families to leave their homelands to survive and to seek better economic and educational opportunities. Yet, students who are born here and have never lived in the Middle East are sometimes treated as newcomers. This is difficult for teenagers to understand as most of them want to be accepted by their peers and by society. Schools play a role in addressing the psychological needs of students by influencing them to interact together and become a part of the community (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Walberg, 2007). If the students' needs are not properly met, this will negatively affect their behaviors and perceptions (Osterman, 2000). Educators should be aware that there is a difference between immigrant

students who were born outside of the country and those students who were born in the U.S. but are the children of immigrant families (Zhou, 1997).

Middle Eastern immigrant students face many issues upon arrival in the U.S., especially during the first few years, as this is a major turning point for immigrant students' lives regardless of their ethnicity or background. For Arab Middle Eastern students, terrorism dominates the media. These students are confronted with media issues while they are trying to be successful in the classroom. Dealing with stereotyping, discrimination, and racism affects their quality of education due to the pressures it places on them and their families (Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012).

Middle Eastern students feel obligated towards their families. Family relations strongly contribute to their performance and success levels socially and academically. For example, parallel cousin or first cousin marriages are encouraged in the Middle East. In fact, in many cases, these marriages are planned from childhood, and parents from both sides are compelled to proceed with this decision. These, and similar trends and family practices affect Middle Eastern students particularly in American schools where such a practice is often rejected and these first cousin connections are considered like siblings (Khuri, 1970). Therefore, it is important for teachers to enhance their knowledge, awareness, and cultural sensitivity to enable them to manage their classrooms efficiently in translating their cultural understanding towards every student (Turner, 2007).

Religion

Middle Eastern students have various beliefs and religions; some are Muslims, Jews, or Christians. Culture and religion have an impact on immigrants and on how they adjust in America (White, 2012). There are around 2.75 million Muslims (White, 2012). Public school districts in

America should consider taking further steps to accommodate this population growth of the Muslim community, taking into consideration their associated requirements and needs. Social, cultural, and religious traits can have a significant effect on the students' academic performance at school (Blair, Blair, & Madamba, 1999). Religion and family relations influence many factors related to high school students such as food choices, mood swings, habits, body image, and beliefs. These factors change the way students behave, study, and collaborate at school (Neumark-Sztainer, Story, Perry, & Casey, 1999).

Teachers who have prior knowledge of these beliefs and trends may be more sensitive to their students' academic needs. Students' learning is positively influenced when using materials that they accept or are interested in. For example, the religious beliefs of Middle Eastern students are in conflict with the tenets of the Theory of Evolution. Therefore, most Middle Eastern students reject this theory. In many instances, teachers face challenges in introducing certain topics that face this kind of rejection (Rutledge & Mitchell, 2002).

In other cases, religion can provide protection for drug use among high school students. Strict religious beliefs could in some cases act as a preventive guard for students, who might be influenced to participate in the use of drugs or alcohol (Amey, Albrecht, & Miller, 1996). For instance, Muslims are prohibited from the use of controlled substances that are unhealthy and could affect proper functioning of the brain (Bilal, Makhawi, Al-Fayez, & Shaltout, 1990). Parents often teach their children to stay away from alcohol and drugs, which is stated in the Quran (Muslim sacred text), which is respected and followed by most Muslims (Bilal, et al., 1990). Muslim Middle Eastern students become accustomed to accepting different rules in the U.S. allowing such restrictions. In addition, Muslim and Jewish populations have strong dietary

rules with regard to kosher and halal diets and food items (Regenstein, Chaudry, & Regenstein, 2003).

Some Muslim Arab American families enroll their children in private schools while most families enroll their children in public schools. Acculturative stress can be seen during this transition time for Middle Eastern students that may last for a long time when they immigrate to the United States (Alhomaizi, 2012). Acculturative stress is the psychological impact resulting from students and their families trying to adapt to a new cultural environment. Students' adaptation may have a short or a long-term affect while they adjust to changing cultures (Alhomaizi, 2012). Due to the increase of immigrant students as a result of political conflicts around the world in the public school setting, new and evolving strategies and materials have been made available in order for these students to be successful and become integrated (Adc.org, 2015). These new policies promote a smoother transition to different school levels for Middle Eastern students while also allowing other students to be educated with unbiased information about Middle East regions (Adc.org, 2015). Many Native American students, who were born and raised in America, have not been introduced to other cultures or peers from other countries. Studies have shown that interactions with students from diverse cultures broaden students' knowledge and motivate additional learning about other parts of the world (Kuh, 2008).

Multicultural Teaching Pedagogy

Several studies suggest educating and preparing teachers through a multicultural teaching pre-service through different education programs so they can better teach and deal with students of diverse backgrounds (Gay & Howard, 2000). Such cultural preparation for teachers will increase their awareness and knowledge related to students from various ethnicities (Gay & Howard, 2000). Raising teachers' awareness and knowledge will reduce their resistance and fear

of diversity in interacting with students of different races (Gay & Howard, 2000). In addition, teachers will work more effectively with students from various ethnic groups (Gay & Howard, 2000).

Cultural Awareness and Knowledge

At the most basic level, cultural awareness can be defined as a conscious understanding of the role culture plays in communication (Baker, 2012). In a complex environment such as schools where teachers and students interact in many ways, cultural awareness means more than communication. Individuals reflect on the opinions, concepts and attitudes of their cultural groups (Constantin, 2012). The concept of culture has more depth in relation to individuals, which makes it hard for change. Cultural concepts are the meaning of morals and ethics along with behaviors because culture is associated with structured principles, roles, beliefs, and relations of a certain ethnic group (Constantin, 2012). Language and culture are usually connected. Teachers are urged to practice their instruction using proper language associated with a cultural understanding of their students to be able to effectively deliver information and knowledge (Seelye, 1984). Cultural instruction is recommended because of the diversity of students; teachers use different instructional techniques implementing a curriculum to increase intercultural communication (Seelye, 1984). This multicultural curriculum accommodates the needs of immigrant students and stimulates their interest in asking significant questions to enforce their learning.

Cultural knowledge refers to the learned behaviors, beliefs, and ways of relating to people and the environment that members of a cultural group acquire through a process of enculturation (Spradley & Phillips, 1972). Past research indicates that enhancing an individuals' intercultural awareness and understanding will not only reduce cultural misunderstandings and conflict, but it will also create a good working and learning atmosphere. Teams or organizations will benefit

from multiculturalism (Momir, Petroman, Constantin, Mirea, & Marin, 2015). Given the importance of multicultural education, researchers argue that the preparing educators to be cross-culturally knowledgeable should have three aspects: learning factual information about the specific characteristics of different ethnic and cultural groups, understanding how these cultural characteristics play in the students' learning environment, and developing and promoting cultural contexts in teaching (Gay, 2002).

Multicultural Teaching: Challenges and Opportunities

Teachers' beliefs and knowledge about different cultures affect the way they interact with students in classrooms. The beliefs that teachers have might restrict them from providing equal rights to all students. The teachers might deny privileges for some students based on their color, race, or ethnicity (Causey, et al., 2000). Therefore, it is important to discuss the pedagogical issues with regards to multicultural teaching such as promoting cultural diversity, curriculum development, class leader strategies, assessment, and evaluation, etc. (Gay, 2002).

Promoting cultural diversity on campus and in classrooms.

Understanding cultural dynamics is a difficult task because those 'hard core' such as solid beliefs and cultural components are deeply embedded in peoples' minds and usually not easily observed and interpreted (Alexander-Snow, 2004). Therefore, teachers often struggle observing students' different cultures while trying to make sense of their different behaviors in classrooms. Parents and families are involved in the beliefs and values learned by their children. It is hard to change or alter the children's and parents' actions when they join American schools. This takes a considerable amount of time and strategic effort to help them to adapt and adjust to change (Alexander-Snow, 2004).

The development of cross-cultural awareness has been a major concern among adult college students and working professionals (Lokkesmoe, Kuchinke, & Ardichvili, 2016). Empirical studies have demonstrated that cultural awareness, as well as a larger conceptual construct, cultural competence, is instrumental in enhancing an individual's cross-cultural communication, decision making in a multicultural context, and overall performance (Groves & Feyerherm, 2011). However, little has been researched with respect to K-12 teachers' cultural awareness and how that affects teaching and learning. Cultural awareness becomes essential for effective teaching and learning even in this early stage of education when educators and students have to interact with people from other cultures. The immigrant students' learning could be negatively affected if their educators lack proper cultural awareness of their cultural background characteristics. If teachers often misunderstand their students or cannot interact efficiently with them, students will not adapt and fit well in their new school environment (Wu & Ang, 2011).

Cultural diversity and differences among student populations relate to their learning needs, styles, and outcomes. It is important for teachers to be aware of the learning needs of different students in their classrooms. For example, teachers need to explore the types of challenges that English Language Learner (ELL) students of different cultures face daily in the classroom. Teachers need to be experienced with instructional methods regarding literacy development to assist the students from immigrant families. There are many differences in the ways that individual students learn. Instructional techniques differ greatly between Middle Eastern countries and the U.S. Ogbu (1992) cited "Core curriculum and multicultural education are two major approaches advocated in the current school reform movement" (p. 5). Although both of these approaches are currently applied in the public school system, neither of these approaches addresses the problems that minority students face in the classroom (Ogbu, 1992).

The core curriculum assumes that students will perform well if they are required to achieve higher standards, if an identical curriculum is applied, and if individual deficiencies are fixed. It is important for multicultural advocates of education to realize the critical issue in cultural diversity in observing the gap in relationship between the typical American culture and cultures of minority students in public schools. Understanding different cultural issues will help education advocates design instructional programs and curriculum to emphasize these cultural differences in class content (Ogbu, 1992).

Cultural diversity in students is related to many factors such as ethnicity, language, religion, culture, and social class. Therefore, students of diverse backgrounds have many differences, which create challenges for teachers during instruction if they are not aware and understand these individual disparities (Zeichner, 1993). Middle Eastern students have different cultural patterns and customs related to their traditions, religious beliefs and family society trends. These social obligations require students to participate in many family gatherings related to their religious holidays or other traditional events such as funerals or celebrations. These social activities, religious events and other celebrations consume tremendous amounts of the students' time but are required as part of the culture (Parker, 1976). The school culture and teachers' understanding and knowledge related to such obligations help the students in adapting to American schools because of the awareness and consideration of educators and school officials about the students' lifestyle and commitments. Students' adaptation and sense of belonging contribute to their success, reduce their stress and anxiety, and may reduce their inappropriate behavior, which is influenced by the school climate and accessible interventions.

A study discussing different factors affecting Middle Eastern and Jewish students' aggressive behavior towards each other found that this behavior was correlated to school climate.

The study reported that almost one third of this student population had demonstrated violent behavior toward peers, and one in five did the same against their teachers. This was all related to the school accommodation of cultural connections, characteristics and systematic factors affecting Middle Eastern students (Khoury-Kassabri, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2009). In other words, the school failed to address the students' prior personal attitudes and to promote effective collaboration. Even though students from both groups were part of Middle Eastern culture, each group has its own lack of connection due to their families, politics and communities.

Enhancing multicultural teaching.

The increasing disparities between the growing number of immigrant students in American public schools and their teachers have motivated educators to develop new multicultural instructional strategies. These strategies address the individual needs of students through multicultural teaching. Multicultural teaching is defined as the ability to successfully teach children from different ethnic backgrounds the knowledge of diverse cultures, constructive attitudes towards students and families from other cultures, changing stereotypical ideas related to some racial groups, and enhancing the interest to effectively interact with diverse students (Wade, 2000).

Many community-based groups can provide training and information to school districts regarding Middle Eastern countries. For example, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) provides a library of information on the Middle East for educators (Adc.org, 2015). This kind of information should be helpful to teachers and educators as they enrich their knowledge about the differences in Middle Eastern students' cultural backgrounds and to learn to respect their cultural differences and beliefs. Addressing these cultural differences will promote

effective learning and allow teachers to interact better with their Middle Eastern student population (Al-Hazza & Bucher, 2010).

Examples of innovative multicultural teaching can be seen in a case study that examined different homework practices of eight teachers and how they interacted with new immigrant students. This study showed a strong focus in tailoring homework for the students instead of presenting it in a generalized manner (Bang, 2012). Many immigrant students are in the process of learning to speak English while trying to do complex homework for different subjects in English at the same time (Bang, 2012). Another form of multicultural teaching or counseling is used in visual learning. A prior study showed that students from diverse cultures learn and digest information more effectively if teachers use popular films as an experimental technique to present an idea or a topic. Experiential learning reflects life events and experiences to stimulate students' minds to think and connect to their topic (Course, 2008). The regular class activities such as readings, papers, and assessment can then be used after building a strong base of understanding in relation to the topic (Course, 2008). Another study proposed different multicultural approaches to use in classes with diverse students. These approaches were not validated for their efficiency, but they were useful in supporting students of diverse cultures. These approaches include visual and electronic instruction, education literacy for teachers, social networking communities, and the introduction of new technologies in multicultural learning (Ferdig, R. E., Coutts, DiPietro, Lok, & Davis, 2007).

Public schools can benefit significantly from creating practices to help immigrant students by providing the best possible methods for them to learn (Hersi & Watkinson, 2012). These practices reduce stresses and burdens for the students and their families while giving them more opportunities. Many immigrant students speak another language at home which differs from the

language of instruction. There is evidence that the lack of competence in the language of instruction affects immigrant students and contributes to their falling behind at least one year academically in comparison to other non-immigrant students (Christensen & Stanat, 2007). Changes in school policies, the introduction of new language support programs, and professional development for teachers to learn a second language will help these students increase their level of achievement (Christensen & Stanat, 2007).

Developing multicultural curriculum and teaching strategies.

The educational environment in the Middle East has some unique features. For examples, in Middle Eastern public schools, students are assessed exclusively according to their examinations, as (Moloney & Saltmarsh, 2016). Thus, teachers depend on their direct lectures and illustrations, and reading from assigned textbooks. Students are required to memorize class details rather than to use their understanding of the class content. They do not research topics and are not encouraged to learn additional facts unless it is directly included in the curriculum. The students work individually on classwork and do not work collaboratively with their peers (Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010). On the other hand, the American public schools encourage interactive learning where students are required to investigate facts about different topics and share them with classmates. These differences in instructional techniques contribute to the confusion faced by Middle Eastern students as they attempt to perform different tasks and to communicate in American classrooms (Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010).

