Does Multicultural Education Improve Students’ Racial Attitudes? Implications for Closing the Achievement Gap

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Abstract

The effects of multicultural education on the racial attitudes of students in prekindergarten through twelfth grade are examined in this meta-analysis. Multicultural education was operationalized for this study as programs and curricula dealing with racial and cultural diversity. The effect sizes of curricular intervention and reinforcement dimensions of multicultural education in suburban and urban settings among age groups 3-8 and 9-16 were compared to see the relative effectiveness of multicultural education on students’ racial attitudes. The mean effect size of 0.488 from a total of 60 effect sizes calculated using 30 studies shows that exposure to multicultural education led to a reduction in students’ racial attitudes. However, the mean effect size of 0.645 from curricular intervention studies was higher than the mean effect size of the reinforcement studies at 0.08, indicating that the curricular intervention dimension of multicultural education was more effective in reducing students’ racial attitudes. Multicultural education was more effective in reducing racial attitudes in urban areas with a mean effect size of 0.72, than in suburban areas with a mean effect size of 0.587. Multicultural education was also more effective in reducing racial attitudes among the 9-16 age group.

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with a mean effect size of 0.751, than among the 3-8 age group with a mean effect size of 0.208. Implications for research and for practice with emphasis on closing the achievement gap that exists among the various student subgroups primarily in under achieving inner-city public schools are discussed.

**Keywords**

multicultural education, racial attitudes, culturally responsive pedagogy, black studies, effect sizes, afrocentric curriculum, closing the achievement gap, social justice education, African American, cultural diversity, diversity education, meta-analysis, social sciences

In an educational environment of Race to the Top federal grants and No Child Left Behind mandates where accountability is highly emphasized, expected, and required to receive federal and state financial support for public schools, and where there is documented evidence of the glaring gap in the achievement levels among the student subgroups in the United States' K-12 public schools, it is critical to explore and use all avenues and instructional strategies that will enhance students' academic achievement.

Proponents of multicultural education (ME; Banks, 1994; C. I. Bennett, 1990; Coelho, 1994; Davidman & Davidman, 1994; Gay, 1988; Grant, 1977; Nieto, 1992) explicitly state that the inclusion of ME in the curriculum of schools creates an atmosphere where racial attitudes and academic achievement are improved.

The Census Bureau indicates that the demographics of the United States are changing because of the increase in the minority population. The changing demographics and the existence of various cultures, especially in cities, highlight the need to ensure that the principles of democracy are attained whereby the racial attitudes of citizens are positive to facilitate peaceful communication and cooperation among various ethnic groups. According to Gabelko and Michaelis (1981) and Lynch (1987), the reduction-of-prejudice dimension of ME is geared toward helping students acquire more democratic values, behaviors, and attitudes.

A number of studies (Fisher, 1965; Trubowitz, 1969; J. E. Williams & Edwards, 1969; Yawkey, 1973; Yawkey & Blackwell, 1974) were conducted to determine the effects of ME on students' racial attitudes. Banks (1991), in a narrative review, stated that ME, which he divided into curricular intervention studies, reinforcement studies, perceptual differentiation studies, and studies that involved cooperative learning activities, brought about change in racial attitudes. He also noted that reinforcement studies yielded richer and
consistently positive results. Glock, Wuthnow, Piliavin, and Spencer (1975) found that young children’s attitudes were easier to change since these attitudes were still being formed.

This meta-analysis examined the variations in the effects of ME on the racial attitudes of students from pre-K through Grade 12. It synthesized the findings from selected studies on the effects of ME on attitudes to determine the average differences of the effects of the curricular intervention and reinforcement dimensions of ME so that relative comparisons of these effects at suburban and urban locations and among age groups 3 to 8 and 9 to 16 could be made. This meta-analysis answered the following four research questions:

1. What were the differences in the racial attitudes of students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade who were exposed to ME, operationalized as programs and curricula dealing with diversity issues, and same-grade students who were exposed to traditional methods of instruction?

2. What were the differences in the racial attitudes of students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade who were exposed to curricular intervention dimension of ME and same-grade students exposed to reinforcement dimension of ME?

