

B. Cultural Responsiveness

Group Members

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Definition of Research Area and Terms

As a well-documented and persistent opportunity, achievement, and discipline gaps exist between White, middle-class students and students of color; those from low-income backgrounds; speakers of languages other than English; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTBQ) youth; students identified as disabled; and immigrants, we focused our review and subsequent empirical questions on the needs of marginalized populations. We subscribed particularly to Ladson-Billings' (1995) tenets of culturally relevant teaching: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (p. 160).

Literature Review Process

We began our review by identifying all book chapters and articles from the *Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education* series, *Middle Grades Research Journal*, *Middle School Journal*, and *Research in Middle Level Education Online* between 2000 and 2013 that addressed our topic based on Brinegar's (2015) content analysis of these same publications. This included 133 documents.

Due to the vastly different ways scholars defined and applied terms in these articles, we could not synthesize findings at this point and took additional steps to categorize articles with regard to how they met the following criteria:

1. Defined terms related to power, culture, and difference, and used citations;
2. Focused on changing unjust systems rather than changing individuals to fit into unjust systems;
3. Used at least one element of the middle grades concept and included citations.

Once we developed these criteria, we created a codebook in a shared Google Sheet articulating how we would identify evidence of each, with inclusion and exclusion criteria. Each team member independently coded each article using the codebook. We met weekly to discuss our categorizations of 10 articles at a time, coming to consensus regarding each difference of opinion and continuing to hone our codebook.

Once we had completed the categorization process, we analyzed the 14 articles that reflected all three dimensions of our theoretical framework to: (a) evaluate how these authors had addressed each area; and (b) identify empirical and conceptual gaps with which to develop an agenda for future research.

Research Questions

Student Experiences and Identity Development

1. What are the experiences of marginalized youth in today's middle grades?
2. How can the field better elucidate the voices of marginalized students when conducting research on middle grades practices?
3. What does it mean to acculturate vs. assimilate for today's young adolescents?
4. How are young adolescents choosing to identify vs. how are they being forced to identify?
5. What are the larger socio-cultural-historical discourses at play in the construction of marginalized youth identities?
6. What funds of knowledge do marginalized young adolescents draw on in the process of constructing their identities?

7. What is the role of intersectionality in understanding the identity development of young adolescents?
8. What are the needs of different groups of young adolescent immigrants?
9. What are the differing needs between various groups of immigrants and refugees?
10. How do marginalized students in the middle grades respond to national standards?

How Teachers Enact Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

1. How do we create critical consciousness in teacher candidates and middle grades teachers?
2. How do we create critical consciousness in all middle grades students?
3. How can teachers address the needs of early adolescents in a classroom with multiple subgroups without essentializing any one group's experiences?
4. What does it look like when teachers from different backgrounds/identities successfully implement culturally responsive practices?
5. What are the experiences of middle grades teachers from marginalized backgrounds?
6. What are the interrelated connections between middle schools, communities, families, and students when investigating culturally responsive pedagogy?
7. How do teachers support LBGTQ students within their classrooms?

How Schools Support Student Identity Development and Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

1. How can the school environment be used to support positive cultural/ethnic identity development?
2. How can the middle grades concept be used to enhance educators' culturally responsive practices for young adolescents from marginalized backgrounds?

3. Which culturally responsive middle grades practices apply across subpopulations and which are group specific?
4. Which elements of the middle grades concept help support the development of equity for marginalized populations and can these findings be generalized?
5. What barriers exist to implementing middle grades concepts in schools with majority minoritized populations?
6. What is the state of culturally responsive middle schools west of the Midwest?

Influential Readings

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