Teachers and policy makers should be aware of Middle Eastern students' childhood experiences with their school systems and introduce various instructional tools and resources they need to succeed. Effective programs, using visual aids to assist learning, and encouraging

community and family participation are effective strategies to help these students understand classroom materials (Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012).

Cultural knowledge plays an important role in various conceptual models, such as cultural competence, cultural capital, and cultural identity (Wan & Chew, 2013). Being an antecedent of culturally sensitive practices, including but not limited to, school curriculum, business practices, and healthcare treatments, cultural knowledge is a process of seeking and obtaining a sound educational foundation about diverse cultural and ethnic groups. In obtaining this knowledge base, researchers argued that one must focus on the integration of individuals' cultural beliefs and values and factors related to the profession, situation, and environment (Lavizzo-Mourey & Mackenzie, 1996). For educators, obtaining knowledge about the students' cultures involves understanding not only their values and worldview, but also how the learning environment influences their thinking, doing, and being.

It is important to describe the connection between district programming and policy with teachers dealing with immigrant students. District leaders should establish new systematic methods to resolve the struggles of Middle Eastern students and to improve their learning experiences. Preparing teachers and introducing them to different cultural backgrounds related to their students will assist them in modifying instructional tools and approaches used in their classrooms to accommodate students' needs (Stritikus & Nguyen, 2010). To provide curriculum according to students' needs, the students should first be properly assessed according to their prior knowledge with regard to certain subjects (Johnson & Avelar La Salle, 2010).

Children learn from their parents at home before they start school. This knowledge continues throughout the school years because they are at home around family members. These students learn life skills, cultures, and traditions related to their daily lives. The growth of

knowledge depends on the amount of time they spend at home with their families. The environment that shapes that knowledge includes neighbors, friends, and communities. Accordingly, students learn differently and understand school experiences based on their prior information (Lambert, 1973). Middle Eastern students learn their culture and life skills from older family members and grandparents. The learning experience is based on respect and on avoiding other people's mistakes (Au, 2002).

Teachers interact with their students in different ways, reaching their minds through learning and influencing them to become life-long learners. They help student to develop autonomy in the process of self-assessment, planning, setting goals, reflecting and evaluating their progress (Yang, 1998). Nurturing leadership among students has been proven effective in multicultural teaching.

Teachers are leaders in their classrooms, where they practice their leadership skills effecting students, parents, colleagues, and community members. Therefore, teachers are true change agents to education reform (Wynne, 2001). Many may agree that leadership is a form of an assessment. It tests your strengths in an organization, adaptation to change, and the creation of a positive climate and a strong culture. Leadership is tough and perhaps that is why why (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). It is a challenge simply because creating change for a certain individual is built on a foundation of unity and the strength of collaboration of different members in an organization. This unity and collaboration can be reflected on team members through creating a shared vision. The effective development, communication, and implementation of that shared vision makes an organization successful and a schoolteacher a true class leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

It is the leader's mission to work with his or her team to understand their values, backgrounds, and beliefs to form a consensus of shared values. It is imperative for leaders to

inspire others to gain acceptance and commitment to attain their goals. Accordingly, teachers as leaders can enhance the learning experience of their students by practicing effective leadership skills (Wynne, 2001).

Teachers are urged to enhance their sense of responsibility towards minority students' learning by addressing their individual needs, considering their diverse cultures, and including them as active participants in class activities and discussions to further their learning and accomplishments (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004).

Multicultural Teaching and Learning Environment

The education system today experiences multiple cultures, languages, and backgrounds. Globalization, migration, and politics are the reason behind this diverse student population in American classrooms (Moloney & Saltmarsh, 2016). The characteristics and attitudes of each diverse group of students are distinct with individual learning skills and abilities (Moloney & Saltmarsh, 2016).

The main focus of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is to determine inequities and promote justice in the public school system (Harris, 2012). Therefore, it is important to provide an equal learning environment for all students. Immigrant students come from different origins with various backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicities. Thus, researchers find it necessary to avoid discrimination and to prepare teachers to accommodate various academic settings for these students to learn and increase their performance (Parker & Villalpando, 2007). For example, the stereotypical perspective of teachers and administrations towards immigrant families is often associated with low expectations and challenges in communications (Parker & Villalpando, 2007).

Teachers' Characteristics

Teachers' characteristics play a major role in their attitudes and beliefs towards minority and diverse students. The teachers' years of experience, ethnicity, gender and other factors affect their perceived knowledge towards certain cultures and backgrounds (Flores & Smith, 2009).

The researcher has found that a difference exists between sociocultural diversity of the U.S. public school student populations and the sociocultural homogeneity reflected in the population of teachers (McKoy, 2013). Researchers have noticed a demographic trend that a high percentage of teachers are: White, female, and middle class; additionally, many teachers have been found to be unaware of and nonresponsive to how culture may impact student learning (Bradfield-Kreider, 2001; Dieker, Voltz, & Epanchin, 2002; Nierman, Zeichner, & Hobbel, 2002).

Teachers' demographic characteristics have remained important in conceptual frameworks pertaining to the development of teachers' cultural competence. Some researchers have used the demographic characteristics of teachers and/or students as precedents for cultural knowledge or 'cultural encounter,' both of which are essential components in the construct of cultural competence (Sargent, Sedlak, & Martsolf, 2005). Other researchers have treated the demographic characteristics as a single construct in the framework of competence. For example, Butler, Lind, & McKoy, (2007) have examined the impact of music teachers' age, gender, cultural identity, cultural values, and cultural learning style on their ability to develop cultural knowledge and skills.

Past research has shown mixed results with respect to variations of cultural competence or similar constructs (e.g., cultural knowledge, cultural skill, cultural intelligence, cultural identity, etc.) based on demographic characteristics. Dunaway, Morrow, and Porter (2012) found that males and females, minorities and non-minorities, and people of all ages have similar self-

reported levels of cultural competence; whereas, other researchers found that race/ethnicity has a significant effect on music teachers' cultural competence (McKoy, 2013). Homogeneity of research participants and small sample size has been identified as limitations in past research particularly pertaining to the effect of demographic variables. In an increasingly diverse school environment, teachers' demographic characteristics warrant a further investigation on how they relate to their cultural competence and teaching practices (McKoy, 2013).

The ongoing professional development for teachers also plays an important role in dealing with multicultural challenges in teaching. Educators strive to increase students' achievement levels. This can only be accomplished by improving the quality of teachers and school leadership. Participating in ongoing learning programs will help teachers maintain and gain the necessary information they need to support students' learning, accommodate the changes in technology, and implement the best educational practices (Mizell, 2010). There are different ways that professional development can help teachers gain the additional knowledge they need to transfer that knowledge to their students. School leaders and administrative staff should explore the different cultural backgrounds of families in their school communities and surroundings. It will be helpful to investigate the demographics and ethnicities of the school neighborhood. Students often come from that neighborhood, where families of students and other residents in their area can provide support to teachers in becoming accustomed to a diversity of cultures that exists in that community.

It is important to note that cultural knowledge distribution in a population is not perfect (Brumann, 1999). In other words, individuals do not have perfect knowledge about their own culture due to personal, socioeconomic, and environmental barriers. It is to be expected that there are other barriers preventing individuals from acquiring cross-cultural knowledge. Past research

suggests that there are cross-cultural differences in the degree to which individuals consider social connections to be important (Wan, & Chew, 2013). Moreover, the conceptualization of general cultural values (e.g., collectivism) or themes as well as specific notions (e.g., trust and adaptability) may differ across cultures (Yuki, 2003). School leaders and district officials should encourage teachers to advocate in learning the particulars about different cultures to help and support their students. These different details related to cultural understanding will not be properly understood without observing and seeking information related to that specific culture. Schools and districts often plan training through professional development for teachers to acquire the necessary tools and information to implement in their multicultural teaching (Leistyna, 2001).

Students' Learning Environment: from Family, Campus, to Educational Policy

Parental involvement.

Previous research cites parental involvement as a significant factor in the academic success of students (Jeynes, 2012; Turner & Kao, 2009; McCloyd, 1990). Given what Turner and Kao (2009) determined with regard to the correlation between parental involvement and student socialization and the importance of school, that parental involvement is a significant component of a student's outlook on a school. Jeynes (2012) found that students in schools with parental involvement programs showed substantially higher test scores than those in schools without such programs, even when controlling such factors as race, socioeconomic status, and gender. When parents make school and education a priority, the child makes school and education a priority (Jeynes, 2012).

Parental involvement takes different forms given the needs of the school, the needs of the school community, the student population, and the academic programs that are in place. Studies present two major factors that influence parental involvement in schools: socioeconomic status

and cultural background (McLloyd, 1990). The challenges that schools may face with increasing parental involvement can be varied as well. Some common challenges that interfere with parents becoming involved in the education of their children are their socioeconomic status and their cultural background (Lareau, 1987). The cultural background of a parent may influence their level of involvement as well. That is not to say that ethnic minority parents such as Latino parents do not value education.

On the contrary, (Spera, Wentzel, & Matto, 2009) recognized that minority parents have aspirations for their children and see education as a way to achieve upward mobility in society. Minority parents often place a high value on the importance of education (Spera, et al., 2008). Some of the barriers minority parents face relate to language and work schedules. Minority parents often are not English-speaking. Their native language is often a language other than English. In addition, minority parents may have inflexible work schedules or multiple jobs that interfere with their ability to get involved and to remain involved in the education of their child(ren). In a study related to Latino parents, (Zhou, 1997) identified Latino parents as immigrants who are not familiar with the English language and American culture. This lack of familiarity with the English language and culture contributes to the reluctance of minority parents to become involved in the education of their child(ren) and school.

Educators have worked on increasing equity in the academic learning environment of students. The percentage of parents who are involved in their children's learning have been well recognized among middle- and upper-class parents in comparison to those that come from lower-income families (de Carvalho, 2001). In high-income communities, the involvement of parents tends to be at a significantly greater level (Abrams & Gibbs 2002). Parents from lower socioeconomic levels sometimes have difficulty supporting their children because of financial and

work obligations. These students could have lower grades and academic achievement due to their families' low socioeconomic status (McLloyd, 1990).

Traditional involvement of parents of minorities, such as that of Hispanic origin, is often limited as they perceive their role in education of their children to be more significant in the environment of their home and their family (Hwang & Vrongistinos, 2010). Many Hispanic parents view their role in the education of their children to be more home-based such as assisting with homework (Boncana & Lopez, 2010). Their understanding of parental support is making sure that their children understand the importance of proper discipline and cultural values (Gibson & Bejinez, 2002). While providing suitable education at home, parents feel that their presence at school is not significant; hence, parents and teachers work separately but not always together in supporting students (Hornby & LaFaele, 2011). While their students are at school, parents of Hispanic students view the school as the primary educator. This mindset detracts from the parent's desire to participate at the school site. The research on Latino parents shows a similarity with the behaviors of Middle Eastern parents, where cultural factors and other obstacles could affect the involvement of parents (Yap & Enoki, 1995). Parents of Middle Eastern students might feel uncomfortable interacting with their children's schools (Suleiman, 1996). Parents might not feel welcome, as teachers may have negative attitudes based on some media outlets broadcasting false claims about Middle Eastern culture or region (Suleiman, 1996).

School climate.

Schools, educators, and districts are concerned with students' attendance. School attendance is often associated with students' success and their level of achievement. Educators seek different approaches and techniques to increase attendance rates and promote success (Railsback, 2004). This is not the case in many Middle Eastern countries. Public school teachers

often encourage students not to attend school before or after a short school holiday, particularly in the early school years; students are absent many days during the school year to accompany their parents on private vocational trips or simply to stay at home. This is not the case with private schools in the Middle East where attendance is mandatory and the educational program is strictly regimented (Akkari, 2004).

On the other hand, schools have been eager to include technology in classrooms and provide technology to their students. This method of learning is encouraged to cope with the advancements in world technology that we interact with on a daily basis. Thus, there are many barriers that affect the implementation of technology for such instruction in the K-12 schools (Hew & Brush 2007). Since the Middle Eastern regions are split into countries with differing economic status', students coming from wealthy countries are more likely to adapt to such technologies, while others may find it uncomfortable to acclimate this kind of technological interaction. This acclimation is different among college-level students where the students are more open to such interventions (Hew & Brush 2007).

Guidance and support is needed from teachers and school administrators for high school freshmen and their families to better prepare these students in transitioning to the high school environment. The transition from the environment of a middle school to that of a high school is particularly challenging for Middle Eastern immigrant students. For example, the District Counseling Unit, APS Health & Wellness Department put together a planning guide for ninth grade students for the Albuquerque, New Mexico public schools that shows how ninth graders and their families can better transition to the high school environment and what is available to them (9th Grade Student and Family Planning Guide, 2012). One of the main tasks of The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), through the Immigrant Students and Secondary

School Reform project, is to help state education agencies and districts reinforce proper delivery of education for non-English speaking students enrolled in high schools (Bautista, 2013).

This project includes professional development for teachers to help immigrant parents and students, especially those with formal schooling. Their programs encourage parents to get involved in their children's education and for students to increase their capabilities through summer programs (Spaulding, Carolino, Amen, & Ball, 2004).

This research provides teachers and educators with strategies and ideas to assist Middle Eastern students and their families. It allows families to participate with their children's teachers to focus on educational goals that will help the students to succeed academically. This collaborative work with educators and parents smooth the transition to high school (9th Grade Student and Family Planning Guide, 2012).

Policy and legislation.

The school district administration plays a major role in reducing the stress and conflicts students might have in expressing themselves. Districts have to work on developing different policies to implement change in their educational organizations to provide a better learning environments for students and teachers (Fowler, 2013).