3. What were the differences in the racial attitudes of students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade who were exposed to ME in suburban settings and same-grade students exposed to ME in urban settings?

4. What were the differences in the racial attitudes of students ages 3 to 8 and students ages 9 to 16 who were exposed to ME?

**Milieu of the Meta-Analysis**

ME evolved as a direct result of ethnic studies, especially the early ones carried out by G. W. Williams (1882-1883). According to Banks (1994), there are five distinct phases of ME. The first phase of ME, also called the monochronic courses phase, occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s, when ethnic studies became part of the curricula of schools and teacher preparation colleges. The second phase of ME, the multiethnic studies courses phase, occurred in the early 1970s and resulted from the ethnic studies educators' push to increase educational equality through structural and systemic changes in schools (Banks, 1995). The third phase of ME, the multiethnic education phase, occurred in the early 1970s and the 1980s, when other groups considered as minorities, women and people with disabilities, demanded that their history and culture
be included in school curricula. The fourth phase, from the mid-1980s into the 1990s, primarily dealt with ME research, practice, and theory formulation with a focus on race, disability, gender, and class. Today, all four phases of ME currently exist in schools, even though the fourth phase is more prominent. Phase 5 of ME encompasses the existence of the key concepts and the institutionalizing of the significant elements of Phases 1 to 4. At this phase, ME gradually becomes entrenched in the curriculum and the entire educational experience.

The definitions of ME, reflecting the various perspectives of the scholars in the field, have been evolving for more than 30 years. A review of the definitions show that they share a common premise in their assertions that ME is for all students, challenges all types of prejudice, endorses the unique cultures of all students, and is designed to ensure that all students receive equal educational access and opportunities. Gay (1988) stressed the importance of modifying the structure, procedure, substance, and values of education to reflect the cultural, ethnic, linguistic, social, and racial pluralism in the United States. Nieto (1992), in a more encompassing definition, stated,

Multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and affirms pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender) that students, their communities, and teachers represent. Multicultural education permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, the interactions among teachers, students and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. It furthers the democratic principles of social justice because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change. (p. 208)

Nieto emphasized that ME should be antiracist, basic, pervasive, a social justice education, important for all students, a process, and actively engaged in critical pedagogy (Nieto & Bode, 2008). The five dimensions of ME developed by Banks (1994, 2004) are content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure. Sleeter and Grant (2006) also developed five approaches to ME, which are teaching the exceptional and the culturally different, human relations, single-group studies, ME, and education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2004) believes that the new
direction for ME is to “be open to conflict and change” to survive in the global climate of constant change.

The new work of multicultural education must be more generative. Both scholars and classroom teachers must look for opportunities, new ways to think and learn about human diversity and social justice. They must be willing to push innovation in multicultural education. (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 63)

In this study, ME is defined as programs and curricula dealing with racial and cultural diversity. Programs and curricula dealing with gender were not included for the following reasons:

1. The effects of ME on gender associations apply to all cultures. However, the studies on the effects of ME on gender associations did not identify the distinct impact of race and ethnicity on students’ gender associations (Grant & Sleeter, 1986).
2. This meta-analysis focused on the impact of ME on the attitudes of members of a race and culture toward members of their own race and toward members of other races and cultures. Changes in racial and prejudicial attitudes, therefore, were focused on.

The major goal of ME is to see that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups experience educational equality by reforming the school and other educational institutions (Banks, 1994). According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP; 1996), young people learn about their world through their daily activities, their peers, the media, and the schools' provision of a variety of planned perspectives, viewpoints, and training. In its report on what the high school of the 21st century should be, NASSP stated,

An understanding of and respect for diversity should be absorbed into the fabric of each high school, whatever the composition of its enrollment. Schools ought to help students to see diversity in its broadest sense as an expression of the American experience. Diversity should be considered in connection with the school’s curriculum, instructional practices, and staffing. In the end, education ought to equip students for the interdependency of life in the 21st century. (NASSP, 1996, p. 68)
The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2008) projected that elementary and secondary public school enrollment will increase to 54 million in 2017, with the South to experience the largest increase. As the nation’s public school enrollment is increasing, the diversity of the student body is concurrently growing rapidly, according to NCES (2008) in its annual report mandated by Congress, The Condition of Education 2008, which prompted NCES commissioner Mark Schneider to state that there are on-going challenges involved in educating a growing and increasingly diverse population. According to Aud et al. (2010) in The Condition of Education 2010, the population of White students in the nation’s K-12 public schools has steadily declined. In 2008, the White population dropped to 55.5% from 68.3% in 1988 and from 78% in 1972. In the same period, the Hispanic student population rose to 21.7% in 2008 from 11% in 1988. Since 1986, the population of Hispanic students has gradually increased more than that of African Americans, whom they exceeded in 2002 and yearly after. The African American student population rose to its highest level of 17.2% in 1998 from 16.5% in 1988. However, the African American population dropped to 15.5% in 2008. In 2008, 7.4% of public school enrollment was a combination of Asian (3.7%), Pacific Islander (0.2%), American Indian–Alaskan Native (0.9%) students and students of more than one race (2.6%). Minority students increased from 22% in 1972% to 45% in 2008.

The increase in minority enrollment has regional differences. The South and West had more minority enrollments than the Northeast and Midwest, and the Midwest had the smallest between 1988 and 2008. In 2008 the West had approximately 56% minority enrollment and 43% Whites, and the percentage of Hispanics surpassed that of African Americans. From 1988 to 2008, the percentage of Black enrollment remained higher than that of Hispanic enrollment in the South, with 24% to 28% of African Americans versus 10% to 19% of Hispanics; and in the Midwest, with 13% to 15% of African Americans versus 3% to 10% of Hispanics.

In the 2007-2008 school year, the U.S. Department of Education reported that 48,515,020 students were enrolled in the K-12 public schools (NCES, 2008). Of those, 17%, or 8,267,000 students, were Blacks with regional differences as follows: 1% in Montana; less than 2% in Idaho, Utah, New Hampshire, and Vermont; approximately 30% in Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, and South Carolina; 46% in Louisiana; and approximately 50% in Mississippi (NCES, 2008). Currently, Hispanics make up 1 in 5 public school students and, with other minority students, are disproportionately enrolled in high-poverty schools. As a result, gaps in achievement and graduation rates between White and minority students persist (NCES, 2008).
The demographic diversity of U.S. society and schools, therefore, emphasizes the importance of creating a curriculum that ensures that the cultural needs as well as the academic needs of all students are met regardless of race or ethnicity. By meeting the cultural and academic needs of all students through the emphasis of the importance of all races and cultures, the attitudes of students toward themselves and toward other cultures would likely be improved. ME has been touted as one of the planned activities that could bring about attitudinal change (Banks, 1991). Jackson (1944), Fisher (1965), Hayes and Conklin (1953), Leslie and Leslie (1972), Litcher and Johnson (1969), Shirley (1988) Trager and Yarrow (1952), and Yawkey (1973) found that students developed positive racial attitudes after exposure to ME.

**Reasons for Studying Attitudes**

Research on attitudes has shown that planned interventions, programs, and activities are capable of positively modifying racial attitudes (Fisher, 1965; Hayes & Conklin, 1953; Jackson, 1944; Litcher & Johnson, 1969; Shirley, 1988; Trager & Yarrow, 1952; Yawkey, 1973).

The existence of attitudes toward political and cultural groups in young children might help explain the nature of the relationships among the diverse members of the U.S. population because young members of each group have developed attitudes about themselves and other ethnic groups. According to Yawkey and Geletka (1973), children possess attitudes toward political objects, and these attitudes change as children age. Swick and Blackwell (1972) also found that 4-year-old Black children possess attitudes toward political and cultural groups. It is evident from news media reports that despite the gains made in the area of peaceful race relations since the abolishment of slavery, and even with the election of the first Black U.S. president, deep mistrust and a racial divide among the various ethnic groups still exist.