Public education is important in shaping our society and building a strong infrastructure of individuals capable of contributing positively in the future. In education, the judicial system is responsible for affirming equal rights for all students to ensure a better learning environment that is favorable to their academic achievement (McDaniels, 2016). School and district officials are encouraged to develop rules and regulations to assess and evaluate students according to their true ability and educational standards. Accordingly, stereotypical ideas related to race or ethnic groups should be avoided so students can have equal rights in their education. Educators must protect

students from different discriminatory activities and practices that could result in disruptions to their learning. For example, teachers and school officials need to evaluate valid measures to assess the students with regard to program placement. Proper assessment and evaluations with regards to students' standards and grade level allocations are not always accurate to represent students' performance levels (Blanchette, 2006). The disproportionate representation of African American students in special education is common in the context of White privilege and racism that exist in American society (Blanchette, 2006). Unprepared teachers, inappropriate curriculum and the lack of appropriate educational resource allocations have contributed to the problem of disproportionate representation (Blanchette, 2006). To discontinue unfair placements for African American students, policy makers should implement new laws and policies for all school systems to follow regarding special education placements (Blanchette, 2006).

One specific policy measure that helps is the English Language Learner designation. Middle Eastern students are among other students who are sometimes classified as English Language Learners (ELL). In some cases, immigrant students are often placed in ELL classes despite their ability to speak English. This may be because documents are not completed correctly for school enrollment. Parents usually state that their children speak another language at home. Accordingly, schools assume that these students are English Language Learners and are placed in ELL classes despite their proficiency in English. Furthermore, these students continue to study English as a foreign language for several years without having the opportunity to be reassessed and placed in regular classrooms (Waters & Jiménez, 2005).

During the 1990s, the number of immigrants arriving in the United States exceeded any other prior time period. The number of non-English speaking students increased rapidly in public schools (Spotlights, 2016). In 2000-2001, four million students, around 10% of the total K-12

student enrollment included students with limited English proficiency (Spotlights, 2016). According to Spotlights (2016) the general school population has only grown 12% since 1991, while there has been an increase of growth of ELL to 105%. These numbers create more challenges for educators who work with these students. There are different studies that prove that there is a lack of achievement between ELL students and native English-speaking students who were born and raised in America (Spotlights, 2016). The same concept of lower achievement is reflected in other class curriculum. ELL students do not understand the class content as well as their English-speaking peers, which results in them falling behind. Despite the ongoing debates among educators regarding teaching all subjects in English or offering immigrant students the classes in their native language, teachers find it challenging to communicate in English with non-English speaking students (Slavin & Cheung, 2003).

According to some observations done on students from different cultural backgrounds, students perform better academically, when the culture taught in the classroom is the culture of their own homes and not the culture of their new environment. This is because they relate and react more efficiently to topics that they connect to in comparison to newly introduced ones. For example, English teachers usually use vocabulary and sentences from the community because the students are familiar with this type of communication. Thus, students from different origins will not find it as difficult to relate to and to share the same communication connections (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010).

Gaps in Literature

The above literature topics were discussed in several studies, but there is limited literature that ties the main constructs of this study together. For educators to deal better with addressing different challenges related to Middle Eastern students and other students from diverse cultures,

there should be closer investigation and analysis focusing on specific gaps, interactions, and relationships between teachers and students. This deeper focus should introduce easier solutions and better opportunities to address problems with connections to different cultural aspects related to the learning environment.

In addition, Middle Eastern students have been included in studies conducted overseas in different countries. Thus, there are limited resources on investigations with relation to Middle Eastern students attending American public schools. The reviewed literature revealed that immigrant students are a growing population in public schools. Therefore, given the increase in Middle Eastern students, teachers' cultural awareness and cultural knowledge and its relationship to multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges when working with these students is an important topic to be investigated and addressed. This study's findings should provide information for teachers to use with Middle Eastern students and other minorities to enhance their educational performance. Furthermore, it will provide evidence and information for educators and policy makers to implement constructive changes and ideas to support the learning of immigrant and minority students.

Conclusion

The review of literature has exposed a need to investigate the problem of teachers' multicultural teaching that deals with cultural challenges. The gaps in the literature addressing the main constructs of this study validates the research questions to explore the relationship between teachers' cultural awareness and cultural knowledge and the dependent variable teachers' multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges working with Middle Eastern students.

The literature revealed different concepts related to the problem of effective interactions between Middle Eastern students and teachers. These concepts focus on differences in instruction,

cultural trends, school climate, stereotypical ideas, religious beliefs, English language deficiency and ineffective parental involvement. The review of literature supported the two theoretical frameworks of this study constructed on Critical Race Theory and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Appropriate communication between teachers and students offering equality and equity to all students should improve the learning environment and increase students' achievement.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This study examined how teachers perceive culturally effective teaching strategies for Middle Eastern high school students and how other related factors affect their perceived cultural challenges. This study also explored teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness in teaching and working with Middle Eastern high school students, their cultural awareness and cultural knowledge, their demographics, and their influence on the students' learning environment.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe this study's methodology. The chapter describes the research design, research setting, and research sample. The instruments and procedures for collecting data are also discussed. In addition, the methods for collecting and analyzing data are explained. Finally, the role of the researcher is described. It was important to address the connection between the teachers' cultural awareness and knowledge and their interactions with international students or minorities because effective interactions between teachers and students should increase the performance of students (Keaton, 2012).

The researcher tested the main constructs of this study, which includes the teachers' perceptions of multicultural teaching that deals with cultural challenges, teachers' cultural knowledge, teachers' cultural awareness, teachers' demographics and the learning environment. Cultural awareness is defined as the individual's sensitivity to cultural values and bias, whereas cultural knowledge is the expectation of acknowledging interpersonal relationships in diverse cultural settings (Sue et al., 1998). The perceptions of awareness and knowledge regarding culture have been previously investigated (Sue, 2006). The researcher looked at the teachers' perceptions of multicultural teaching that deals with cultural challenges, which served as the dependent variable in this study and included various dimensions such as, content integration, the knowledge

construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 1993).

This chapter describes the methodology the researcher used to answer the research questions:

1. What is the correlation between a teachers' level of cultural awareness and their perceptions of multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern high school students?
2. Does a relation exist between a teachers' cultural knowledge and their perceptions of multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students?
3. How and to what degree does students' learning environment in school and at home affect teachers' perceptions of multicultural teaching in dealing with cultural challenges in classrooms?

Theoretical Frameworks

This study uses two theoretical frameworks; Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy presents different effective teaching techniques to use in classrooms with diverse students. These types of teaching techniques contribute to increasing students' achievement through engagement and motivation. In addition, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy includes the knowledge of students from different backgrounds into instruction and curriculum to close the cultural gap of students from diverse ethnicities and promote a fair learning environment for all (Irvine, 2010). On the other hand, Critical Race Theory defines issues related to legal academic matters dealing with unfair learning environments. This theory is used as an essential tool in the field of education to analyze different

perspectives associated with race, inequity, and unequal privileges in schools (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Using the theoretical frameworks, Critical Race Theory and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, the researcher tested the following hypotheses: (H1) Teachers' cultural awareness is positively correlated with their perception of multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students, holding others constant. H2: Teachers' cultural knowledge is positively correlated with their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students, holding others constant. (H3) Students' learning environment is correlated with teachers' perceptions of multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges in teaching and working with Middle Eastern students, holding other factors constant.

The methodology for this study included the research design, setting, sample, instrument, procedures for data collection, procedures for data analysis, and a description of the researcher's role in conducting this study.

Research Design

The study was a quantitative research design. This approach defined the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable through analyzing quantifiable data from a large sample size. This data was analyzed statistically to reject or accept the null hypothesis to determine the existence of relationships between variables. The findings and concepts of this study could be generalized to a larger population at the end of this investigation (Creswell, 2013). The research used an *ex post facto* cross-sectional design. According to Jarde, Losilla and Vives (2012), in *ex post facto* research, the researcher does not manipulate the independent variables nor assign participants into groups. Therefore, *ex post facto* design is a

better examination of how an independent variable, present prior to the study, affects a dependent variable. In addition, the researcher tested the correlation between the teachers' cultural awareness and knowledge, including their perceptions of multicultural teaching that deals with the cultural challenges of working with Middle Eastern students during a specific period of time (Jarde, et al., 2012).

For the study sites (i.e., the schools) a purposive sampling technique was used. The teachers who responded to the study were not selected based on those independent variables such as their demographic characteristics, their cultural awareness, and cultural knowledge. In this study, the researcher could not alter or change the teachers' prior perceptions on their multicultural teaching experiences because the research is done as an after-the-fact investigation (Jarde, et al., 2012).

Research Setting

Three southern California high schools were selected for the study in the Los Sief area. The demographics of each school include: The first school has a total of 3,411 students: 50% are White, 25% Hispanic, and 20% Asian. In this school, approximately 20% are identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged students and 3% are English Language Learners (ELL). The Academic Performance Index (API) showed a score of 832 for the year of 2012. The school's graduation rate is 80%, and the dropout rate is 14.4% (SARC of 2011-2012). The second school has a total of 4,273 students; 39% are Hispanic, 28% are White, and 18% Asian. The socioeconomically disadvantaged students equal 52% of the total student population, and the ELL population is approximately 3%. The school API is over 800 (SARC of 2011-2012). The third school has a total of 3,100 students; 8% are Asian, 11% African American, 34% Latino, and 45% Caucasian of European and Middle Eastern ethnicity. The socioeconomically disadvantaged

students equal 51% of the total student population, and the ELL population is 17% of the total school enrollment. The school's API is 823 (SARC of 2011-2012).

Research Sample

The survey of three California charter and traditional public schools was conducted beginning in the spring of 2017. The current study used a two-stage sampling method. The first stage used purposive sampling, which aimed to select three high schools with a fairly high percentage of students from the Middle East. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling that is selected based on the objectives of the study and the characteristics of the population (Guarte & Barrios, 2006). In this study, purposive sampling was used to investigate schools with large populations of Middle Eastern students and the types of interactions they have with their teachers. Therefore, this study had participants from three schools A, B, and C. In the second stage, a convenience quota sampling was used to select the participating high school teachers until the sample size reached 105. The convenience quota sampling is a non-probability sample of participants that represents the entire population (Fogelman & Comber, 2002). Therefore, the assembled sample of participants from the three selected schools were chosen randomly but through a convenience sampling method. This type of sampling was helpful to the researcher in collecting the 105 desired responses from the three locations.

A total of 300 surveys were distributed to teachers among the three chosen schools. Each school received a total of 100 surveys. The researcher anticipated a total response rate of 35% from the 300 participants equaling approximately 105 responses. This survey was distributed in hard-copy form to teachers from January through February 2017. The researcher was offered the assistance of the school principals or their designees to deliver the surveys to the teachers'

mailboxes. Teachers were encouraged to respond to the survey within two weeks. Surveys were returned to a secure location in the main office or hand delivered to the principal or designee.

The total response rate of participants who completed the survey was 59% as the total number of responses were 194 out of a total of 331 surveys distributed.

All the teachers who participated in the survey received a letter (Appendix A) that outlined the study, the purpose of the study, and their proposed contributions. Participants were asked to respond to a survey questionnaire that took approximately 30 minutes to complete. The survey included 55-60 questions with the first 11 questions asking about participant demographics and individual characteristics.

Participation was voluntary and participants were able to discontinue their participation at any time. Participants were not required to reveal any personal information related to them and were not required to identify their school site. Participants were assured that their identity and responses were confidential and would remain anonymous.

Instrument and Procedure

A survey was used in this study as the method of data collection. The researcher used the survey questions to collect specific information from the participant population (Groves, et al., 2009). This survey instrument, which was confidential and anonymous, could help reveal some sensitive data that related to culture, policy or race issues associated with Middle Eastern students. The survey questions were created to answer the three main research questions of the study as they helped to generalize the findings to a larger population. Sets of questions were grouped together with regards to each main construct of the study. Table 3.0 describes the constructs' map in relation to the survey questions.

Table 3.0. Frequencies and Percentage for Demographics Characteristics of the Participants

Construct	Question
Teachers' demographics	Gender Age Race/ethnicity Middle Eastern decent Country of origin Years of teaching high school Years of teaching experience Educational background Average household income Cultural training Middle Eastern interaction
Teachers cultural awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At this point in your life, how would you rate yourself in terms of understanding how your cultural background has influenced the way that you think and act? • At this point in your life, how would you rate your understanding of the impact of the way you think and act when interacting with persons of different cultural backgrounds? • In general, how would you rate your level of awareness regarding different cultural institutions and systems? • In particular, at the present time, how would you rate yourself in terms of being able to accurately compare your own cultural perspective with that of a person from Middle Eastern cultures? • How would you rate your understanding of the concept of "relativity" in terms of the goals, objectives, and methods of working with culturally different participants? • How well do you think you could distinguish "intentional" from "accidental" communication signals in a multicultural educational setting?
Teachers' cultural knowledge	Understanding level of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural education • Ethnicity • Racism • Prejudice • Cultural competence • Diversity • Culture in general • Particular culture—Middle Eastern culture
Perceived multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges working with ME* students	How challenging are your multicultural teaching methods and strategies with respect to each statement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the contributions made by minority groups in our society. • Identify cultural biases in commercial materials used in instruction. • Develop materials appropriate for the multicultural classroom. • Identify the social forces which influences opportunities for minority group members. • Help students see cultural groups as real people. • Show how mainstream Americans** have adopted food, clothing, language, etc. from other cultures. • Present cultural groups in our society in a manner that will build mutual respect. • Identify how language affects performance on certain test items. • Present diversity of cultures as a strong positive feature of American heritage. • Effectively utilize ethnic resources in the community • Identify the similarities between Anglo-American and other cultures • Feel the need to adopt instructional methods to meet the needs of learners from diverse cultures. • Recognize potential stereotypical attitudes towards Middle Eastern students in instructional materials. • Provide instruction showing how prejudice affects individuals. • Plan instructional activities that reduce prejudice toward other cultural groups. • Create a learning environment that allows for alternative styles of learning. • Provide instructional activities that help ME students develop strategies for dealing with racial confrontations. • Help ME students recognize that competence is more important than ethnic background. • Develop activities that increase self-confidence of ME students. • Assist all students to understand the feelings of people from other ethnic groups. • Help ME students to work through problem situations caused by stereotypical attitudes. • Identify solutions to problems that may arise as the result of cultural diversity • Identify student behaviors that are indicative of negative racial attitudes. • Develop instructional methods that promote intercultural cohesiveness. • Develop instructional methods that dispel myths about ethnic groups. • Get students from different cultures to work and interact together.
Learning environment	Agreement level to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration in my school is prepared for diverse students • I am encouraged by the school administration to welcome diverse students in my classroom • There is collaboration between staff regarding ME students' affairs • The faculty and staff understand ME students' needs and learning habits • The parents of ME students are involved at school • When parents are engaged, ME students make better progress • The parents' cultural competence affects ME students' learning at home and school. • Mothers of ME students are more involved than their fathers • Family members of ME students that I interact with understand my language

ME* Middle Eastern

Mainstream Americans** Those Americans who are a part of American society which is normal, is not deviant because of ethnicity, religion, lack of religion, culture or values, feminism (Ferree, 2003).