The media clearly presented the March 3, 1991, beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers and the acquittal of those police officers involved, which led to the subsequent riots in south-central Los Angeles, culminating in the beating of White truck driver Reginald Denny by rioters; the July 1997 beheading of a Black man by two White men in Grayson County, Virginia; the 1995 shooting of a Black couple by two members of the 82nd Airborne Division in North Carolina; and the June 1998 dragging to death by truck of a Black man by three White supremacist drivers in Jasper, Texas, as some prominent examples of this mistrust. The racial divide could be seen from the polarized reactions and conclusions reached by Whites and
Blacks after the acquittal of O. J. Simpson by all-Black jurors for the murder of his wife in October of 1995.

It is crucial that there are interventions and programs designed to increase communication among racial groups and subsequently change the deep-seated attitudes that led the people discussed above to commit such horrific, racially motivated crimes.

**Multicultural Curriculum**

An effective ME is one that has well-designed curricula and programs. A well-designed multicultural curriculum includes the different components of students' cultural identities, such as ethnicity and race (Gollnick, 1995). Multicultural curriculum refers to courses designed and taught as an integral part of a school's curriculum or as an addendum to an existing curriculum. Multicultural programs are activities that are not designed as part of a school's curriculum but are conducted within and/or outside the formal classroom. Multicultural curriculum and multicultural programs are both designed to ensure that the educational and cultural needs of students from all ethnic backgrounds are met (Banks, 1995; Grant, 1977). Multicultural curriculum was greatly influenced by the ethnic studies movement, the 1950s intergroup education movement, and the civil rights movement of the 1960s, which sought to integrate school curricula by incorporating the cultures of all members of the community.

Banks (1994) recommended a multicultural curriculum that would teach minority ethnic groups how to free themselves from psychological captivity, stress social action, acquire humanistic dispositions toward all ethnic groups, realize power and ethnic identity without being chauvinistic and ethnocentric, and acquire the national identity and skills necessary to participate completely in the society. The use of culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy in classrooms is a practical way to enhance diverse students' acquisition of cultural pride and identity, which in turn positively affects academic achievement. Although this meta-analysis did not examine the effects of ME on students’ academic achievement, scholars in the field of multicultural and Afrocentric education have delineated effective and successful, culturally relevant pedagogical strategies.

According to Gay (2000), culturally responsive teaching is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory and involves using the “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 29). Ladson-Billings
(1994), on the basis of her observations of teachers in classrooms, affirmed that culturally relevant teaching “views knowledge critically, is passionate about knowledge, helps students develop necessary skills, and sees excellence as a complex standard that takes student diversity and individual differences into account” (pp. 91-98).

A discussion of the Afrocentric approach to school curriculum would enrich the foregoing discussion on multicultural curriculum. The proponents of Afrocentricity believe that students should be taught from an Africa-oriented point of view, especially students of African origin, to help young African Americans to reach a sharp self-realization. Afrocentricity was influenced by past and present African and African American leaders, such as the late Senegalese activist scientist Cheikh Anta Diop, Marcus Garvey, Elijah Mohammed, and Malcolm X. Afrocentricity, according to Asante (1992), is “the belief in the centrality of Africans in postmodern history. It is our history, our mythology, our creative motif, and our ethos exemplifying our collective will” (p. 6). Afrocentricity does not advocate the degrading of other cultures; however, it requires people of African descent to reach within to draw strength from their African ancestry. Afrocentric curriculum, therefore, should emphasize the culture and heritage of African Americans as the foundation to new learning. Ladson-Billings (1994) identified successful characteristics of culturally relevant teaching that are effective for African American students as follows:

a teacher-student relationship that is fluid and “humanely equitable”; teachers cultivation of the relationship beyond the boundaries of the classroom; teachers that demonstrate connectedness with each of their students; teachers that encourage a community of learners; and encourage students to learn collaboratively, expect them to teach each other and to take responsibility for each other. (pp. 61-70)

The Meta-Analysis

The studies included in this research were analyzed using a meta-analysis. Scientists and scholars (Hedges & Olkin, 1980; Hunter, Schmidt, & Jackson, 1982; Wolf, 1986) in the field of social and behavioral sciences know that single studies or experiments were not absolutely useful in answering the questions posed by the problem under study. Since most reviews in this area have been of narrative form and usually do not use statistical analysis to reach conclusions, statistical analysis or a meta-analytic approach allowed for the exploration of several dimensions of potential importance.
According to Glass, McGaw, and Smith (1981), meta-analysis is the statistical analysis of the findings of many original empirical studies. It involves calculating effect size (ES) to determine the statistical difference in mean standard deviation. Meta-analysis, therefore, yielded results that were more representative and covered a broader range of content, treatment, variation, population, and means of measurement than the results of the original studies.