The survey used response choice selections, which are called scales. The survey included simple answer choices such as “yes” or “no,” range type selections, and more complex Likert scores of five responses (Lee, Jones, Mineyama, & Zhang, 2002). Scales used in the survey were field tested for reliability and validity for the following main constructs: cultural awareness, cultural knowledge and perceived multicultural teaching that dealt with cultural challenges. All scales are adapted and modified to clarify issues related to Middle Eastern students. Original scales were sourced from the literature relating to the constructs (Lange, 2011; D'Andréa, Daniels, & Heck, 1991). The questionnaire was divided into sections that provided answer choices related to the dependent variables and independent variables. From the participant responses, the researcher sought to answer the research questions and analyze the findings. In addition, the scale range of five choices helped to investigate the variation of responses between the levels of teachers' perceptions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013).

The survey was distributed to the participants in a paper-and-pencil format. The survey questionnaire was developed to examine the theoretical framework and models for cultural sensitivity. The teachers' perceptions of their self-awareness and of the knowledge gained in diverse cultural settings have been conceptualized based on literature (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Cultural awareness includes an individuals' sensitivity to cultural values and bias, whereas cultural knowledge is the knowledge of culture, worldview, and expectations for interpersonal relationships in diverse cultural settings. Multicultural teaching that deals with cultural challenges has also been conceptualized and formulated to include various dimensions, such as content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure (Lange, 2011).

In the questionnaire, cultural awareness, one of the main independent variables, was measured using six question items in the survey, and cultural knowledge, another main independent variable, was measured using eight question items. Participants were provided five options on a Likert-type scale with ratings from 1-5, with “1” representing low awareness or knowledge and “5” representing high awareness or knowledge (Appendix A). Teacher characteristics were another contributing factor and were measured through demographic variables such as age (nominal level of measurement due to categorization), gender (nominal level of measurement), race/ethnicity (nominal), educational level (ordinal), income (ordinal), teaching experience (ratio level of measurement in years), etc. The learning environment was measured using nine question items with respect to the teachers’ agreement, with “5” meaning Strongly Agree and “1” meaning Strongly Disagree, to the statement pertaining to parental involvement and the cultural environment at school. The conceptualization of the dependent variable, perceived multicultural teaching that deals with cultural challenges was adopted from the literature and modified for this current study. The concept was measured using 26 question items. Participants indicated their perceived effectiveness from “5” Extremely Challenging to “1”, Not Challenging (Appendix B).

The researcher conducted a pilot study in which two schools participated. The purpose of the pilot study was to help identify the characteristics of participants in the same school settings of southern California, as well as the development of the measurement instrument. The researcher conducted a pilot test of all (60) questions in a Likert-type survey to measure teachers’ cultural awareness, knowledge, and multicultural teaching dealing with the cultural challenges of working with Middle Eastern students. The researcher hand-delivered 30 hard copies of the survey with consent forms to the two schools in the same district. A sample group of thirty teachers was

invited to participate during the month of October 2016. Based on the responses to the pilot surveys, several survey questions were re-worded to provide greater clarity prior to data collection during January and February 2017. A total of 27 teacher participant responses were received during one week of the survey period. The majority were female, White/Caucasian Americans in their 40s and 50s. Most of them are not of Middle Eastern descent. Over half of the teachers had received some form of cultural training. It is expected that the survey participants for this study would share similar characteristics to those found in the pilot study. Table 3.1 reports the demographic characteristics of the participants in the pilot study.

Table 3.1 *Demographics Characteristics of the Participants*

Demographics	N	%
Gender		
Male	6	22.2
Female	21	77.8
Age		
21-24	1	3.7
25-29	1	3.7
30-39	5	18.5
40-49	10	37
50-59	7	25.9
60-69	3	11.1
70+	0	0
Race/Ethnicity		
White	16	59.3
Black	3	11.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	11.1
Hispanic	4	14.8
American Indian/Native Alaskan	1	3.7
Unspecified	16	59.3
Education Attainment Level		
Associate's degree	0	0
Bachelor's degree	17	63.0
Master's degree	9	33.3
Doctorate degree	1	3.7
Other	0	0
Income		
Less than 24,999	0	0
25,000 – 49,999	7	25.9
50,000 – 74,999	12	44.4
More than 75,000	6	22.2
Cultural Training		
Yes	14	51.9
No	12	44.4
	Mean	SD
Teaching Experience (in years)	17.33	8.713

Data Collection

The data collection was estimated to start in early spring of 2017. Hard copies of the survey were used for easier distribution. The surveys were hand-delivered and distributed to teacher participants at each of the three selected school sites to ensure a higher response rate. In

the three school sites, each principal or designee participated by notifying their teachers about the survey and encouraging them to respond. Teachers were contacted by placing letters in their school mailboxes and by follow-up emails. This extra step was taken to encourage teachers to respond and hopefully, to increase the response rate. Survey distribution and data collection were executed in January and February of 2017. All teachers at all three sites were invited to participate regardless of their characteristics. The researcher hoped to receive approximately 105 teacher-completed surveys from the selected three schools. Data from all completed surveys were manually entered in Excel spreadsheets. The researcher then organized, analyzed, and classified the data after exporting the Excel spreadsheets to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis, factor analysis, and specifically multiple regression analysis were used in the current study. The analysis focused on the results that were related to the two main independent variables, which are the teacher's cultural knowledge and cultural awareness affecting the teachers' perceived multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges. Therefore, the researcher was controlling for the two other independent variables, teachers' demographics and students' learning environment. Each individual variable was tested for its reliability; specifically, the reliability test was performed for teachers' cultural knowledge and awareness, teachers' perceived multicultural teaching effectiveness, teachers' demographics, and students' learning environments. The research focused on the two main independent variables: teachers' cultural awareness and their cultural knowledge. This study tested the relationship between the dependent variable teachers' perception on multicultural teaching that deals with cultural challenges in teaching Middle Eastern students at a high school level.

In this study, the survey was distributed in a paper-and pencil format among three hundred teachers. The total completed responses collected were 194. Reporting the results was completed with the use of tables and included the reliability testing for the main constructs in this study, characteristics of the participants, and learning environment. Meanwhile, a reliability test of the survey instrument was performed in the pilot study. Data was manually entered using SPSS corresponding to each survey copy. As a result, data analysis was concluded using different methods of analysis. The result showed that the instruments for all three main concepts in the framework, namely cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and perceived multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges, were reliable (Cronbach's Alpha larger than .80 for all three sets of question items). The result also indicated that the control variable of students' learning environment was also reliable (Cronbach's Alpha equal to .70) (See Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Reliability Test for Instruments Used in the Study for the Three Main Concepts

Instruments	# of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Cultural Awareness	6	.93
Cultural Knowledge	8	.88
Perceived Multicultural Teaching dealing with cultural challenges	26	.91
Students' Learning Environment	9	.70

In addition, a simple independent-sample t-test was performed to pilot test the instrument: a comparison was made between the teachers who had cultural training and those who had not in terms of their perceptions of perceived multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges in interacting with Middle Eastern students, which was to examine if the teachers' characteristics

play a role in their perceived multicultural teaching dealing with multicultural challenges. The two groups of teachers were significantly different on three measurements of the perceived multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges working with Middle Eastern students (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Multicultural Teaching Challenges Affected by Cultural Training

	Cultural Training Received						t	df
	Yes			No				
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n		
①	4.54	.52	13	3.92	.99	12	1.98 ^a	23
②	4.43	.64	14	3.50	1.24	12	2.44*	24
③	3.86	.54	14	3.08	1.08	12	2.36*	24

^a < .10; * p < .05.

- ① Help students see cultural groups as real people.
- ② Show how mainstream Americans have adopted food, clothing, language, etc. from other cultures.
- ③ Effectively utilize ethnic resources in the community.

A factor analysis was also performed to test the unidimensionality of the survey instrument. This refers to the reliability measurement of one psychological dimension or construct (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Finally, a multiple regression analysis was used to test the research hypothesis. In the regression model, the dependent variable was the ‘perceived multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges,’ the four independent variables in the model were: teachers’ cultural awareness, teachers’ cultural knowledge, the students’ learning environment, and teachers’ demographic characteristics.

Role of Researcher

The researcher did not participate in the selection of sample subjects from the three schools, thereby, preventing any personal bias. The researcher planned to collect data in the spring of 2017 to give new teachers the opportunity to interact with Middle Eastern students for half the school year before participating in this study.

The researcher adhered to practices to avoid ethical concerns. All completed surveys were collected directly by the principal or designee and picked up by the researcher at each of the three participating schools. Therefore, teacher participants remained anonymous throughout the process. Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Participants could elect to stop at any time. Participant signatures on the consent forms provided prior to the completion of the survey confirmed this. Rights, risks and benefits of the participants were acknowledged prior to the start of the study. Therefore, all participants were fully informed of the study's procedures. Lastly, the researcher provided contact information should there have been additional questions or clarification needed regarding the survey.

Summary

The survey questions addressed were designed to answer the main research questions. The research design of quantitative approach was effective in determining the correlation between the dependent variable of multicultural teaching challenges dealing with Middle Eastern students and the independent variables of teachers' cultural awareness, teachers' cultural knowledge, teachers' demographics and learning environment.

The total number of responses was acceptable with a response rate of 57%. Therefore, the results of the study could be generalized to the specific population for the sample area of study. The instrument used was reliable with limited errors and missing data. Finally, the data collection method was successful and was conducted according to the planned timeframe.

Chapter Four: Results and Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions of the challenges related to pedagogy in teaching and interacting with Middle Eastern students. This chapter reports the results of an *ex post facto* study focusing on teachers' perceptions. In addition, factors affecting teachers' perceived challenges were analyzed in connection with the four primary constructs of this study. The focus of this section is to present the findings as they relate to each of the research questions and the theoretical framework used to guide this study. Results from the hypotheses tests are reported: The correlation between teachers' perceived challenges in multicultural teaching pedagogy and 1) their level of cultural awareness, 2) their level of cultural knowledge, 3) their demographic characteristics, and 4) their students' learning environment, specifically, the school setting and parental involvement.

This chapter is organized according to the research questions and theoretical framework of this study. Descriptive statistics were utilized for the study sample of respondents and hypothesis testing was performed to demonstrate the correlation.

Reliability and factor analysis were performed to show the validity of the survey questions and present different factors related to each of the variables in this study. Results from the regression analysis will indicate the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables of this study. Finally, a summary of findings along with various unexpected and inconsistent data will be noted along with a discussion explaining alternatives.

Research Questions

The results of this study were analyzed based on their connection to the following research questions:

1. What is the correlation between a teachers' level of cultural awareness and their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern high school students?
2. Does a relation exist between a teachers' cultural knowledge and their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students?
3. How and to what degree do students' learning environments in school and at home affect teachers' perceptions of multicultural teaching in dealing with cultural challenges in classrooms?

Descriptive Statistics

In this study, the aim was to focus on teachers in a metropolitan area in Southern California. The survey was delivered to three high schools in this area. A total of 331 paper-and-pencil surveys and invitations to participate in this study were distributed to the teachers of all three high schools. School (A) had 131 teachers, School (B) had 100, and School (C) had 100 teachers. Out of these invitations, a total of 194 completed responses were received and used in the analysis (N = 194), resulting in a 59% response rate. A majority of the respondents (53%) were female; 57% were Caucasian Americans in their 40s and 50s.

The majority of teachers were not of Middle Eastern descent. Ninety-nine percent are from the United States of America. Over 50% of the teachers had received some type of cultural professional development. Of the respondents, 47% had a Bachelor's degree and 44% a Master's degree. Approximately 45% of the teachers make an average household income of \$50,000 to \$74,999. Most of the teachers have interacted with Middle Eastern students. The respondents have, on average, 13 years of teaching experience. *Table 4.0* reports the demographic characteristics of the participants in this study.

Table 4.0 *Demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

Demographics	N	%
Gender		
Male	72	37.1
Female	122	62.9
Age		
21-24	5	2.6
25-29	9	4.6
30-39	42	21.6
40-49	69	35.6
50-59	44	22.7
60-69	25	12.9
70+	0	0
Race/Ethnicity		
White	110	56.7
Black	9	4.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	25	12.9
Hispanic	33	17.0
American Indian/Native Alaskan	11	5.7
Unspecified	6	3.1
Education Attainment Level		
Associate's degree	12	6.2
Bachelor's degree	92	47.4
Master's degree	86	44.3
Doctorate degree	2	1.0
Other	2	1.0
Income		
Less than 24,999	0	0
25,000 – 49,999	24	12.4
50,000 – 74,999	88	45.4
More than 75,000	82	42.3
Cultural Training		
Yes	118	60.8
No	75	38.7
Middle Eastern Descent		
Yes	16	8.2
No	177	91.2
Middle Eastern Interaction		
Yes	160	82.5
No	23	11.9
	Mean	SD
Teaching Experience (in years)	17.33	8.713

Concepts in the Framework

Factor analysis.

Factor analysis was used to describe the variability of the values observed to investigate the relationship and correlation between the different constructs. The purpose of this analysis was to identify different factors that were related to every concept or variable in this study (Salkind, 2014). These concepts included teachers' awareness, teachers' knowledge, teachers' multicultural teaching challenges, school setting, and parental involvement.