Limitations

The accuracy of the data analyzed in this meta-analysis depended on the accuracy of the information provided in the original studies. ME as it pertained to this study was limited to programs and curricula that dealt with race. Other aspects of ME, such as gender, disability, and social class, were not studied because the variables affecting attitudes in these areas likely differ from those affecting racial attitudes, and the presence of various cultures in the United States highlighted the importance of examining the nature of racial attitudes and the interventions that brought about change in attitudes.

Since ME involved different programs and curricula, there was no uniformity in the types of ME programs examined. Although some studies looked at the effects of ME that was embedded in the curriculum, others looked at reinforcement programs and activities that were not part of the school's official curriculum.

This study examined only the effects of ME on racial attitudes and did not look at the effects of ME on the self-concepts of the students under study. It also did not look at the impact of self-concept on the attitudes of the participants under study. This was because whereas self-concept dealt with how people perceived themselves, racial attitudes dealt with how people related to other people within and or outside their cultures (James, 1890).

The original studies examined in this meta-analysis also used a variety of attitude scales to measure students' attitudes; therefore, there was no uniformity in the scale of measurement used in the studies.

Criteria for Inclusion of Studies

The studies included in this meta-analysis met the following criteria: (a) The study used some form of experiment (treatment and nontreatment groups). (b) The study examined the effects of ME (curricular intervention programs, reinforcement programs, or perceptual differentiation programs) on racial attitudes. The studies that looked at other forms of ME, such as gender, were excluded. (c) The participants in the study were preschool to 12th-grade children.
The studies involving college or postsecondary participants were excluded. (d) The study was conducted in the classroom or in a structured setting outside the classroom. (e) The study reported the outcomes of both the control group and the experimental group separately using quantitative measurement and statistical analysis of data. (f) The study had a minimum sample size of 40 students. (g) The treatment lasted at least one session.

Using the above criteria, 30 studies out of approximately 300 relevant studies were selected for this study.

**Calculation of ES**

Calculation of ES involves the determination of the mean difference between the experimental and control groups divided by the standard deviation of the traditional or control group. This method, the definitional formula, is believed to yield the most data in a direct way (Glass et al., 1981) and would determine the statistical difference in mean standard deviation units (Wolf, 1986). The use of the definitional formula below to calculate ES depends on the study’s data, including the control group’s standard deviation and the means of both the control group and the experimental group.

\[
ES = \frac{(X_m - X_t)}{SD_t},
\]

where \(X_m\) is the experimental group’s mean or the mean of those who received ME, \(X_t\) is the traditional or control group’s mean or the mean of those who did not receive ME, and \(SD_t\) is the traditional group’s standard deviation.

**Findings and Conclusions**

According to Cohen (1988), the ranges for interpreting ES are as follows: Small effect range is when \(ES = 0.200\) to 0.499, medium effect range is when \(ES = 0.500\) to 0.799, and large effect range is when \(ES = 0.800\) and above. Tallmadge (1977) states that to be deemed educationally significant, an ES difference of 0.250 or more should be obtained.

**Mean ES**

The mean ES calculation of the 30 original studies was 0.488, interpreted by Cohen (1988) as a small effect. However, 0.488 is close to the top of the small effect range, which, according to Tallmadge (1977), would be considered educationally significant since it is greater than 0.250. It can be concluded,
therefore, that exposure to ME brought about positive changes in students’ racial attitude compared with traditional instruction.

Since there is no available meta-analysis on the same topic to compare this finding with, the result will be compared with theories and reviews of scholars in the field of ME. This finding supports the narrative review done by Banks (1991), in which he found that ME brings about change in racial attitudes. This finding also supports the theories of ME scholars (Banks, 1994; C. I. Bennett, 1990; Coelho, 1994; Davidman & Davidman, 1994; Gay, 1988; Grant, 1977; Sleeter & Grant, 2006; Nieto, 1992) who believe that the inclusion of ME in the curriculum of schools creates an atmosphere where racial attitudes are improved.

A Comparison of Mean Effect Sizes by Type of Study

The mean ES of the 21 curricular intervention studies was 0.645, which Cohen (1988) interprets as a medium effect and Tallmadge (1977) would consider educationally significant. Exposure to the curricular intervention dimension of ME brought about more positive changes in students’ racial attitudes than did exposure to traditional instruction.

The mean ES of the eight reinforcement studies was 0.08, which Cohen (1988) interprets as a minimal effect. As a result, exposure to the reinforcement dimension of ME brought about minimal positive changes in students’ racial attitudes in comparison with exposure to traditional instruction.

These results show that the curricular intervention dimension of ME was more effective in reducing students’ negative racial attitudes. The curricular intervention dimension of ME might have been more effective in reducing the students’ racial attitudes because the students saw the multicultural curriculum as an integral part of their curriculum and not as an additional activity that is not part of the curriculum. The students may have felt that they were accountable for the ME information in the form of tests and questionnaires and, therefore, needed to internalize as well as practice the ME information. The ideas, objectives, and standards specified within the ME curriculum would more likely change performance on measures of attitudes than would reinforcement activities. However, this could not be determined from the information available.

The curricular intervention dimension of ME also generally lasted for a longer duration than the reinforcement dimension, because reinforcement dimensions of ME are designed as an additional activity that reinforces students positively for selecting black objects and negatively for selecting white objects in response to questions asked.
Banks (1995) stated that reinforcement studies are more theoretically grounded than curricular intervention studies and have produced richer and consistently positive results. However, the findings of this meta-analysis are contrary to this interpretation.

A Comparison of Mean ES by Location

The mean ES of the eight studies carried out in urban locations was 0.72, which Cohen (1988) interprets as a medium effect and Tallmadge (1977) would consider educationally significant since it is greater than 0.250. Exposure to ME, therefore, brought about more positive changes in urban students’ racial attitudes than did exposure to traditional instruction. The mean effect size of the 15 studies carried out in suburban locations was 0.587, which Cohen (1988) interprets as a medium effect and Tallmadge (1977) would consider educationally significant. Consequently, exposure to ME brought about more positive changes in suburban students’ racial attitudes than did exposure to traditional instruction.

These results show that ME is effective in bringing about positive racial attitudes in students in urban and suburban areas, with only slight differences in effect.

ME might have been more effective in reducing racial attitudes in urban areas because urban areas have a more diverse population than suburbs. Students in urban areas, therefore, having been exposed to a variety of cultures, were more willing to accept the differences and recognize the similarities among the various ethnic groups. Students in the suburbs, on the other hand, tended to live in homogeneous neighborhoods with minimal contact with different ethnic groups. However, the fact that the ES of the studies done in urban areas was only slightly greater than the ES of the suburban studies could be the result of the increase in the minority population in suburbs. As the suburbs become more diverse, the residents become more exposed to, and accepting of, different cultures.

A Comparison of Mean ES by Age of Sample

The mean effect size of the 14 studies involving students ages 3 to 8 was 0.208, which Cohen (1988) interprets as a small effect. Exposure to ME brought about more positive changes in the racial attitudes among students ages 3 to 8 than did exposure to traditional instruction among same-age students. However, Tallmadge (1977) interprets the mean effect size of 0.208 as not educationally significant because it is less than 0.250.
The mean ES of the 15 studies involving students ages 9 to 16 was 0.751, which Cohen (1988) interprets as a medium effect and Tallmadge (1977) interprets as educationally significant since it is greater than 0.250. Exposure to ME, therefore, brought about more positive changes in racial attitudes among students ages 9 to 16 than did exposure to traditional instruction among same-age students.

These results show that ME is effective in bringing about positive racial attitudes in students ages 3 to 8 and 9 to 16. However, ME seemed to be much more effective in producing positive racial attitudes among the 9- to 16-year-old students. This result does not support Banks’s (1991) narrative review findings that ME is more effective with preschoolers and kindergartners.