A factor analysis was done for each variable in this study, which included: teachers' cultural awareness, teachers' cultural knowledge, teachers' perceived multicultural teaching while interacting with Middle Eastern students, and the learning environment (school setting and parental involvement). *Table 4.1* shows that the statistical analysis resulted in a one-factor unidimensional outcome. The Eigen value and percentage of variance is also explained by the one-factor solution in the table below. The Eigen value explains a set of values of a parameter for which a differential equation has a non-zero solution and is associated with a linear system of equations (Kolenikov & Angeles, 2009). For example, the results revealed a one-factor Eigen value of 3.9 for cultural awareness (an Eigen value larger than 1.0 denotes a meaningful and significant factor). Also, the 66.6% variance explained for the concept of Cultural Awareness demonstrates the validity for a single factor solution. Similar results were obtained for other concepts and are reported in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 *Factor Analysis for the Five Variables*

Factors	Question Items	Eigenvalue	% Variance explained
Cultural Awareness	12-17	3.99	66.6%
Cultural Knowledge	18-25	4.62	57.7%
Perceived challenges in Multicultural Teaching	26-51	14.23	54.7%
Learning Environment—School Setting	52-55	2.49	62.1%
Learning Environment—Parental Involvement	56-60	2.95	58.9%

Based on the factor analysis results shown above, the proposed framework, which includes the following constructs: teachers’ cultural awareness, teachers’ cultural knowledge, teachers’ multicultural teaching challenges with Middle Eastern students, and the students’ learning environment are all valid as independent and dependent variables. This analysis has similar results to those found in the pilot study that was conducted with a small sample population before this study was conducted. The pilot study and this study both identified the same factors, those variables listed above that were suggested for the framework. In addition, the unidimensionality (one-factor solution) for each of the concepts in the framework are confirmed.

Therefore, the independent variables that included teachers’ cultural awareness, teachers’ cultural knowledge, and the learning environment together with teachers’ multicultural challenges dealing with Middle Eastern students, the dependent variable, which were specified in the framework of this study, were identified and confirmed.

Reliability Test.

The survey instrument questions for this study were field tested in a pilot study to determine validity and reliability. The survey question items were modified based on the results of the pilot study to accommodate the purpose of this study and to answer the three research questions.

The researcher utilized a Cronbach’s alpha analysis of the data to confirm the reliability and consistency of the survey instrument questions used to collect the data. In addition, the Cronbach’s alpha analysis confirmed the reliability of the survey questions in relationship to the five main constructs associated with the theoretical framework of this study, which included cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, multicultural teaching challenges dealing with Middle Eastern students, school setting, and parental involvement. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients range from 0.00 to 1.00. If the Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient equals 1.00, there is reliable internal consistency.

If the reliability coefficient is high then the level of reliability is considered acceptably high. If there is a correlation between variables, then Cronbach’s alpha should be .70 or higher. In this study, all five factors showed an acceptable level of reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha above .70.

Each concept in the study was tested for reliability. The five factors related to each set of questions were individually tested. *Table 4.2* below illustrates the results of reliability testing.

Table 4.2 Reliability Testing for the Five Concepts of the Study

Instruments	# of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Cultural Awareness	12-17	.89
Cultural Knowledge	18-25	.89
Perceived Challenges in Multicultural Teaching	26-51	.96
Learning Environment—School Setting	52-55	.79
Learning Environment—Parental Involvement	56-60	.82

Each of the five main concepts in this study had a Cronbach's alpha above 0.70. Teachers' cultural awareness represented by questions 12-17 had a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.89$. Teachers' cultural knowledge represented by questions 18-25 had a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.89$. Teachers' multicultural professional development challenges represented by questions 26-51 had a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.96$. The learning environment represented by questions 52-55 had a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.79$, and parental involvement represented by questions 56-60 had a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.82$. Therefore, based on the results of the factor analysis and the reliability test, the question items in the survey well conveyed to the constructs in the framework. The corresponding variables were then used in the subsequent regression analysis for their correlations.

Description of the Concepts

Descriptive analysis was conducted on each variable in the study after the data collection was completed. Different scale calculations were done to outline patterns that evolved from the data collected. In this study, question items 12-17 elaborated on teachers' perceived cultural awareness in relation to Middle Eastern students. In question items 18-25, teachers' perceived cultural knowledge with regard to Middle Eastern students is explained. Question items 26-51 describe how teachers perceive multicultural teaching with Middle Eastern students. Question items 52-55 explain teachers' perceptions regarding the school setting, which is the learning environment for Middle Eastern students. Finally, question items 55-60 describe teachers' perceptions of parental involvement, which is another part of the Middle Eastern students learning environment.

Thus, the two main dependent variables, cultural awareness and cultural knowledge, were included in the statistical analysis along with the independent variable, teachers' multicultural

teaching challenges with Middle Eastern students.

The survey questions were developed to answer the three research questions. The study focused on five main constructs, which included: teachers' perceived cultural awareness, teachers' perceived cultural knowledge, teachers' perceived challenges in multicultural teaching, teachers' demographics, and the learning environment. The learning environment was divided into two sections, school setting and parental involvement. In each section, the questions were grouped together, to match the specific construct of this study. The survey included 60 questions. The respondents used a 5-point Likert-type scale to answer each question with "5" being very high and "1" being very low. The first set of questions represented the teachers' demographic characteristics. The second set of questions represented the teachers' cultural awareness in five scale levels with "5" being very aware and "1" being very limited awareness. The third set of questions represented the teachers' cultural knowledge in a five scale levels with "5" being very good to "1" being very limited. The fourth set of questions represented the teachers' perceived challenges in multicultural teaching experience starting with "5" being extremely challenging to "1" being not challenging. The fifth and last set of questions represented the construct that included the learning environment, which consisted of the school setting and parental involvement. *Table 3.0* in Chapter Three describes the map for the four main constructs of the study in relation to the survey questions. Descriptive analysis of means and standard deviations are included in this section. *Table 4.3* provides the means and standard deviations for all five factors of the study.

Table 4.3 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for the Five Factors

Factor	N	M	SD
Teachers' Cultural Awareness	194	3.43	1.21
Teachers' Cultural Knowledge	194	3.47	1.24
Teachers' Perceived Challenges in Multicultural Teaching	194	3.94	1.06
Learning Environment School Setting	194	2.12	1.08
Parental Involvement	194	3.29	1.33

The results in Table 4.3 demonstrate that teachers perceived a fairly high level of challenges related to multicultural teaching dealing with Middle Eastern students (M = 3.94, SD = 1.06). The results indicate that teachers have an almost equally meaningful high level of cultural awareness (M= 3.43, SD = 1.21) and knowledge (M = 3.47, SD = 1.24). Also, the results indicate that teachers somewhat agree about the existing challenges related to the factor of parental involvement (M = 3.29, SD = 1.33). For example, the teachers highly agreed with the statement “When parents are engaged, Middle Eastern students make better progress.” However, teachers disagreed about having the appropriate support in a school setting with a (M = 2.12, SD = 1.08).

Concerning the first construct in this study, teachers' cultural awareness, Table 4.4 provides the mean scores and standard deviations of the level of cultural awareness for each of the six questionnaire items (12-17) related to teachers' perceived level of cultural awareness. The second construct in this study, teachers' cultural knowledge, Table 4.5 provides the mean scores and standard deviations of the level of cultural knowledge for each of the eight questionnaire items (18-25) related to teachers' perceived level of cultural knowledge.

The third construct, *Table 4.6* provides the mean scores and standard deviations of level of challenges for each of the 26 questionnaire items (26-51) relating to teachers' perceived levels of cultural knowledge. Finally, the descriptive data for the fourth construct, the learning environment, which includes the school setting and parental involvement, is found in Tables 4.7 and 4.8. Table 4.7 specifies the statistical information for the last construct, the school setting. It provides the mean scores and standard deviations of the level of agreement for each of the four question items (52-55) related to the level of collaboration in a school setting. Table 4.8 specifies the statistical information for the last construct, parental involvement. It provides the mean scores and standard deviations of the level of agreement for each of the five question items (53-60) related to the level of parental involvement.

Table 4.4 *Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Survey Items Relating to Teachers' Cultural Awareness*

<i>Questionnaire Item</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q12. At this point in your life, how would you rate yourself in terms of understanding how your cultural background has influenced the way that you think and act?	3.51	1.26
Q13. At this point in your life, how would you rate your understanding of the impact of the way you think and act when interacting with persons of different cultural backgrounds?	3.46	1.25
Q14. In general, how would you rate your level of awareness regarding different cultural institutions and systems?	3.33	1.20
Q15. In particular, at the present time, how would you rate yourself in terms of being able to accurately compare your own cultural perspective with that of a person from Middle Eastern cultures?	3.32	1.19
Q16. How would you rate your understanding of the concept of “relativity” in terms of the goals, objectives, and methods of working with culturally different participants?	3.44	1.19
Q17. How well do you think you could distinguish “intentional” from “accidental” communication signals in a multicultural educational setting?	3.52	1.16

Note: (5) Very Aware; (4) Aware; (3) Neutral; (2) Limited; and (1) Very Limited

Data indicated that teachers were fairly aware of how their cultural background has influenced the way they think and act ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.26$) and being able to distinguish “international” from “accidental” communication signals in a multicultural education setting ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.1$). The data also noted another meaningful result, which is teachers’ awareness of their understanding of the impact of the way they think and act when interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.25$). Furthermore, the data indicated that the teachers understand the concept of “relativity” in terms of the goals, objectives, and methods of working with culturally different participants like Middle Eastern students ($M = 3.44$, $SD =$

1.19). Respondents also indicated that they are aware of the process to accurately comparing their own cultural perspective with that of a person from a Middle Eastern culture (M = 3.32 SD = 1.19). Finally, concerning the cultural awareness factor, the teachers' level of awareness regarding different cultural institutions and systems was in the high range (M = 3.33, SD = 1.21).

Table 4.5 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Survey Items Relating to Teachers' Cultural Knowledge

<i>Questionnaire Item: Rate your understanding of the following</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q18. Multicultural Education	3.58	1.25
Q19. Ethnicity	3.54	1.26
Q20. Racism	3.72	1.22
Q21. Prejudice	3.70	1.18
Q22. Cultural Competence	3.71	1.11
Q23. Diversity	3.84	1.14
Q24. Culture in general	3.39	1.24
Q25. Particular culture – Middle Eastern culture	2.96	1.50

Note: (5) Very Good; (4) Good; (3) Average; (2) Limited; and (1) Very Limited

This section of the questionnaire related to cultural awareness, in which the high school teachers indicated high levels of understanding for diversity (M = 3.84, SD = 1.14). The next closest level of understanding that teachers noted was racism (M = 3.72, SD = 1.22). The teachers also noted a similar level of understanding about cultural competence (M = 3.71, SD = 1.11). Respondents showed a close understanding of prejudice as well (M = 3.70, SD = 1.18). Results indicated that teachers had a similar understanding about both multicultural education (M=3.58,

SD=1.25) and ethnicity (M=3.54, SD=1.24). Lastly, Teachers noted an average understanding for a particular culture like the Middle Eastern culture (M = 2.96, SD = 1.50).

Furthermore, the factor of teachers' multicultural teaching challenges interacting with Middle Eastern students at a high school level is explained in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Survey Items Relating to Levels of Teachers' Perceived Challenges in Multicultural Teaching

Questionnaire Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q26. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the contributions made by minority groups in our society.	3.94	1.132
Q27. Identify cultural biases in commercial materials used in instruction.	3.91	1.13
Q28. Develop materials appropriate for the multicultural classroom.	3.96	1.08
Q29. Identify the social forces which influences opportunities for minority group members.	3.94	1.09
Q30. Help students see cultural groups as real people.	3.84	1.14
Q31. Show how Mainstream Americans* have adopted food, clothing, language, etc. from other cultures.	3.86	1.07
Q32. Present cultural groups in our society in a manner that they will respect and collaborate.	3.85	1.12
Q33. Identify how language affects performance on certain test items.	4.02	1.00
Q34. Present diversity of cultures as a strong positive feature of American heritage.	3.95	1.16
Q35. Effectively utilize ethnic resources in the community	4.06	1.00
Q36. Identify the similarities between Anglo-American and other cultures	4.01	1.05
Q37. Adapt instructional methods to meet the needs of learners from diverse cultures.	3.96	1.02
Q38. Analyze instructional materials for potential stereotypical attitudes towards Middle Eastern students.	3.94	1.07
Q39. Provide instruction showing how prejudice affects individuals.	3.88	1.11
Q40. Plan instructional activities that reduce prejudice toward other cultural groups.	4.08	1.00
Q41. Create a learning environment that allows for alternative styles of learning.	3.95	1.05
Q42. Provide instructional activities that help Middle Eastern students develop strategies for dealing with racial confrontations.	3.95	.96
Q43. Help Middle Eastern students recognize that competence is more important than ethnic background.	4.02	1.03
Q44. Develop activities that increase self-confidence of Middle Eastern students.	4.01	1.00
Q45. Assist all students to understand the feelings of people from other ethnic groups.	3.89	1.12
Q46. Help Middle Eastern students to work through problem situations caused by stereotypical attitudes.	3.98	.98
Q47. Identify solutions to problems that may arise as the result of cultural diversity	3.94	1.03
Q48. Identify student behaviors that are indicative of negative racial attitudes.	3.98	1.03
Q49. Develop instructional methods that promote intercultural cohesiveness.	3.95	1.02
Q50. Develop instructional methods that dispel myths about ethnic groups.	3.91	1.05
Q51. Get students from different cultures to work and interact together.	3.93	1.07

Note: (5) Extremely Challenging; (4) Challenging; (3) Neutral; (2) Somewhat Challenging; and (1) Not Challenging

Note: Neutral is interpreted as "not challenging nor easy."

In Table 4.6 above, the teachers indicated a high level of challenges to planning instructional activities that reduce prejudice toward other cultural groups ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.00$). The data showed a similar level of challenges to actively utilizing ethnic resources in the community ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.00$). Also, the teachers perceived that it was fairly challenging to identify how language affects performance on certain test items ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.00$). The results indicated that it was challenging for teachers to help Middle Eastern students recognize that competence is more important than ethnic background ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.03$). The lowest indication compared with the other question items was the teachers' perceived level of challenges to helping students see cultural groups as real people ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.14$). The data showed that, in general, teachers perceived a high level of challenges in multicultural teaching pedagogy when interacting with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, specifically Middle Eastern students, with mean scores above 3.50 for all questions.

The following two tables illustrate the teachers' level of agreement with regard to the students learning environment. Table 4.7 reports the teachers' perception of administrative support and collaboration in the school setting and Table 4.8 reports the teachers' perception of parental involvement and its effect on the students' performance.

Table 4.7 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Survey Items Relating to School Setting.

<i>Questionnaire Item</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q52. Administration in my school is prepared for diverse students	2.17	1.19
Q53. I am encouraged by the school administration to welcome diverse students in my classroom	2.22	1.26
Q54. There is collaboration between staff regarding Middle Eastern students' affairs	2.01	.97
Q55. The faculty and staff understand Middle Eastern students' needs and learning habits	2.06	.89

Note: (5) Strongly Agree; (4) Agree; (3) Neutral; (2) Disagree; and (1) Strongly Disagree

The results show that teachers disagreed that the school administration encouraged them to welcome diverse students in their classrooms (M = 2.22, SD = 1.26). The teachers indicated that the administration at their school sites was not prepared for diverse students (M = 2.17, SD = 1.19). The results also indicated that the teachers disagreed that faculty and staff understand Middle Eastern students' needs and learning habits (M = 2.06, SD = .89). Lastly, the teachers stressed their disagreement about the presence of collaboration between staff regarding Middle Eastern students' affairs (M = 2.01, SD = .97).

Table 4.8 *Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Survey Items Relating to Parental Involvement.*

<i>Questionnaire Item</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q56. The parents of Middle Eastern students are involved at school	3.47	1.32
Q57. When parents are engaged, Middle Eastern students make better progress	3.59	1.34
Q58. The parents' cultural competence affects Middle Eastern students' learning at home and school.	3.40	1.28
Q59. Mothers of Middle Eastern students are more involved than their fathers	2.86	1.31
Q60. Family members of Middle Eastern students that I interact with understand my language	3.12	1.40

Note: (5) Strongly Agree; (4) Agree; (3) Neutral; (2) Disagree; and (1) Strongly Disagree

The data in the Table 4.8 above indicated that teachers agreed that when parents are engaged, Middle Eastern students make better progress (M = 3.59, SD = 1.34). The results demonstrated that teachers agree that parents of Middle Eastern students are involved at school (M = 3.47, SD = 1.32). There is agreement that parents' cultural competence affects Middle Eastern students learning at home and school (M= 3.4, SD = 1.28). The findings revealed that the teachers disagree that family members of Middle Eastern students whom they interact with understand their language (M= 3.12, SD = 1.40). Finally, teachers showed the least level of agreement about whether mothers of Middle Eastern students are more involved than fathers (M = 2.86, SD 1.31).

With regards to teacher's demographic characteristics, data indicated that young teachers between the age of 21-39 experience fewer multicultural challenges dealing with Middle Eastern students than middle-age teachers of 40-59. On the other hand, teachers with more years of

teaching experience face less multicultural teaching challenges working with Middle Eastern students at high school.

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was used to test the three-research hypotheses: H1: Teachers' cultural awareness is positively correlated with their perception of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students, holding others constant. H2: Teachers' cultural knowledge is positively correlated with their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students, holding others constant. H3: students' learning environment is correlated with teachers' perceptions of multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges in teaching and working with Middle Eastern students, holding other factors constant. This analysis focused on findings that are related to the teacher's cultural knowledge and cultural awareness. These two main independent variables affect teachers' perceptions of the challenges in multicultural teaching associated with Middle Eastern students, which is the dependent variable. Also, the researcher controlled for other factors, namely, teachers' demographics and students' learning environment.

The three research hypotheses were tested in the same multiple regression model. Table 4.9 only lists the specific categorization of the demographic variables used in the regression analysis. Table 4.10 indicates the results.

The dependent variable is the perceived multicultural teaching challenges working with Middle Eastern students. The independent variables included the four constructs of teachers' cultural awareness, teachers' cultural knowledge, and students' learning environment (two variables: school setting and parental involvement). These variables are measured by standardized scores obtained through the factor analysis; and teachers' demographic characteristics measured

by nine categorical variables: gender, age, race/ethnicity, country of origin, education level, household income, cultural training, and interaction with Middle Eastern students. In addition, the one continuous variable, which is the number of years of teaching experience. The specific categorization of the demographic variables is listed in Table 4.9 and the result of the regression analysis is reported in Table 4.10.

Table 4.9 Categorization of the Demographic Variables Used in the Regression Analysis

Teacher Demographics	Categorization	Variables used in the model
Gender	Male Female Other (none identified)	A variable ‘Male’ is used; Female is the omitted category
Age	Young (21-39) Mid-age (40-59) Elder (60+)	Two variables ‘Young’ and ‘Elder’ are used; Mid-age is the omitted category
Race/ethnicity	Caucasian American Non-White	A variable ‘Caucasian American’ is used; the others are omitted in the model.
Country of origin	U.S.A. # of foreign countries	A variable ‘USA’ is used; the others are omitted in the model
Household income	High-income (>\$50K) Mid- and low-income (<\$50K)	A variable ‘High-income’ is used; mid- and low-income are the omitted categories.
Education attainment level	College degree (BA) Post-bachelor degree (MA+)	A variable ‘College’ is used; post-bachelor is the omitted category.
Cultural competence training	Had training Had no training	A variable ‘Cultural training’ is used; had no training is the omitted category.
Interaction with Middle Eastern students	Had interaction Had no interaction	A variable of ‘ME student interaction’ is used; had no interaction is the omitted category.
Teachers’ teaching experience	Years in teaching	Number of years in teaching is a continuous variable in the model.

Table 4.10 *Regression Analysis Summary of Teachers' Perceived Challenges in Multicultural Teaching Pedagogy (N=194)*

Variable	Parameter Estimate (B)	P
Cultural awareness	-.01	
Cultural knowledge	-.01	
School setting	-.40***	.000
Parental involvement	.11	.100
Male	.07	
Young	-.37*	.033
Elder	.23	
Caucasian American	.19	
USA	-.06	
High-income	-.22	
College	.21	
Cultural training	-.02	
ME student interaction	-.10	
Teaching Experience	-.04**	.003
Constant	.71	
R ²	.261	
F	4.50***	

Dependent Variable: Regression Factor Score (1 for 1 analysis)

Level of Significance: * < 0.05 ** < 0.01 *** < 0.001

The significance level (alpha or α) is the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true. For example, a significance level of 0.05, which is commonly used as α level in social sciences, indicates a 5% risk of concluding that a correlation exists when there is no actual correlation. P-values are the probability of obtaining an effect at least as extreme as the one in the sample data, assuming the truth of the null hypothesis. When a P value is less than or equal to the significance (α) level, the null hypothesis should be rejected.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the correlation between some characteristics compared to the others. The compared characteristics are: male and other genders, Caucasian and other ethnicities, teachers from the U.S. and from other countries, teachers' level of education as being graduates and those who have post-graduate degrees, teachers with cultural competency training versus those without, and teachers who interacted with Middle Eastern students and teachers who did not. In addition, the age category was defined by middle-age (40-59) compared to young teachers (21-39) and older (60-69). The high income (\$50,000 and above) compared to other levels of income (below \$50,000). Table 4.10 shows the significance values for the correlation of variables.

The results shown in Table 4.10 are statistically significant ($F=4.5$, $p < .000$), which means that the conceptual model is a good fit. The group of independent variables in this model explains 26% of the variance in teachers' perception of challenges in multicultural teaching pedagogy ($R^2 = .26$).

Regarding the effect of individual independent variables on the dependent variable, three variables were significant predictors, and one variable approached significance within the model. After controlling for other factors, school setting shows a significant negative correlation with the dependent variable, multicultural teaching challenges dealing with Middle Eastern students ($B = -$

.40, $p < .000$), indicating that a positive school setting (e.g., more administrative support) is associated with fewer perceived challenges in multicultural teaching. The independent variable discussed here is another learning-environment-related variable, namely, parental involvement, which approaches the statistical significance, a minor significance of ($B = .11$, $p = .10$), indicating that more parental involvement is associated with a higher level of perceived challenges in multicultural teaching.

With respect to teachers' demographic characteristics, age is a significant predictor. The younger teachers perceived a lower level of challenges in multicultural teaching than did their middle-aged counterparts ($B = -.37$, $p = .033$). Teachers' teaching experience also showed a significant negative association with the dependent variable multicultural teaching challenges dealing with Middle Eastern students ($B = -.04$, $p = .003$), indicating that the longer they have been teaching, the lower level of challenges in multicultural teaching they perceived.

Summary

This chapter presented findings related to teachers' perceptions about multicultural teaching challenges dealing with Middle Eastern students in the state of California. In this chapter, the researcher addressed the three research questions related to the study investigating teachers' indication of their level of awareness, level of knowledge, multicultural teaching challenges, and learning environment.

In addition, the findings addressed the theoretical framework related to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory that framed the main concepts in this study. The survey that was used as a data collection instrument measured the factors for each of the five main constructs of the study. The results indicated one factor for each of the following; teachers' cultural awareness, teachers' cultural knowledge, teachers' multicultural teaching challenges, and

learning environment.

Regarding the three main hypotheses of this study, the results did not support two of the hypotheses dealing with teachers' cultural awareness and teachers' cultural knowledge. Specifically, there is no significant relationship between teachers' perceived challenges in multicultural teaching pedagogy in dealing with Middle Eastern students and their cultural awareness or their cultural knowledge, holding others constant. On the other hand, the results have shown a significant relationship between some aspects of teachers' demographics and their multicultural teaching challenges. In addition, results indicated a significant correlation between learning environment and teachers' multicultural teaching challenges dealing with Middle Eastern students.

Regarding teachers' demographics, specifically their teaching experience, the data indicated that the more the teachers' years of experience, the fewer multicultural teaching challenges they have dealing with Middle Eastern students. When looking at age, the data indicated that the younger the teachers are the fewer multicultural teaching challenges they experience interacting with Middle Eastern students.

Finally, in relation with the independent variable of learning environment, the data showed that the level of multicultural teaching challenges is higher when the parents are more involved in their children's learning. Furthermore, if there is a positive school setting with administrative support, then teachers are more likely to experience fewer challenges with multicultural teaching dealing with Middle Eastern students.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the current study, which includes an overview of the problem, statement of the purpose, research questions, methodology, and summary of the major findings. Following the introduction, the discussion section provides an analysis of the findings. After the analysis section are the implications for policy and practice, followed by suggestions for future research. The conclusion ends this chapter.

Statement of the Problem

This study examined the issues associated with high school teachers' multicultural teaching pedagogy used with Middle Eastern students and how it might have related to the teachers' lack of cultural awareness and cultural knowledge, as well as other demographic and environmental factors.

This research is timely and important given that the student populations in U.S. public schools are continuing to grow in diversity with the numbers of Middle Eastern students continuing to increase at a rapid rate. Furthermore, this research addressed different concepts related to the school environment and those teachers' characteristics that affected teachers' multicultural teaching with the students coming from the Middle East.

Statement of the Purpose

Teachers have their own perceptions regarding the cultural challenges associated with Middle Eastern students. Therefore, it helps researchers and school administrators understand those challenges in multicultural pedagogy when working with Middle Eastern students, and the factors that relate to those challenges. Specifically, it was important to gain in-depth information about the relationship between teachers' cultural awareness and knowledge and their challenges in multicultural pedagogy. The results of this study should be beneficial for school administration,

school districts, and other stakeholders to improve the cultural knowledge of teachers and to reduce the different difficulties they experience dealing with Middle Eastern students.

Research Questions

The current study was designed to answer the following three research questions:

1. What is the correlation between teachers' level of cultural awareness and their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern high school students?
2. Does a relationship exist between teachers' cultural knowledge and their perceptions of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students?
3. How and to what degree do students' learning environments in school and at home affect teachers' perceptions of multicultural teaching in dealing with cultural challenges in classrooms?

Methodology

This study used a quantitative design approach to answer the research questions. The researcher used a survey as a data collection instrument. The data was collected from three different high schools with a high number of Middle Eastern students. Teachers were the main participants in the study. This survey instrument included 11 demographic questions and 49 questions, which addressed the five remaining constructs that framed this research study. Question items were answered on a five-point, Likert-type scale from 1-5 that indicated the different levels for each section representing each of the five main components or constructs of the study. The teachers' perceived cultural awareness was represented by questions 12-17 and used a scale ranging from "5" representing very aware to "1" representing very limited awareness.

For questions 18-25, representing cultural knowledge, the scale was defined as “5” representing very good knowledge to “1” representing very limited knowledge. The teachers’ perceived multicultural challenges were examined in questions 26-51, with the scale defined as “5” representing extremely challenging and “1” representing not challenging.

For the learning environment construct, questions were divided into two sections; Questions 52-55 represented the school setting and were measured using different teacher agreement levels that ranged from “5” strongly agree to “1” strongly disagree. The school setting section included questions that represented the administrations’ preparation for dealing with diverse students from the Middle East and staff collaboration to better meet Middle Eastern students’ learning needs. Parental involvement was measured in the second section of the students’ learning environment. The responses to questions 56-60, indicated teachers’ level of agreement regarding the role of parental involvement and collaboration with Middle Eastern students’ family members. The level of agreement in the parental involvement questionnaire section was measured with a scale of “5” representing strongly agree to “1” representing strongly disagree.

All the teachers at the three selected high schools received an invitation to participate in this study. Teachers who had agreed to participate received a hard copy of the survey, which was distributed and collected by the principal of each site. The researcher anticipated collecting as many responses as possible. The surveys were distributed to 331 teachers at the three high schools; 194 teachers completed the survey. The surveys were distributed and collected between the months of January and February 2017. The participants were asked to complete the hard copy of the survey and return it to the principal’s office for collection. The researcher collected the completed surveys at the end of February 2017.

Descriptive statistics were utilized as a first step to analyze the collected data and to determine various scales to categorize patterns that evolved from the data collection process. The second step, a factor analysis of the teachers' responses related to their level of cultural awareness, knowledge, and multicultural teaching challenges (items 12-51) was performed to identify the dimensions of factors that might have emerged and to determine the validity of the variables of this study. The third step, which included reliability testing, was conducted and Cronbach's alpha was determined to confirm the reliability and consistency of questions used in the instrument in relation to the five main constructs associated with the theoretical framework of the study. Thus, each construct in the study was included and tested to confirm its reliability. The last step included a multiple regression analysis, which was completed to test the three research hypotheses in this study and to infer the significance levels associated with the main variables to look for correlations among the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings in relation to the study's research questions.