ME might have been more effective in bringing about more positive attitudes in the 9-to-16 age group because these students are older and are more cognitively discerning of their world than the younger age group of 3 to 8. These older students (9 to 16 years old), having lived longer, might have had more contact with members of other ethnic groups. This contact might have taught these students that despite the differences among different ethnic groups, there are also basic similarities shared by all ethnic groups. Adolescents are also very cognizant of their peers. The opinions of their peers, rather than their race, seem to be more important to adolescents.

On the other hand, the older students, having lived longer, might have developed deep-seated negative racial attitudes that exposure to ME would cause to yield a large positive effect between the pretest and posttest results.

The studies with the younger students (3 to 8 years old) might not have yielded many medium to large ESes because these children’s racial attitudes were not as deep-seated as that of the older students. Exposure to ME, therefore, would not yield a considerable difference or positive effect between the pretest and posttest results because their racial attitudes were not very negative to start with.

The overall result of this meta-analysis supports the theories of Gabelko and Michaelis (1981) and Lync (1987), who contend that the reduction-of-prejudice dimension of ME will help students cultivate democratic attitudes and values. Having positive racial attitudes and a good understanding of other cultures certainly should help students develop democratic attitudes and values. The findings also support the theories of the proponents of ME (Banks, 1994; C. I. Bennett, 1990; Coelho, 1994; Davidman & Davidman, 1994; Gay, 1988; Grant, 1977; Nieto, 1992; Sleeter & Grant, 2006) who believe that the inclusion of ME in the curriculum of schools creates an atmosphere where racial attitudes are improved.
Implications for Research

It would be useful to conduct further research on why the studies using younger children yielded a minimal effect size by researching how deep-seated young children's racial attitudes are. Most of the research in this area shows that young children develop racial and democratic attitudes and that these attitudes could be modified with planned interventions. However, there was no indication of how deep-seated these attitudes were.

Further research should be conducted on the effects of the perceptual differentiation dimension of ME on students' racial attitudes. The only study using this dimension that was used in this meta-analysis yielded a positive ES. However, this study was not used to compare the relative effectiveness of the dimensions of ME because it would create an inadequate comparison.

More reinforcement studies involving older children should be conducted to see whether they will yield positive ESes, as did the one used in this meta-analysis. This will strengthen the results of the effects of the reinforcement dimension across all age groups and grade levels.

Five of the studies used in this meta-analysis were conducted in the 1960s, 19 in the 1970s, 4 in the 1980s, and 2 in the 1990s. Current and continuous studies on the effects of ME on students' racial attitudes should be conducted to determine whether ME is still effective. Differential results between methods of ME and age levels suggest a need for further research to better understand how it works.

Most of the studies included in the research could not compare across time frames and did not also look at the impact of the teacher's beliefs and attitudes on the students' attitudes. Research pertaining to the influence of teacher beliefs and attitudes would be an interesting dimension to study in this field.

Implications for Practice

ME was found to be effective in improving racial attitudes of students in prekindergarten through 12th grade from the results of this meta-analysis. Policy makers and practitioners, therefore, should scrutinize the content of schools' curricula to ensure that ME is an integral part of the curricula. This is essential since the curricular intervention dimension of ME was found to be much more effective than the reinforcement dimension in reducing prejudicial attitudes. Funds would be usefully allocated to revise or rewrite the curriculum of schools as well as to provide training and support for teachers who are responsible for implementing the multicultural curriculum.
This meta-analysis shows that ME brings about positive change in racial attitude across all age groups and grade levels. However, ME was more effective among older students. It is important, therefore, for ME interventions to be started early and continued through all the grade levels. This consistency will increase the effect of ME and ensure that students see ME as an ongoing learning experience.

ME was also found to be most effective in urban areas and moderately effective in suburban areas. Since urban areas, and increasingly, more suburban areas, have the highest concentration of various ethnic groups, and thus are likely to have more racially motivated rivalries, this finding could be interpreted as good news because ME could be considered a tool that could be used to improve communication among the various cultures. Improvement in communication is especially important since current census reports indicate that the minority population in general, and specifically that of school-age children (NCES, 2008; Snyder & Wirt, 1998), is increasing and will continue to increase, especially in urban and suburban areas.