Research Question #1: What is the correlation between teachers' level of cultural awareness and their perception of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern high school students?

To determine the findings for this research question, which explores the correlation between teachers' level of cultural awareness and their perception of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern high school students, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The multiple regression analysis was focused on the correlation between the teachers' level of cultural awareness and their cultural challenges dealing with Middle Eastern students when controlling for other variables.

The regression analysis revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between the teachers' level of cultural awareness and their perception of cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern high school students. The research did not find that teachers' perceived level of cultural challenges would change if they were more culturally aware of Middle Eastern students.

Although teachers have high levels of cultural awareness, the data still indicated that teachers perceived high levels of cultural challenges working with Middle Eastern students. A possible explanation for this result is that teachers could have indicated their cultural awareness in general and did not relate specifically to the Middle Eastern students' cultures. Thus, teachers understand and are aware that different cultures exist, each with specific beliefs and behaviors, but they are not specifically aware of the Middle Eastern cultural beliefs and behaviors or of any substantial differences that may characterize the Middle Eastern culture.

Teachers' awareness is complex; the definition of awareness could be vague to many participants. Prior research has found teachers unaware of and nonresponsive to how culture may impact student learning (Bradfield-Kreider, 2001; Dieker, Voltz, & Epanchin, 2002; Nierman, Zeichner, & Hobbel, 2002).

Research Question #2: Does a relation exist between a teachers' cultural knowledge and their perception of dealing with cultural challenges in working with Middle Eastern students?

In this study, the descriptive analysis indicated that teachers perceive moderately high levels of challenges regarding multicultural teaching dealing with Middle Eastern students. The data analysis for the teachers' cultural knowledge indicated mean scores as 3.47 and standard deviations of 1.24, which means that teachers have high perceived levels of cultural knowledge in

relation to multicultural teaching challenges dealing with Middle Eastern high school students. This suggests that the teachers' cultural knowledge is high, but it does not have a statistically significant positive or negative relationship with the teachers' multicultural teaching challenges in working with Middle Eastern students. Although the findings do not indicate a relationship between the prior cultural knowledge of teachers and their perceived challenges in working with Middle Eastern students, the results showed that the teachers understand the importance of obtaining cultural knowledge about their students. The high level of cultural knowledge of teachers indicated their acknowledgment and interest in obtaining such cultural information about the diverse students they have in classrooms.

Nevertheless, the teachers perceived multicultural challenges working with Middle Eastern students might not reveal different aspects or show a full picture of students' challenges and struggles in classrooms. In other words, teachers may have limited perceptions about all the challenges in dealing with this specific ethnic group of students, while students do not reflect or communicate on the challenges they encountered with teachers. Students could experience diverse cultural styles, such as teaching pedagogies, language deficiency, social disconnection, and differences in classroom environment (Ogbu, 2003). These and similar factors, such as being unable to share their struggles, work with their classmates, or being uncomfortable in classrooms may prevent Middle Eastern students from expressing their feelings and reporting their discomfort to their teachers. Thus, teachers might think positively that students are learning and doing well while they are not aware of the negative cultural struggles that their students might be facing. Therefore, it would have been beneficial to include other opinions from individuals in the students' academic learning environment like the parents and the students themselves to identify the related challenges as well in this study.

The general knowledge of different cultures is limited in relating directly to cultural information about the Middle Eastern population. The teachers' self-reporting on cultural knowledge may not have been accurate enough to reflect on their knowledge of Middle Eastern culture specifically. The majority of the teachers that participated in this study were Caucasians. Therefore, those teachers from different cultures may not relate directly to the cultures of Middle Eastern students. According to (Lewis, 2010), the diversity in teachers could be a result of them sharing a few cultural concepts or having unlike perspectives about other cultures. The researcher believes that teachers might perceive of themselves as having an understanding of diversity in the classroom; however, they may not understand the specifics of and unique nature of the culture of Middle Eastern students.

Another reason the teachers perceive a moderately high level of challenges working with Middle Eastern students may be because of the large number of students in classrooms today. Class sizes usually impact the instructional practices and use of time. The teachers cannot provide students with their individual instructional needs due to the lack of time, which does not allow teachers to acknowledge the students' individual challenges and report them accurately. It is important for teachers to meet students' specific needs to encourage their positive behaviors and manners (Osterman, 2000). Inequity in classrooms is escalating because teachers cannot address individual students' needs nor provide them with specific accommodations to meet their required learning needs. The gap in the disparity of cultural dissimilarities between teachers and students is increasing. This might lower the teachers' ability to properly practice effective instruction and interaction with diverse students and prevent challenges and confusion (Causey, et al., 2000).

Research Question #3: How and to what degree does a students' learning environment in school and at home affect teachers' perceptions of multicultural teaching in dealing with cultural challenges in classrooms?

This research question representing the students' learning environment includes two main sections; 1) teachers' characteristics, school setting, and 2) parental involvement. The teachers' characteristics were investigated in this study using teachers' gender, age, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, educational level, socioeconomic status represented by income, prior cultural competency training, and interaction with Middle Eastern students. On the other hand, the school setting was mainly focused on the administration's role and staff collaboration in relation to preparation and providing a proper educational environment for those students from the Middle East. A final construct representing the learning environment measured was parental involvement in supporting their children at school.

Prior research prioritized the characteristics of teachers and their demographics in various theoretical frameworks associated with the improvement of their cultural teaching competency. These characteristics of teachers are major components affecting their cultural knowledge and interaction with diverse students (Sargent, Sedlak, & Martsolf, 2005).

Research has indicated that teachers' characteristics play a role in shaping the teachers' attitudes and behaviors towards diverse students. For example, teachers' years of experience or age affect their perceived knowledge where they interact differently in working with certain cultures and ethnicities (Flores & Smith, 2009). In the current study, the regression analysis revealed that years of experience of teachers have a significant negative association with the overall perceived multicultural teaching challenges in working with Middle Eastern students. Accordingly, teachers who have been teaching for more years face less multicultural teaching

challenges working with Middle Eastern students. This would suggest that it is less challenging for veteran teachers to interact with this type of diverse student population as they have set their norms for their classrooms where they rely on their teaching experiences to handle different struggles related to the diversity of the student population. Another alternative explanation may be that the new teachers with less teaching experience have not encountered such diversity in classrooms and do not have the experience to settle conflicts related to Middle Eastern cultures or any other cultures. Those teachers with more years of teaching experience might have shared with other teachers or mentors different challenges of Middle Eastern students during their career. This exchange of ideas, understanding of diverse student populations, and experiences enrich teachers' abilities to deal with diverse students. In either case, the data indicate that more experienced teachers will be less likely to experience challenges dealing with Middle Eastern students. Additional research needs to be performed to identify additional reasons and explanations behind the positive affect between the years of teaching experience and the challenges that teachers encounter working with Middle Eastern students.

The regression analyses revealed another finding of this research: younger teachers perceive fewer multicultural challenges working with Middle Eastern high school students than their mid-age counterparts. The group of young teachers was categorized in the analysis as between the ages of 21-39 years old and middle-age teachers of 40-59. The results indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between the teachers' age and their perceived multicultural teaching challenges dealing with Middle Eastern students. The teachers might perceive fewer multicultural challenges due to their connection with social media or other latest resources where they could gain additional information about Middle Eastern population. Gaining additional cultural understanding might reduce the challenges with regards to decision-making or

interactions with this diverse group. In addition, those young teachers embrace more diversity in classrooms while getting their teaching credentials, unlike veteran teachers who might have not experienced coping with such diversity in their study or work environment until recently with the growth in immigration and diversity in public school student demographics.

It may be easier for a young group of teachers to adapt to a new diverse environment and cope with challenges related to a Middle Eastern student population than older teachers who feel settled and accustomed to their traditional teaching environment. The younger generation of teachers usually adapt and interact better with each other in making a change in the process to use everyone's skills and techniques to create a strong culture and a positive work climate (Senge, 2008). Veteran teachers might be more resistant to necessary changes needed to implement new teaching strategies to support the learning needs of Middle Eastern students as well as reduce the challenges in dealing with this population.

Young teachers are usually inspired to share their personal values and beliefs and are more flexible to change and innovations. They are more open to risk taking and creativity, leaving the fear of conflict out of their minds (Lencioni, 2002). On the other hand, veteran teachers may be more resistant to change and may prefer to stay in their comfort zone denying the existence and growth of the Middle Eastern student population in their classrooms.

Furthermore, the result indicated that teachers with more years of teaching experience perceive less multicultural teaching challenges with Middle Eastern students in high school. These experiences could include the ability to overcome conflicts in classrooms and make rational decisions in avoiding struggles that might arise during their teaching. A teachers' age does not necessarily mean that the teacher has a better ability to overcome challenges; however, their experience is a determining factor in their ability to do so.

The result showed a significant negative correlation between the factor of school setting and teachers' perceptions of multicultural teaching challenges dealing with Middle Eastern students after controlling for other factors. ($B = -.40, p < .000$). The analysis indicated that if the administration provides a positive school setting atmosphere for Middle Eastern students, the fewer challenges teachers will have working with these students. This means if the school administration works effectively with teachers to provide support and helps them acquire an understanding of essential Middle Eastern students' needs, the challenges of working with these students will be reduced. The results showed a disagreement from teachers with regard to collaboration with the school administration in welcoming diverse students in their classrooms. This means that school administration may not adequately support and prepare teachers to work with Middle Eastern students in their classrooms. Research has indicated that some of these students arrive in the United States with numerous behavioral, psychological, and academic difficulties. These difficulties could be a result of social, political or school system conflicts in their country of origin. A set of effective planned strategies for students to better cope in their new educational environment could support their learning needs and increase their achievement (Nieto, 1992). In addition, teachers also agreed that their school sites were not prepared to accommodate the diversity in students. This may be due to the Common Core instructional tools and assessments that are not flexible and difficult to accommodate to these diverse students' individual needs. Furthermore, the findings also indicated the teachers' disagreement on the question regarding faculty's and staff's understanding about Middle Eastern students' learning behaviors and needs. It may be difficult to understand specific needs of the Middle Eastern student population if the cultural competency training for educators is too general and does not include specifics about each ethnic group.

Lastly, the results indicated that teachers lacked proper collaboration efforts with their peers to support Middle Eastern students' affairs. The absence of collaborative teamwork to support this problem could be due to the lack of teachers' time, in-depth knowledge, and large class sizes. Consequently, the teachers cannot participate in additional cultural training or share their experiences, nor learn from each other. It is important to build a strong foundation of unity between administration and staff where they can enrich their collaboration and teamwork efforts to accomplish success in providing an equal school environment for all students regardless of their backgrounds (Senge, 2008).

Another students' learning environmental factor in this study was parental involvement. The result revealed that there was a near statistically significant positive relationship between parental involvement and teachers' multicultural teaching challenges working with Middle Eastern students ($B = .11$, $p = .10$). It is worth discussing the result given that this significance level was obtained through a relatively small sample of participants. The data analysis states that teachers agreed that if parents were more involved at school, then the teachers would perceive higher levels of multicultural teaching challenges working with Middle Eastern students ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.33$). The reason behind this positive correlation between the two variables could be because of the ineffective interaction between parents and teachers. The parents might face difficulties communicating with their children's teachers due to their poor English language proficiency. Another reason might be that many parents do not understand the school system and instructional methods used in America so they cannot discuss detailed issues with regard to their children's grade or performance. One last reason could relate to parent/teacher cultural differences, which might affect the types of positive or negative interactions between each. This means that parents could, in some cases, feel that their involvement is not welcomed by the

school, which might be as a consequence of their traditions. Middle Eastern parents tend to involve more hospitality in treating people in a less formal way. Therefore, they may expect that same behavior from school staff and teachers in return to be hospitable towards them and use the same less formal way of interaction. In addition, teachers perceive more challenges dealing with parents who lack English-language proficiency or proper knowledge about the U.S. school system, or perceive cultural differences in hospitality and interaction behaviors.

Nevertheless, the results in this study indicated that teachers agreed that when parents are engaged, Middle Eastern students make better progress. This means that teachers think it is necessary for parents to get involved to improve students' achievement. Although most teachers agreed that Middle Eastern students' parents are involved in their children's education ($M=3.47$), they also agreed that those involved parents do not understand the teachers' language. This indication could result in further problems that could impact the effectiveness of school/home interactions and lower students' performance. The result also indicated that teachers agreed that parent's cultural competence affects Middle Eastern students' learning at home and school. Therefore, parents are also encouraged to develop their cultural competence here in America to adapt and blend in with other school and community members to help their children improve.

Implications and Conclusions

This study developed a multicultural teaching survey instrument that was validated for internal reliability and consistency that was used to investigate challenges in multicultural pedagogy in working with diverse ethnic groups. Educators will or should continue to investigate innovative ways to support students' achievement by implementing effective strategies in cultural competency development, to provide the field of education with multicultural advocates and skilled professionals to deal with such diverse populations.

It is important to identify effective practices to lower the level of multicultural teaching challenges that teachers experience when working with Middle Eastern students. Educators are more likely to succeed in improving the quality of administrative staff and teachers that can support Middle Eastern students if they improve students' learning environment. Improving the learning environment may be accomplished by promoting effective ways for teachers to collaborate by sharing their experiences and knowledge with each other in relation to Middle Eastern students. In addition, teachers should receive the support and preparation from their administration to welcome Middle Eastern students in their classrooms and accommodate their specific learning needs. It is recommended that in-service training, consultants, team teaching, and specific coursework materials be provided as a guide to teachers to accommodate the specific needs of Middle Eastern students.

It is possible to create change and implement cultural support policies and strategies through educational entrepreneurs who strive to find new and innovative ways to accommodate students from diverse backgrounds (Donnellon, Ollila, & Middleton 2014). Those entrepreneurs will reflect on the associated cultural challenges related to Middle Eastern students and other ethnicities, as they will work on promoting innovative ways to possibly solve conflicts and provide equality among all students in the public schools.

The focus of this study was on the multicultural teaching challenges that teachers perceive working with Middle Eastern students and different factors that increase or decrease these challenges. School districts and administration should consider developing detailed training on the different cultural aspects regarding the different ethnic groups that live in the community surrounding the school or area. Since data indicated that teachers needed the additional support from administration and colleagues, training through mentors and sharing experiences may help

teachers understand the cultural challenges faced by other staff members. The exchange of ideas and stories could help teachers develop more expertise in handling cultural challenges. It is recommended that multicultural education for teachers include the theory and practical side of teaching a diverse student population so they can gain the confidence to address multicultural issues (Barry & Lechner, 1995).

The results of this study showed minor statistical significance with relation to parental involvement. Therefore, it is important to include parents in their children's learning. Parents can help teachers understand students' learning difficulties and give them a background on the differences in teaching pedagogy between their country of origin and America. Introducing and creating new teaching strategies will support efficient learning for diverse students. An effective teaching strategy is for teachers to build their instruction based on what the students already know and what they need to learn. The students are more interested in knowledge they can relate to and benefit from, rather than engaging in content they do not appreciate or value. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to embrace the students' cultural backgrounds for students to effectively learn (Quinton, 2013).

Teachers' backgrounds and demographic characteristics can change their attitudes towards diversity. For example, veteran teachers with more years of experience can determine what strategy is more effective in interacting with immigrant students from different races, ethnicities and cultures. Many teachers develop a variety of instructional methods in their classrooms to help students realize the similarities between themselves and their classmates despite their different cultural backgrounds (Panebianco, 2014).

In addition, Middle Eastern parents could utilize some training and development themselves about American culture and trends. The cultural improvement of parents will help

them understand different aspects and cultural issues that are practiced in the American society so they can support their children in their new environment. The parents can develop their cultural understanding through interaction with community and school members. Furthermore, parents should be educated about the school system here in the United States. It would be valuable for those Middle Eastern parents to be introduced to details related to educational policies, students' and parents' rights, instructional methods and techniques, and assessment and evaluation procedures. The more that parents are educated with detailed information related to their children's' learning, the more they can help their children improve their grades and achieve success.

Therefore, the school administration and district personnel should provide workshops and events to invite parents to participate and share their cultures, background and beliefs with others from different ethnicity groups.

Finally, it is recommended that teachers and administrative staff be provided with the necessary cultural knowledge about different ethnic groups that reside in their community and are enrolled in their school location. Cultural competency training, not just a general course, should include specific ideas and suggestions to support the diverse students' needs and help to accommodate their learning requirements. Furthermore, the parental involvement role should be further investigated to illustrate the different areas where teachers and parents could collaborate efficiently to help Middle Eastern students adapt to school in America.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study focused on teachers' self-reporting of their perceptions in relation to all constructs of the study. The results might have been different if another sample was used to reflect on teachers' cultural awareness or knowledge. The teachers might think they are fully

aware and have cultural knowledge about Middle Eastern students, when they actually do not have the specific awareness or knowledge about the cultural trends, beliefs, or behaviors related specifically to Middle Eastern students. Thus, including more in-depth questions in data collection about different cultural aspects could have been asked to clarify and confirm the teachers' cultural knowledge. Teachers might assume that the culture of Middle Eastern students is similar to other cultures they are familiar with and therefore consider that the information they have is applicable towards working with Middle Eastern students, which is not always the case, because there are some differences between behaviors of Middle Easterners and students from other ethnic groups.

This research invited teachers to participate in the study and did not include other educators, such as principals, administration staff, parents and students. Perceptions and reflections from individuals in the field of education might have been beneficial as broader and more comprehensive information on this topic might be obtained. Future research may include perceptions of parents, students, administration, and school psychologists to reflect on the multicultural teaching challenges.

Teachers' characteristics were included in the analysis of this study as a series of independent variables. For example, there was a significant relationship between teachers' age and their perception of cultural challenges when working with Middle Eastern students. However, reasons behind this significance were not investigated. Therefore, it is recommended that future research investigate different age groups of teachers and identify the reasons associated with the cause and effect relationship between the age and level of cultural challenges. This may identify why these challenges are lower when the interactions are related to younger teachers.

Most teachers agreed that the school administration and the school setting do not positively support decreasing multicultural teaching challenges with Middle Eastern students. Further studies could identify key differences that contribute to this disagreement and provide data to clarify specific ideas for administration to collaborate efficiently and promote a more appropriate school environment for the diverse students to learn and succeed. In addition, it would be beneficial to get more involvement of the community's perspectives and to identify their level of agreement or disagreement with regard to cultural challenges that Middle Eastern students experience.

The focus of this research was to investigate the multicultural challenges that teachers and students experience dealing with each other in classrooms. A qualitative study that examines behaviors and performance of both populations to describe the relationship they have with one another would be valuable. This additional research investigation could give in-depth information with details on the nature of collaboration and interaction between the teachers and students.

Conclusion

This research study was conducted to answer research questions on how teachers' cultural awareness, knowledge, and the learning environment relate to their level of multicultural teaching when working with Middle Eastern high school students. This research study was investigated with the use of two theoretical frameworks, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory, to connect them to the five dependent variables and one independent variable. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is related to teachers' cultural awareness and knowledge in implementing teaching strategies, methods, and techniques. This type of culturally differentiated instruction would support Middle Eastern students' needs and help them acclimate to their new learning environment. On the other hand, Critical Race Theory would allow educators to provide an

equitable learning environment to all students from diverse ethnic groups and to acknowledge their learning and educational rights. It is essential to provide equity to Middle Eastern students among other student populations who need the assurance and encouragement to increase their achievement and perform better in the public school system.

This study found that young teachers compared to mid-age teachers experience less multicultural challenges working with Middle Eastern students. Teachers with more years of teaching experiences are more likely to experience multicultural challenges with these students. In addition, the teachers did not feel that they received the proper support from the school administration or staff members to support Middle Eastern students to adapt to their new school environment. Therefore, the school environment at present is not set up to accommodate the needs of this specific student population. Finally, parental involvement must be included in the Middle Eastern students' learning process where engagement of parents and collaboration of teachers are required to promote success for Middle Easterners.

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Appendix A

California State University, Northridge

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT Cultural Challenges in Classrooms: An Investigation of High School Teachers'

Interactions with Middle Eastern Students

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Sahar Albannai as part of the requirements for the Ed.D. Degree, in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM

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PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to explore how high-school teachers perceive their multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges in working with culturally diverse students, particularly the Middle Eastern students an ethnic group who have received limited research attention.

PARTICIPANTS

Inclusion Requirements

You are eligible to participate in this study if you teach in a high school in California.

Time Commitment

This study will involve approximately 30 minutes of your time over the course of the two weeks when the survey is distributed.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures will occur: In a survey, which is available in paper-and-pencil format, you will respond to some questions about your perception of your cultural awareness and knowledge, your perceived multicultural teaching dealing with cultural challenges in working with students, as well as your demographic characteristics.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include: social pressure to participate in this study because of your cultural background and psychological discomfort discussing cultural and teaching issues. To reduce these potential risks, the project procedures ensure the highest confidentiality. This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

BENEFITS

Subject Benefits

You may benefit from participating in this study by recalling effective teaching methods in working with culturally diverse students and reflecting your cultural awareness and knowledge.

Benefits to Others or Society

Based on this study's findings, we expect to encourage increased cultural awareness and knowledge among high school students when teaching and working with culturally diverse students, particularly the Middle Eastern students. We further expect to encourage the teachers to develop effective multicultural teaching methods and strategies to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student population.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION

The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT

Costs

There is no cost to you for participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Subject Identifiable Data

All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed and replaced with a code. A list linking the code and your identifiable information will be kept separate from the research data.

Data Storage

All research data will be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected and has encryption software.

Data Access

The researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

Data Retention

The researchers intend to keep the research data until the research is published and/or presented and then it will be destroyed.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with California State University, Northridge.

Appendix B
Cultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Multicultural teaching Survey

Teacher information

1. My gender is M F Other
2. My age is between: (check one) 21-24 25 – 29
 30 – 39 40 – 49 50 – 59
 60 – 69 70+
3. I identify with which race/ethnicity: (check one)
 White Black
 Asian/Pacific Islander Hispanic
 American Indian/Native Alaskan Unspecified
4. Are you a Middle Eastern descent?
 Yes No
5. What is your country origin? _____
6. I have been teaching the current grade level for _____ years.
7. I have been teaching for a total of _____ years.
8. My educational background is: (Check highest level of completion)
 Associate's degree Bachelor's degree
 Master's degree Doctorate degree
 Other (Please specify) _____
9. What is your average yearly household income?
 Less than 24,999 25,000 – 49,99
 50,000 – 74,999 More than 75,000
10. I have received some cultural competency training. Yes No
11. Have you interacted with Middle Eastern students in your school or classroom? Yes
 No I don't know

Below you will find a list of statements and/or questions about a variety of issues related to

multicultural teaching and challenge course facilitators. Please read each statement/question carefully. From the available choices, mark the response that best fits your reaction to each statement/question.

	Culture Awareness	5 Very Aware	4 Aware	3 Neutral	2 Limited	1 Very Limited			
12-	At this point in your life, how would you rate yourself in terms of understanding how your cultural background has influenced the way that you think and act?				5	4	3	2	1
13-	At this point in your life, how would you rate your understanding of the impact of the way you think and act when interacting with persons of different cultural backgrounds?				5	4	3	2	1
14-	In general, how would you rate your level of awareness regarding different cultural institutions and systems?				5	4	3	2	1
15-	In particular, at the present time, how would you rate yourself in terms of being able to accurately compare your own cultural perspective with that of a person from Middle Eastern cultures?				5	4	3	2	1
16-	How would you rate your understanding of the concept of “relativity” in terms of the goals, objectives, and methods of working with culturally different participants?				5	4	3	2	1
17-	How well do you think you could distinguish “intentional” from “accidental” communication signals in a multicultural educational setting?				5	4	3	2	1
	Cultural Knowledge How would you rate your understanding of the following:	5 Very Good	4 Good	3 Average	2 Limited	1 Very Limited			
18-	Multicultural Education				5	4	3	2	1
19-	Ethnicity				5	4	3	2	1
20-	Racism				5	4	3	2	1
21-	Prejudice				5	4	3	2	1
22-	Cultural Competence				5	4	3	2	1

23	Diversity	5	4	3	2	1
24	Culture in general	5	4	3	2	1
25	Particular culture—Middle Eastern culture	5	4	3	2	1

Note: Adopted from Lange, E. H. (2011). *Perceived cultural competence levels among challenge course facilitators*. University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Cultural Teaching Scale						
5 Extremely Challenging 4 Challenging 3 Neutral 2 somewhat Challenging 1 Not Challenging						
	The items listed below reflect content and activities that are important for teaching high-school students from diverse cultural backgrounds, with a particular interest in Middle Eastern descents. Please indicate by circling a number that corresponds to how do you perceive challenges dealing with multicultural teaching methods and strategies with respect to each statement.	5	4	3	2	1
26-	Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the contributions made by minority groups in our society.	5	4	3	2	1
27-	Identify cultural biases in commercial materials used in instruction.	5	4	3	2	1
28-	Develop materials appropriate for the multicultural classroom.	5	4	3	2	1
29-	Identify the social forces which influences opportunities for minority group members.	5	4	3	2	1
30-	Help students see cultural groups as real people.	5	4	3	2	1

31-	Show how Mainstream Americans* have adopted food, clothing, language, etc. from other cultures.	5	4	3	2	1
32-	Present cultural groups in our society in a manner that they will respect and collaborate.	5	4	3	2	1
33-	Identify how language affects performance on certain test items.	5	4	3	2	1
34-	Present diversity of cultures as a strong positive feature of American heritage.	5	4	3	2	1
35-	Effectively utilize ethnic resources in the community	5	4	3	2	1
36-	Identify the similarities between Anglo-American and other cultures	5	4	3	2	1
37-	Adapt instructional methods to meet the needs of learners from diverse cultures.	5	4	3	2	1
38-	Analyze instructional materials for potential stereotypical attitudes towards Middle Eastern students.	5	4	3	2	1
39-	Provide instruction showing how prejudice affects individuals.	5	4	3	2	1
40-	Plan instructional activities that reduce prejudice toward other cultural groups.	5	4	3	2	1
41-	Create a learning environment that allows for alternative styles of learning.	5	4	3	2	1

42-	Provide instructional activities that help Middle Eastern students develop strategies for dealing with racial confrontations.	5	4	3	2	1
43-	Help Middle Eastern students recognize that competence is more important than ethnic background.	5	4	3	2	1
44-	Develop activities that increase self-confidence of Middle Eastern students.	5	4	3	2	1
45-	Assist all students to understand the feelings of people from other ethnic groups.	5	4	3	2	1
46-	Help Middle Eastern students to work through problem situations caused by stereotypical attitudes.	5	4	3	2	1
47-	Identify solutions to problems that may arise as the result of cultural diversity	5	4	3	2	1
48-	Identify student behaviors that are indicative of negative racial attitudes.	5	4	3	2	1
49-	Develop instructional methods that promote intercultural cohesiveness.	5	4	3	2	1
50-	Develop instructional methods that dispel myths about ethnic groups.	5	4	3	2	1
51-	Get students from different cultures to work and interact together.	5	4	3	2	1

Mainstream Americans* Those Americans who are a part of American society which is normal, is not deviant because of ethnicity, religion, lack of religion, culture or values

Learning environment		5	4	3	2	1
Please indicate your agreement to the following statement with respect to the ME students' learning environment in school and at home.						
5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree		
52-	Administration in my school is prepared for diverse students	5	4	3	2	1
53-	I am encouraged by the school administration to welcome diverse students in my classroom	5	4	3	2	1
54-	There are collaboration between staff regarding Middle Eastern students' affairs	5	4	3	2	1
55-	The faculty and staff understand Middle Eastern students' needs and learning habits	5	4	3	2	1
56-	The parents of Middle Eastern students are involved at school	5	4	3	2	1
57-	When parents are engaged, Middle Eastern students make better progress	5	4	3	2	1
58-	The parents' cultural competence affect Middle Eastern students' learning at home and school.	5	4	3	2	1
59-	Mothers of Middle Eastern students are more involved than their fathers	5	4	3	2	1
60-	Family members of Middle Eastern students that I interact with understand my language	5	4	3	2	1



Your time and effort are precious and greatly appreciated.

Thank you for contributing in the development of education and completing this survey.