Since most of the studies used in this meta-analysis were conducted before the 1990s, and only two of the studies were conducted in the 1990s, implications for practice in the 21st century should be cognizant of the current needs and practices in education necessary for preparing our children for the global world they will inherit.

It is evident, however, that ME improved racial attitudes among students in prekindergarten through 12th grade. Consequently, ME, which emphasizes the diversity of our society, is a powerful tool for presenting an accurate picture of the diverse cultures existent in our world. ME, therefore, is a vital educational tool and should be emphasized.

**Implications for Closing the Achievement Gap**

There is a correlation between students’ respect for each other and academic achievement, although this meta-analysis did not study the impact of ME on academic achievement. Grant (1977), Gay (1988), Sleeter and Grant (2006), C. I. Bennett (1990), Nieto (1992), Banks (1994), Coelho (1994) and Davidman and Davidman (1994) assert that the inclusion of ME in the curriculum of schools creates an atmosphere where racial attitudes and academic achievement are improved. Students are more apt to concentrate on their studies rather than on racially or ethnically based fights and incidents that create the disruption of the learning environment, divert time and resources from critical academic activities, and lead to the possible suspension or
expulsion of such students from the schools, triggering an increase in the dropout rate of those students involved.

According to A. Bennett et al. (2004), the National Study Group for the Affirmative Development of Academic Ability believes that since academic ability is a developed ability, there should be interventions from homes, schools, and communities that will lead to the affirmative development of academic ability to close the achievement gap among the various subgroups.

The data gathered from the results of standardized tests across many years establish a nationwide achievement gap. Trends in the achievement gaps in reading and mathematics, according to NCES (2009), reinforce the glaring gap, especially in urban inner-city schools. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) program, which has assessed student reading and mathematics performance since the early 1990s, reported that in 2009, White and Asian–Pacific Islander fourth- and eighth-grade students had average reading and mathematics scores ranging from 24 to 40 points higher than African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians (NCES, 2009). In the 2007 NAEP scores, 4th-grade African Americans (on a 0-to-500 scale) scored, on average, 27 points lower than Whites in reading; and Hispanics scored 26 points lower than Whites. Eighth-grade African Americans scored, on average, 27 points lower on the reading assessment than Whites; and Hispanics scored, on average, 25 points lower than Whites. In mathematics, the achievement gap between White and Black fourth graders was 26 points, and the White–Hispanic gap was 21 points. At the 8th-grade level, the White–Black mathematics gap was 32 points, and the White–Hispanic gap was 26 points (NCES, 2008). The NAEP scores from 1996 to 2000 of a sample of 8th- and 12th-grade students in mathematics and science, and from 1998 to 2002 in reading, establish that African American and Hispanic students perform significantly lower in these subjects (Braswell et al., 2001; Grigg, Daane, Jin, & Campbell, 2003; O'Sullivan, Lauko, Grigg, Qian, & Zhang, 2003).

The nation’s public K-12 schools are operating in a challenging environment of government-imposed school reforms and initiatives, such as the current Race to the Top federal grant program and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. To receive funds from the Race to the Top grant program, initiated by the Obama administration in July 2009, states must have realistic plans to conduct school reform in four areas by using strategies that will produce college- and workplace-ready students who can compete globally; using data to measure student academic growth and drive instruction; employing effective teachers and administrators; and revamping the schools with low
achievement scores ("Race to the Top Fund," 2010). NCLB sets deadlines for states to expand the scope and frequency of student testing, revamp their accountability systems, and guarantee that every teacher is qualified in his or her subject area. NCLB also requires states to make demonstrable annual progress in raising the percentage of students proficient in reading and math and in narrowing the test score gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

In this continuously fluid educational environment, it is imperative that schools turn out citizens who are quite capable of surviving and succeeding despite the changes and demands they encounter daily by ensuring that the curriculum is one that would lead to the success—psychological and academic—of all students irrespective of cultural differences. Policy makers and practitioners, therefore, should endeavor to use all available and proven resources and programs, such as ME, that will improve not only racial attitudes but also the academic achievement of all students, thereby bridging and ultimately eliminating the achievement gap between student subgroups.

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